PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1988-89

COMPRISING PERIOD
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HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—B. C. Sewell

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COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 146**

FIFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Monday 30 January 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Energy Conservation

1. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the percentage of present energy consumption in Greater London which would be saved if all domestic buildings were fitted with the best existing energy conservation equipment.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): Details of domestic energy consumption and potential savings in Greater London are not available. We are continuing to promote energy savings in all domestic buildings.

Mr. Hughes: Has the Minister seen the recent "Electricity for Life" report published by Sussex university, the Council for the Protection of Rural England and Friends of the Earth, which suggests that for every pound spent on electricity conservation the consumer would save, say, £1·90 annually and we would have 42 kg less emissions of carbon dioxide? Will the Minister look at the report and consider that aspect? In London, we have only one energy efficiency officer—clearly an inadequately staffed resource. With substantial investment, we could improve the environment and reduce fuel poverty across our capital city.

Mr. Morrison: I regret that I have not seen the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Now that he has drawn it to my attention, I will certainly look at it and carefully weigh the arguments. As for the Energy Efficiency Office, the hon. Gentleman is probably aware that more emphasis is being put on localised London officers. That accords with the hon. Gentleman's views and my own.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that he should pay close attention to last Thursday's words of Robert Malpas, currently managing director of BP Oil and chief executive-designate of PowerGen? He said that energy conservation was the great issue of our time and that electricity privatisation was a distraction from it. Does the Minister agree that things have come to a pretty pass when we have to rely on a BP Oil salesman to tell the energy conservation facts of life to Ministers of the Department of Energy?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the Energy Efficiency Office budget is much greater—by a factor of about seven times—than it was when the Labour party was last in Government. It does not come well from him to lecture me on precisely how we should be energy efficient.

Mr. Malpas' speech has been drawn to my attention and I concur with his views on energy conservation, but not on electricity privatisation being a distraction. The hon. Gentleman is a member of the Standing Committee that is currently considering the Electricity Bill, so he will know better than I that some of its clauses relate to energy conservation. In no sense is that a distraction.

Renewable Energy Sources

2. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of electricity generated in the year 2000 he estimates will come from renewable sources of energy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): There is great uncertainty about projections for developing technologies such as renewable sources of energy. By the year 2025, wind and tidal barrages, for example, might provide up to 10 per cent. of curent electricity requirements each, if they could be successfully developed and were found to be environmentally acceptable.

Mr. Fearn: Will the Minister confirm that renewable energy from the Mersey barrage will be included for the north-west? How much energy could come from that source and what progress has been made on the scheme?

Mr. Spicer: Speaking from memory, 0·5 per cent. of electricity could come from the Mersey barrage. I can confirm to the hon. Gentleman that the Mersey barrage would come under the non-fossil fuel obligation, for instance, which we have laid out as part of our electricity supply privatisation.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my hon. Friend agree that 10 per cent. will cut the illusions of those who think renewables can make an immense contribution by the year 2000? Does he agree that, these days, large tranches of power are required not small contributions which often come from environmental developments which can be a disaster?

Mr. Spicer: The Government are doing a tremendous amount to sponsor research into renewable sources of energy. As I have already said, we have produced a scheme —the non-fossil fuel obligation—whereby renewable energy will be given special treatment. As I said in my main answer, it is difficult to predict exactly how these technologies will develop. That is why, in the foreseeable future, we shall be putting great reliance on the variety offered by nuclear energy.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does the Minister accept that offshore wave power could make substantial contributions to the national grid by the end of the century? Does he further accept that a substantial body of opinion believes that dirty tricks by nuclear interests in his Department may have contributed to the rundown of offshore wave power research? Can he report on the progress of any discussions following the meeting between Baroness Hooper and my constituent, Professor Stephen Salter, earlier this winter?

Mr. Spicer: I categorically refute the dirty tricks allegation. No Government have done more for the promotion, development and research into renewable energy than this Government. As the hon. Gentleman knows, all renewable energy sources are reviewed from time to time, and offshore wave power will certainly be reviewed. Large-scale offshore wave power is not one of the sources that we are currently pursuing as hard as the others.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that, for all the calls for increased spending on research into renewable energy, if the technology is not there we could spend two or three times as much money on research and still not bring it any quicker? Does he agree, therefore, that for the foreseeable future the only significant alternative to production from fossil fuels is nuclear power?

Mr. Spicer: I agree with that, but I must stress again that we are doing more than any other Government have to explore the potential for renewables and to proceed with them where it appears feasible and commercial to do so.

Electricity Privatisation

3. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received regarding the protection of consumer interests following privatisation of the electricity industry.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I continue to receive a number of representations on this topic. The Electricity Consumers Council has welcomed the proposals in the Electricity Bill for protecting consumers' interests.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State recognise that, despite his smooth words and the sham of competition in the Bill, consumers will still pay dearly for the dogma of privatisation? Why is he not prepared to provide in the Bill for right to supply, not necessarily for credit, to ensure that those living in poverty have a right to heat and light?

Mr. Parkinson: There is an obligation to supply within the Bill and it is a wider obligation than has ever been placed on the industry before. Previously, if one were beyond 50 yards from a distribution point one could be refused supply. That has gone. We are also making it a right for the low-income user of electricity to have a prepayment meter fitted as an alternative to disconnection. At present that is an option, but in future it will be a right. Prepayment meters have been the real reason why there has been such a substantial fall in the rate of disconnections under this Government.

Mr. Rost: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the best protection for consumers will be competition in electricity production with the distribution boards shopping around for electricity?

Mr. Parkinson: I agree with my hon. Friend that it will be a more competitive market for the area boards to buy their electricity and the regulator will be under a duty to regulate the prices of transmission, for both high and low-level distribution systems. Our package plus the package of customer rights adds up to a better deal for the consumer than any ever before.

Mr. Blair: Consumers will be concerned about how far they will have to underwrite the Government's insistence on building four new nuclear power stations. Since we know even from the authorised version of Mr. Baker's speech that the newly privatised industry will not build those power stations unless "the terms are right", and since we are told in today's papers that the Government are refusing to concede the industry's demands that any cost overruns are to be underwritten by the taxpayer, what will happen if there is deadlock between the industry and the Government? Is the Secretary of State prepared to contemplate the four new nuclear power stations not being built, which alone would give his negotiating arm strength, or is this just a public posture to be adopted while the Bill goes through the Commons?

Mr. Parkinson: I remind the hon. Gentleman that Sizewell B is already under construction and will be coming on stream in 1994. An inquiry is being held about

Hinkley Point C and I have just been informed by the Central Electricity Generating Board that it expects to apply for the other two stations within the next few months. Negotiations between the Government and National Power are progressing well. The hon. Gentleman should not believe what he reads in the newspapers any more than what is in the leaked documents that he seems to love using.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that few things are more irritating for a consumer than to be told that a certain service will come on a specified day at 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock, when the consumer waits in and cancels all professional and family engagements and the service does not turn up? Consumers will be delighted that there is to be a consumer right in the matter in future.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that for the first time consumers will have a statutory right to compensation in the event of failure to meet performance standards.

British Coal

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters were discussed.

8. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will next meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Barron: At the last meeting, did the Secretary of State discuss the problems facing ex-miners who took redundancy payments between the ages of 50 and 60? Under the Government's restart scheme a 58-year-old ex-miner who cannot find a job might lose his unemployment benefit equivalent which could be paid by the coal board if it so decided. If the Secretary of State did not discuss that, will he do so now and stop the problems throughout the British coal fields where ex-miners, having spent nearly a lifetime working in coal mines, believe that their five loads of coal and other benefits are under threat?

Mr. Parkinson: I did not discuss that with the chairman of British Coal, but my officials and the Department are having discussions with other Government Departments about the problem. We recognise that the new arrangements have produced new difficulties and we are determined to find a way around them.

Mr. Williams: When the Minister next meets the chairman of British Coal, will he raise with him the future of the west Wales anthracite field? We have lost Cynheidre colliery and there is serious concern about the mothballing of Carway Fawr drift mine. Those jobs are badly needed in the area and there is a problem caused by competition from Chinese anthracite. In the interest of the balance of payments and future supplies of anthracite, we want an early go-ahead for the Carway Fawr project.

Mr. Parkinson: I note what the hon. Gentleman says. I am aware of the project and the local concern and of the shortage of high-grade anthracite reserves in this country. I will bring the hon. Gentleman's points to the attention of the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Andy Stewart: When my right hon. Friend next meets the chairman of British Coal, will he congratulate him and the east midlands electricity board on deciding that the first mini power station will be in my constituency at Bilsthorpe? That is an environmentally friendly station and shows our commitment to British Coal. That station is in addition to and not a substitute for the coal-fired West Burton power station.

Mr. Parkinson: I do not wish to dampen my hon. Friend's enthusisam, but I have read about those proposals with interest as well. I know that discussions are taking place between the east midlands electricity board and British Coal, but no proposals have been put to me to date. When they are, I will look at them with great interest.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: When my right hon. Friend next speaks to the chairman of British Coal, will he ask him to think very carefully about the medium and long-term future of Gedling colliery in my constituency which is currently under threat of closure? Is he aware that the colliery has received an enormous amount of recent investment? The paint is hardly dry on a £6 million underground motorway system. The investment has been successful and the pit has seen an enormous increase in productivity and output and has only relatively recently hit severe geological drawbacks. Will he bring all those points to the attention of the chairman of British Coal when he next meets him?

Mr. Parkinson: I know of my hon. Friend's great concern about Gedling and I will bring those points to the chairman's attention.

Mr. Eadie: In the many discussions that the right hon. Gentleman may have with the chairman of British Coal, will he raise the apparent breakdown between the south of Scotland electricity board and British Coal concerning the board's take of coal from the deep mine Scottish coal industry? Does the right hon. Gentleman not think it ridiculous that this matter should continue and have to be resolved by the court, which will be too late in any case because I believe that the south of Scotland electricity board intends to take no more Scottish deep-mined coal after 31 March and that that industry will, therefore, be obliterated?

Mr. Parkinson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have made my position in this matter clear. I should like to see the two sides reach agreement. Last year, when we appeared to have reached an impasse, the two sides found a way forward, which I earnestly hope they will do again.

Mr. Gow: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the chairman of British Coal and his colleagues are all in favour of his declared policy of privatisation? Can my right hon. Friend assure us that, when that privatisation comes, those working in the coal industry will be given preferential terms so that they can acquire shares in the industry in which they work?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes, I can confirm that one of our objectives in privatising the industry will be to give each miner a chance to have a stake in the industry in which he works. I confirm that I have conveyed to British Coal the

Government's determination to go ahead with privatisation after the next election. We are working together gradually on plans to that end.

Mr. Patchett: Will the Minister discuss with the chairman of British Coal the number of mines currently going through the review procedure and how many are likely to survive? Is this not in fact a closure programme brought on by the Government's lack of interest in the industry?

Mr. Parkinson: I would claim that we are showing our lack of interest in a rather strange fashion, as we have put up £6 billion for investment since we came to office, and we have approved investment plans for nearly £600 million per year for the next three years. This Government have made more investment in British Coal, have paid more generous redundancy terms to miners, and have a far better record, even in the business of closures, than any Labour Government.

Combined Heat and Power

6. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment has been made of the potential of combined heat and power following privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Parkinson: A number of published assessments all indicate considerable potential for combined heat and power. Our proposals for privatising the electricity supply industry will for the first time create conditions which will allow combined heat and power schemes to proceed on an equal basis with conventional generation.

Mr. Mitchell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people believe that there is a tremendous use for reject heat in myriad different projects? It is likely that that would be best exploited by the private sector with its usual greater imagination.

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. The Government have shown their commitment to combined heat and power by funding to date 69 studies and giving approval for a further 92 studies. We believe that there is substantial scope for combined heat and power. We believe that we have laid the way open for it to become a successful competitor in supplying electricity.

Mr. Allen: Will the Secretary of State ensure that any combined heat and power schemes in the Nottinghamshire area are located at the Blidworth, Cotgrave or Gedling pit sites, which are currently under threat? To keep those combined heat and power stations running, will he consider the redundant mineworkers' scheme agreements which, if people are forced back on to restart and not allowed to continue in the scheme, will not be worth the waste paper that they are written on?

Mr. Parkinson: That was a clever, convoluted question, but I am not quite sure where it got us—nor, I believe, is the hon. Gentleman. Combined heat and power schemes will be placed where they are best able to operate efficiently. I am sure that that is what the hon. Gentleman wanted to hear.

Waste Burning

7. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the potential for generating electricity from waste burning.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is great uncertainty about projections for renewable sources of energy. We estimate that by the year 2025 up to 4·5 per cent. of current energy requirements might come from biomass if the diverse technologies involved can be successfully developed and applied.

Mr. Norris: Does my hon. Friend agree that as environmental concerns are rightly at the top of the agenda these days, biomass power generation offers two marvellous possibilities—first, the generation of power without recourse to primary fossil fuel extraction and, secondly, an opportunity to dispose of waste in a way infinitely more environmentally desirable than conventional landfill methods? Will my hon. Friend therefore commit the Department to an even more vigorous study of the ways in which biomass power generation can be enhanced?

Mr. Spicer: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. We already spend £1·5 million a year on research into biomass and there have been some successful outcomes of that research. I recently visited an example just north of Birmingham, which is planning to produce about 3 MW of electricity from methane.

Mr. Dalyell: On waste burning, could the Minister, whom I have always found helpful in such matters, call for an urgent report on the situation at Polkemmet and Wilsontown where Dixon's pit is suffering from ever-growing subterranean fires, with the result that sulphur emissions are becoming a major environmental problem throughout central Scotland? The Scottish Office is doing its best, but this is an extremely serious situation.

Mr. Spicer: I will, of course, look into the matter and see what lies behind it.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

9. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc; and what matters they discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I last met Mr. Harding on 23 January when we discussed a range of matters concerning British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Mr. Morley: Will the Secretary of State pass on to the chairman the relief of the people of Humberside that neither the Killingholme site, nor any site on Humberside, was chosen for the particular diposal site? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that British Nuclear Fuels would rather have gone for a site on Teesside instead of the one chosen at Sellafield? Would the right hon. Gentleman care to speculate on why that site was chosen?

Mr. Parkinson: At the moment I hear a lot of rumours about what the Nuclear Industry Radioactivity Waste Executive will say, but it has not yet made its recommendations about the deep site. I do not know where it will recommend for that site and I do not want to add to the speculation, but I look forward to receiving its report.

Mr. Jack: During his discussions with the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels, did my right hon. Friend discuss the economics and feasibility of the proposition for smaller nuclear reactors and the contribution that they may make to our future power supplies?

Mr. Parkinson: I did not discuss that with the chairman, but I have noted with interest the agreement between Rolls-Royce and the Atomic Energy Authority to investigate the possibilities for smaller nuclear generators.

Mr. Salmond: During the discussions did the Secretary of State and the chairman discuss the fierce resistance in Scotland to any prospect of a Scottish site being used as a nuclear dump? Will the Secretary of State tell us what representations he has received against Caithness, in particular, being used as a nuclear dump?

Mr. Parkinson: I have received very few, but I suspect that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has received rather more. I must point out that at present this is a matter not for the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels, but for Nirex. It is the job of Nirex to come forward with recommendations and, when it does, the Government will take a decision.

Renewable Energy Generators

10. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received proposing that, after privatisation of electricity, all smaller hydro-electric wind or other renewable energy generators will have the right to supply into the grid as they have at present, and at a price negotiated on a cost plus basis.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There have been a number of informal representations. Purchases by distribution companies of electricity generated from renewable sources such as wind and hydro will contribute to their non-fossil obligation. We shall be setting the obligation to accommodate renewable projects.

Mr. Speller: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, whatever the obligation is, it will provide a level playing field for the other non-fossil fuels? Is my hon. Friend aware that the general feeling among those connected with renewable sources of energy is that, as with research money in the past, future obligations will be tilted towards nuclear power and away from the small private generators?

Mr. Spicer: In my first answer to my hon. Friend, I specifically said that the obligation would be set at a level such as to accommodate renewable projects. I hope that that directly answers my hon. Friend's worries about this matter.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

11. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to announce the next approvals for flue gas desulphurisation process equipment to be fitted to Central Electricity Generating Board power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the CEGB and its successors will be making a full contribution towards meeting the United Kingdom's obligation of a 60 per cent. reduction in sulphur dioxide emissions, on 1980 levels, by the year 2003. My right hon. Friend gave his consent to the Drax application last August and I expect further applications to follow as soon as possible.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister recall the terrible smog problems during the 1940s and 1950s and that the Government decided on a national effort to bring in smokeless fuels? Why can the present Government not show the same enthusiasm to solve the problems of the so-called clean fuel electricity by sorting out the problems of nuclear waste and the acid rain caused by the emissions from power stations? All that they seem to do is to drag their feet and be pushed along by the EC. If they do anything at all it is merely to manipulate the price difference between nuclear and coal produced electricity.

Mr. Spicer: I remember very well that the clean air legislation about which the hon. Gentleman speaks was passed in 1956 under a Conservative Government. I am sure that my hon. Friends also remember that. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to suphur dioxide and carbon dioxide emissions. They form one of the reasons why we have signed an agreement under which there will be a 60 per cent. reduction in 1980 levels by 2003. That is why we shall set levels of emission for each of the companies in the private sector. Those levels will be such that the obligations are met and the costs of the emission controls will be spread over all the plants. We are aware of the problems that the hon. Gentleman mentions and we are implementing our obligations in the matter faster than any Government have ever done.

Dr. Michael Clark: When the next round of approvals for flue gas desulphurisation comes about, will my hon. Friend bear in mind that British chemical engineering contractors are keen to undertake this task, not only to provide more work for their work force but further to enhance their reputation abroad so that they may export more and improve the balance of payments to which chemical engineering already contributes substantially?

Mr. Spicer: The placing of orders for equipment will of course, be a matter for the industry, and particularly for firms in the private sector. I am sure that people in the industry will have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Allen McKay: Does the Minister agree that one of the best ways ahead on environmental issues is to continue to fund the experimental stage of the fluidised bed? Does he agree that it would be wrong to lose this simply because a top-up fund is not available and that it should come into commercial use?

Mr. Spicer: I understand that there is some commercial interest in the topping cycle. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the chairman of British Coal and the Department are in touch with each other to see what, if anything, can be done to further this technology.

Sizewell B

12. **Mr. Ground:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of contracts in the Sizewell B development will be placed with British firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The placing of contracts is a commercial matter for the CEGB. It advises me that about

90 per cent. by value of the project contracts for the Sizewell B PWR are expected to be placed with firms in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ground: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is a very high figure and shows that the benefits of the Sizewell B development will be felt not only in the electricity industry but throughout British industry?

Mr. Parkinson: Yes. The programme for modernising and improving the electricity supply industry—both the generation and the distribution of electricity—will be a source of valuable business for British industry in the years ahead.

Mr. Bill Walker: Can my right hon. Friend say whether the contracts that are going out for the Sizewell B development contain any provision for air monitoring of nuclear fallout? If not, can he explain why measurements in my constituency over the weekend show a fallout of 40 times the Government's levels? There is considerable doubt about whether air monitoring is effective.

Mr. Parkinson: I cannot tell my hon. Friend whether these contracts contain provisions for air monitoring. I shall look into the point that he raises and shall be in touch with him about it.

Piper Alpha Disaster

14. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the safety recommendations made by the inquiry into the Piper Alpha disaster will be fully implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has already informed Parliament that if the public inquiry can recommend improvements to the present safety regime, these will be accepted. I cannot speculate on the findings of the public inquiry.

Mr. Salmond: I thank the Minister for that assurance, but I should like to test its seriousness. Is the Minister aware that the National Union of Civil and Public Servants, the coastguard union, is submitting evidence to the Piper Alpha inquiry to the effect that the Peterhead coastguard station is an essential part of marine safety in the north-east of Scotland, and gives the flexibility to respond to major incidents? Is he aware that the Department of Transport is proposing to close that station, effectively prejudging the results of the inquiry and undermining the assurances that the Minister has just given? Will he undertake to contact the Department of Transport and his colleagues there to argue that any closure decision affecting Peterhead should be postponed until after the Piper Alpha public inquiry, and so validate the assurance that he has given us?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Member has reasonably raised an important point. I assure him that I shall have talks with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on that matter.

Mr. Doran: This morning, I had meetings with the widows and the survivors of the Piper Alpha tragedy, and they raised with me a matter that is of major concern to them, which is the recovery of items from the sea bed. I know that this matter has previously been raised with the Minister in the House, but it is of continuing concern to these people. Has the Department any plans, or is it its intention, to undertake an internal investigation into the costs of raising the equipment that lies on the sea bed, and which will provide vital evidence for the inquiry in Aberdeen, and perhaps lead to the recovery of more bodies?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. Friend gave consent to the abandonment of the platform. The toppling has not taken place, and it would be premature to make any judgment until we have seen how the platform topples, albeit that the purpose of the toppling is that it should fall out from the debris so as to enable investigators to look at the debris in more safety. At this stage, I cannot give any undertaking in reply to his question, but I note what he says.

West Burton Power Station

15. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received recently concerning the proposed West Burton coal-fired power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has received nearly 30 representations about West Burton B from organisations and individual members of the public. I understand that discussions are continuing between the relevant local planning authorities and the CEGB about some matters concerning the proposed construction of the station. My officials have urged them to resolve the outstanding matters as soon as possible so that my right hon. Friend can proceed with his consideration of the CEGB's application.

Mr. Haynes: That Minister there will realise that something was said on the Floor of the House about having a coal-fired power station in Nottinghamshire at West Burton, but when we got upstairs in Committee, the Secretary of State, dodging his responsibilities, went in a different direction. I want a straight answer to a straight question. Are we going to have that station at West Burton, yes or no?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is obviously on form today. The straight answer to him is that my right hon. Friend, when he receives an application, has a quasi-judicial role in determining first whether there should be an inquiry and secondly what the decision should be. We have to wait for the CEGB or its successors to come up with an application.

In the case of West Burton, of the 43 conditions between local authorities and the CEGB, only one remains outstanding. We hope that these matters will be resolved so that we can determine the outcome of the application.

Mr. Haynes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you read *Hansard* of the Second Reading of the Electricity Bill, you will see that he promised——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise this on an Adjournment debate, it would be a different matter.

Energy Efficiency Office

16. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the current remit of the Energy Efficiency Office.

Mr. Cecil Parkinson: The Energy Efficiency Office promotes efficiency in the use of energy in buildings and industrial processes, by tackling market barriers and stimulating the market where it is slow to react.

Mr. Taylor: Will the Minister explain how cutting the budget of the Energy Efficiency Office by almost half fits in with the statement by the Prime Minister to the Royal Society that energy conservation is crucial to tackling the greenhouse effect?

Mr. Parkinson: The Government have decided to stop funding demonstration projects, because we already have enough, stop subsidising surveys, because hundreds of them have been done, stop general advertising and start to focus its budget much more on specific groups and areas and on spreading best practice. There is no conflict between the news that we are cutting expenditure in certain areas and the fact that we are still seriously promoting energy efficiency.

Mr. Rost: Will the Energy Efficiency Office organise the programme that my right hon. Friend recently announced for setting a good example in the public sector with cost-effective energy efficiency investment?

Mr. Parkinson: As my hon. Friend points out, the public sector is a major spender. A programme was inaugurated two years ago. It needs a further substantial boost, which it will receive in the weeks and months ahead, and the plans are currently being drawn up.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Church House

50. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what has been the level of abortive expenditure at the Millbank offices consequent upon the decision of the synod not to vacate Church house.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): As a result of the decision of the general synod, the works at Millbank, which were well advanced at this time and which were specially designed to meet the needs of the general synod, have had to be replanned to make the space suitable for letting commercially. The cost of the abortive works involved will, on the present professional advice, be around £1·25 million.

Mr. Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend advise the House of the cost to the general synod of this decision? Does he agree that this rather expensive decision reflects a strange order of priorities? Would not the general synod be advised to consider the use of the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre?

Mr. Alison: The general synod will, in addition, have to pass on to the dioceses of the Church of England an annual bill of about £¾ million to pay a new rent liability at Church house which would have been offset if it had moved to Millbank. That is the equivalent cost of maintaining about 25 parish churches in action for a year. Against that background, I am convinced that the general synod reached an unwise decision, at least on cost-benefit grounds. The availability of the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre would certainly have been one of the genuine and acceptable options available, if it had moved to Millbank.

Mr. Gow: What injury would be done to Church or state if the general synod ceased to exist?

Mr. Alison: So far as the state is concerned, we have a neutral view of the existence and prospects for the general synod. If the link between Church and state were severed, it would be entirely up to the Church of England to determine whether it were well served by the continuation of the general synod at Westminster.

Clergymen

51. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how many clergymen were dismissed for failing to work hard enough in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: This is not a matter for the commissioners. However, I understand that no central records are kept of the reasons for clergy leaving their posts.

Mr. Greenway: Bearing in mind that my right hon. Friend and those whom he represents are responsible for the pay of bishops and clergy, is he satisfied that all bishops and clergy are working hard enough on legitimate matters? Will he bear in mind the recent harbouring of an illegal immigrant by a clergyman and agree that any member of the clergy or bishop who emulates that example of encouraging illegality should not remain in his post?

Mr. Alison: I note my hon. Friend's comments. I am quite sure that all Anglican clergy, indeed all Anglican diocesan bishops, will want to heed the advice given by the two archbishops that they should not aid or abet any individual or group who seeks to break the law.

Mr. Winnick: Leaving aside how it can be decided whether clergymen are working hard enough, would not a clergyman looking into the Chamber now and finding fewer than 50 hon. Members—five of them Ministers and three PPSs—present out of 650 conclude that we are not in a position to give lectures on the subject?

Mr. Alison: There may be very few people in the House at any one time, but very hard-working clergymen often find that there are very few parishioners in the pews. I do not think that that reflects on the amount of time and effort that a clergyman puts into preparing his sermon, or that Ministers put into replying to a thin House.

Administrative Offices

52. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement about the provision of administrative offices by the Church authorities.

Mr. Alison: The Church Commissioners and the general synod will, for the foreseeable future, remain in their present office premises. The Church of England pensions board will be joining the Church Commissioners at their Millbank location in May this year.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend suggest to the Church Commissioners that instead of shuffling about in

expensive west end offices they should show real faith in the inner cities by selling both Church house and Millbank for over £50 million, and investing the proceeds in a move to an area of high unemployment such as my constituency?

Mr. Alison: The trouble is that if we took that line we could have as many as 650 parliamentary colleagues bidding for the relocation of the Church Commissioners' premises. It might be more politic for us to remain where we are.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission how much money has been expended by the National Audit Office on audit of the books and records of *(a)* the banana trade advisory committee, *(b)* the Black Country limestone advisory panel, *(c)* Government hospitality fund advisory committee for the purchase of wine, *(d)* the Marshall aid commemoration commission, *(e)* Red Sea Lights Company Ltd., *(f)* persons hearing estate agents appeals and *(g)* the wine standards board of the Vintners Company, over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Sir Peter Hordern (The Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): Although the Commission is responsible under the National Audit Act for considering the estimates of the National Audit Office submitted by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the cost of particular audits that he carries out under his statutory duties is a matter for him. However, he has informed me that, of the bodies mentioned in my hon. Friend's question, he audits only the accounts of the Marshall aid commemoration commission. The cost of the audit of the 1986-87 account was £1,600.

Mr. Field: Does my hon. Friend not find it extraordinary that the Comptroller and Auditor General should be responsible for the auditing of such minor bodies, particularly the Marshall aid commemoration commission? Would it not be better if he were left, on behalf of Parliament, to concentrate on the really large audits, and private firms of auditors were responsible for such quangos?

Sir Peter Hordern: There is much in what my hon. Friend says. Of the bodies that he mentioned, however, only one is audited by the National Audit Office, and in that instance the full cost of the audit was recovered from the Marshall aid commemoration commission.

Commission Meetings

54. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission when the Public Accounts Commission last met; and what topics were discussed.

Sir Peter Hordern: The Commission last met on Tuesday 6 December, when the main business was consideration of proposed estimates for 1989-90 for both the National Audit Office and the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman consider the potential deterioration in staffing levels in the Northern Ireland Audit Office? Will he undertake to write to the Comptroller and Auditor-General asking him to assess the staffing level statistics, and will he ask whether people who leave are interviewed to discover why they are leaving and whether those who return are interviewed to discover whether the career pattern in the office is sufficient to retain them in the long term?

Sir Peter Hordern: I will certainly write to the Comptroller and Auditor-General as the hon. Gentleman suggests. I should say that although there was indeed a staffing problem in the Northern Ireland Audit Office some time ago, the position has improved. When the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and I visited the office, along with one or two other hon. Members, we were told that there had been a distinct improvement in recruiting, which we hope will continue.

Mr. Gow: Have my right hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) considered the remuneration of the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland? If so, what conclusion has been reached?

Sir Peter Hordern: I am sorry to have to tell my hon. Friend that although we have indeed considered the remuneration of the Northern Ireland Comptroller and Auditor-General and have made a proposal, it has, alas, fallen on deaf ears within the Government. We shall have to return to the matter in due course.

National Audit Office

55. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission whether the Public Accounts Commission has recently discussed the cost implications of moving the headquarters of the National Audit Office to the north of England.

Sir Peter Hordern: As I told my hon. Friend on 23 May last year, the costs of the London headquarters buildings have been carefully considered in the past, both by the Committee of Public Accounts and the Commission. The National Audit Office employs 20 per cent. of its staff outside London. There have, however, been no recent changes in the location of Government Departments. The principal work of the National Audit Office remains at the London offices of the Government Departments and other bodies it is required to audit.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that, with the drive from many Ministers to relocate in the north and with the expense of employing clerical labour in London, growing, it is time for the National Audit Office to up anchor and leave its office in Victoria?

Sir Peter Hordern: My hon. Friend's case would be a good one if it were not for the fact that so many Government Departments are still in London. The National Audit Office has to audit the London offices of the Government Departments. As, when and if Government offices are located in different parts of the country, there will be a good case for the National Audit Office to do likewise.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

House Passes

56. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement about the number of passes to the House currently in issue.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): On 19 January 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, a total of 9,976 photo-identity passes, giving access to all or part of the Palace of Westminster, were in issue.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in view of the large number of passes currently in issue, it would be feasible to issue 70 or so passes so that all Members of the European Parliament, who are not currently eligible for a pass, could receive one, which would improve co-operation?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not anticipate the debate that will take place tonight.

Mr. Wakeham: As you rightly say, Mr. Speaker, my hon. Friend raised a matter that, if you should select a certain amendment, will be right for debate this evening. As my hon. Friend knows, I have considerable sympathy for the point he makes.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Leader of the House tell us how many of the 9,000-plus passes are category 30 passes for lobbyists? Does he take the view—this is not dealt with in the report—that their number should be reduced?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not want to anticipate tonight's debate, but lobbyists are partly dealt with in the report and we had best wait for the relevant debate.

House of Commons Kiosk

57. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what were the takings of the House of Commons kiosk in *(a)* the four weeks up to Christmas 1988 and *(b)* the 12 months up to Christmas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Kiosk takings for the four-weeks period to Christmas 1988 amounted to £193,249·69 and the figure for the 12-month period to Christmas was £588,007·41. Both amounts include VAT.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend congratulate all concerned on those remarkable figures? Will he accept that most items sold at the kiosk are of a fattening nature and add to the weight of hon. Members, making many, including myself, overweight? A good use of the profits would be to build a swimming pool within the precincts of Parliament to enable hon. Members to help reduce their weight.

Mr. Wakeham: I usually agree with the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend, but if he is overweight there are ways of reducing weight other than our building a swimming pool. He would have to take up the building of a pool with the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Leader of the House dispel rumours that are going round that the kiosk is being fattened up for privatisation? If there are profits to be made, will the Government look more kindly, not towards providing swimming pools and all the rest, but to giving the profits to the staff who work in the kiosk and elsewhere?

Mr. Wakeham: What is done with the profits is a matter not for me but for the House of Commons Commission. The profits of the Catering Department are substantially used to assist with capital projects and to improve the services of the House. I note the hon. Gentleman's point.

General Medical Council

58. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Lord President of the Council when he next expects to meet the chairman of the General Medical Council; and what items he expects to discuss.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no plans for such a meeting and, therefore, the second part of the question does not arise.

Q.58. **Mr. Spearing:** If the Lord President does see the chairman of the GMC, will he draw his attention to statutory instrument No. 2255/88, which the Council of which the right hon. Gentleman is President has recently issued on the new rules—the first for eight years—of the preliminary proceedings committee and professional conduct committee of the GMC? Will he tell the chairman that there is considerable concern on both sides of the House, for good reason, about the proceedings of both the committees? Given that fact, does he think that it would be appropriate that any prayer against the statutory instrument should be debated on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's remarks to those whose concern they are. I remind him and the House, however, that the responsibility of the Lord President and the Privy Council is limited to approving, with or without modification, disciplinary procedures that are proposed by the GMC. New rules were approved on 21 December, and the Privy Council has no standing until such rules are made and submitted to it. The rules are currently being examined by a working party that was established by the GMC. The report of that working party will serve as a proper basis for discussion when it is available.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a tragic case that occurred in my constituency brought to my attention a number of cases of great concern and suffering throughout the country over the disciplinary arrangements for doctors? Will he convey that information to the chairman of the GMC when he next sees him? Is he aware that I would support the call for a debate on this important subject? The doctors cannot have it all their own way.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern, and I know the case to which he refers. I shall refer his comments to the GMC. I must repeat that my task, and that of the Privy Council, is limited to considering the rules that it puts before us.

Mr. Dobson Will the Lord President arrange to meet the chairman of the GMC urgently to express to him the abhorrence that is felt throughout the country at the idea of buying and selling human organs? Will he say that even under this Government there are limits to the introduction

of commercialisation into medicine? Will he remind him and those who are proposing the implementation of the idea that at least Burke and Hare, the body snatchers, waited until people were dead?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is being less than his usual fair self. He knows well that I do not have any responsibility in these matters. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health has responsibility, and action has already been taken, including the calling for reports. The health authority is already examining the matter.

Scottish Affairs Committee

61. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what further discussions he intends to have on the setting up of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall give the hon. Member the answer that I would have given to the hon. Members for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie) had they been present in the Chamber.

I refer the hon. Member to what I said on 19 January during business questions in reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I am not very hopeful about this matter, at least not in the immediate future, but I am having a meeting shortly with some of his hon. Friends to discuss the position and to see whether there is any scope for progress.

Mr. Foulkes: I am most grateful to the Lord President. I shall pass on his answer. Does he agree with me, however, that it is extremely regrettable that a Committee of this place that should be set up has not been, and that the Scottish Office is the only Department of state that does not receive the scrutiny of a Select Committee? This is all because of what appears until now to have been the reluctance of the limited number of Scottish Conservative Back Benchers to serve on the Committee. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there have been reports that in certain circumstances Scottish Conservative Back Benchers would now be willing to serve on such a Committee? In the light of that, will he renew and intensify his discussions with all parties concerned to ensure that the Committee becomes active and involved as quickly as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Scottish Office is still subject to a fair amount of scrutiny by various Select Committees. I accept that that is not as good as a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, and I regret as much as the hon. Gentleman does the fact that we were unable to set one up. But I understand the reasons for that, and I and the House have accepted those reasons.

As I told the hon. Gentleman—I am not sure whether he is encouraging or discouraging me—I propose next to talk to two of his senior colleagues who have some proposals to put to me. I believe that that is the sensible thing to do. I shall try to keep the atmosphere calm—I hope that the hon. Gentleman will, too—and we shall see whether there is a basis for proceeding.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is time for thinking through the problem and understanding the difficulties that the Committee of Selection had? The Committee of Selection reflected, properly, the facts as they were. What is important is how we arrived at that position. We cannot find a solution to the problem until we examine carefully how the House arrived at that position. More important, it must be seen in the light of all the activities of the House as they affect the unitary Parliament and the Union.

Mr. Wakeham: As is often the case, my hon. Friend has made a wise contribution to this discussion. I shall reflect on all those points.

Wandsworth Prison

3.31 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the dispute at Wandsworth Prison.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): At 7.30 am yesterday about 100 uniformed staff at Her Majesty's prison Wandsworth went on strike. Fourteen uniformed staff worked normally. At about 9.30 am, under contingency plans, 60 staff in managerial grades from around the prison service were deployed in Wandsworth to maintain order and prison routines. There were inevitable delays and arrangements could not be made for prisoners to take exercise, but meals were served and visits took place normally.

This morning, at 7 o'clock, 197 police officers went into Wandsworth to assist the governor and to work alongside prison staff. During the normal working week many more staff are needed than for the Sunday routine. Although 34 uniformed prison staff are working normally today, peace and order could not have been maintained in the prison without the use of police officers.

Naturally these events led to heightened tension in the prison and there have been one or two incidents, but loyal prison staff and the police have managed to keep the prison running as near normally as possible.

Since last November prison officers at Wandsworth have been refusing to take a full number of prisoners. As a result, about 50 prisoners have had to be kept unnecessarily in police cells. Talks at national, regional and local levels have taken place over many months in an effort to resolve the dispute. The new working systems introduced yesterday are intended to make more effective use of staff resources and contain no unusual or threatening features. The action of the POA branch at Wandsworth in going on strike is completely unjustified. I call on the officers to go back to work under the governor's authority forthwith.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Under-Secretary of State confirm that the action taken this morning by the new governor at Wandsworth prison has imperilled industrial relations throughout the prison service? Does he realise that his statement shows no recognition of the fact that the Prison Officers Association has now suspended the ballot on the fresh start agreement, acceptance of which it had previously recommended? How does he justify an action in a single prison that jeopardises the era of peace within the entire prison service which the Home Secretary claimed to be absolutely necessary for the service's success?

Secondly, will the Under-Secretary of State confirm, putting aside the bogus figures that he has already offered the House, that Wandsworth has an official complement of 1,259 prisoners, but that yesterday 1,505 prisoners were held there? Is not the insistence on 50 additional prisoners on top of the normal complement wholly unreasonable in terms of good management of the service?

Thirdly, what is the Minister's comment on the attitude of the Police Federation, which described the use of 197 of its members as a wholly disastrous decision by the Government, since its members are neither equipped nor prepared to act as prison officers?

Finally, does the Under-Secretary recall that, in December, the Home Secretary boasted that prisoners were no longer being held in police cells in London? That fact held good for a single day—the day on which he made the boast. Does that not provide the most vivid illustration of the causes of the crisis in the prison service? As is so often the case, the Home Secretary is more interested in the illusion of action than in genuine reform.

Mr. Hogg: As is usually the case, the remarks of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) have not added to his reputation.

The facts are as follows. In October last year, there was an agreement between the prison officers at Wandsworth and the Home Office whereby the Home Office agreed to a manpower review in return for the prison officers agreeing to admit 1,555 prisoners. The Home Office delivered its part of the bargain and the manpower team went in.

On 11 November 1988, the prison officers went back on their part of the deal and imposed the limit of 1,505 prisoners in the prison. The manpower review was delivered on 22 November, with the date of the implementation of the new shift being 15 January 1989. Thereafter, there were considerable negotiations. We put back the implementation date by two weeks to allow for further discussions.

On 26 January 1989, there was a further meeting at a senior level where we offered to put back the implementation of the new shift by a further two weeks in return for the prison officers agreeing to admit 1,555 prisoners—as they had agreed to do in October. That proposal was not attractive to the prison officers and they therefore declined.

It is no good the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook grumbling about the number of people in police cells and then grumbling when we take action to reduce the pressure on police cells. That does him no credit.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the problem in Wandsworth and elsewhere in the prison system has continued for some time, notwithstanding the fact that prison officers are extremely well paid and have excellent conditions of service? Will my hon. Friend continue with the policy of negotiation to find a solution? Nevertheless, does he agree that it will eventually be necessary to de-unionise a service of the Crown?

Mr. Hogg: We certainly intend to stand behind the governor in his attempts to ensure that Wandsworth prison operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. I suspect that most prison officers in other prisons will be extremely unhappy about what is happening in Wandsworth, because they are doing exactly what we are asking the prison officers at Wandsworth to do—neither more nor less.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is the Under-Secretary aware that, although the crisis has arisen in part because of the Government's policy on prisons and the overcrowding there, the prison officers' action seems highly irresponsible and that it is quite unacceptable for prison officers to stand at the gates of a prison jeering at the police as they seek to maintain order in a prison where order is close to breaking down? Does he

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

also agree that the pressure on the Prison Officers Association to take action from a handful of extremists in Wandsworth is also unacceptable? I hope that the Government will not accept the argument of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) that if the fresh start initiative is in peril it is entirely because of the Government.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support. It is wrong that a disciplined, uniformed service of the Crown should behave in such a way. Prison officers throughout the country will be ashamed of what is happening in Wandsworth. I and, I suspect, other prison officers throughout the country call on the prison officers at Wandsworth to stop the dispute and to go back to work.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will my hon. Friend congratulate the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on completely changing his policy once again? Will he confirm that the right hon. Gentleman was a member of the last Labour Government who brought in the troops to stop the firemen's strike, which makes his complaints about strike breaking sick and hypocritical?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes his point extremely clearly. There is the further criticism that I have already made—it is no good the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook criticising us for the numbers held in police cells and complaining again when we take action to reduce the numbers. That ambivalent attitude is unworthy of him.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Given the situation that has arisen—I understand the problems that arise in prisons—what is the best thing to do now to bring the two sides together and end the dispute other than telling people to give in?

Mr. Hogg: I am glad to be able to tell the House that tomorrow afternoon, at the request of members of the national executive council of the Prison Officers Association, there will be a meeting between them and senior management at the Home Office. However, the Home Office is standing firmly behind the governor in his determination to manage the prison effectively and efficiently. I call upon the officers at Wandsworth to stop the action, which is highly damaging to the prison and to their reputations.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the action taken by the governor at Wandsworth has been taken only after protracted negotiations with the warders at Wandsworth? Will he also confirm that, at one stage, the implementation of the rota system was postponed for two weeks so that agreement could be reached between the prison officers and the governor of the prison?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is wholly right. The implementation date was originally fixed for 15 January but was postponed to allow for further discussion. At the end of last week, we made a further offer that, if the officers accepted 1,555 prisoners, which is what they agreed to in October, we would put back the implementation for a further two weeks. I am afraid that the prison officers felt unable to accept that generous suggestion.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Gentleman must know—if he does not, he should not be in his job—that this situation is not applicable just to Wandsworth and that overcrowding has been a problem in the prison service for many years for both prison officers and inmates. Is it not clear that we should look at the problem rather than call people names and suggest that they are stupid or silly because they have taken action?

The hon. Gentleman has helped the position somewhat by saying that the Home Office is prepared to meet the national executive of the Prison Officers Asociation, but why did he not say that from the beginning? The answer is to talk to the Prison Officers Association, not call people names. There are real problems in the service.

Mr. Hogg: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman did not do his homework before getting to his feet. Yes, we do have a problem with overcrowding, which is precisely why we are creating 25,000 new places by the mid-1990s, as contrasted with 1979. That is a remarkable achievement. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the dispute at Wandsworth is common to the rest of the prison service is nonsense because what is happening at Wandsworth is peculiar to Wandsworth. The officers at Wandsworth are being asked to do no more than that which is being done by most of their colleagues in other prisons.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): No one doubts the skill and professionalism of the vast majority of prison warders, nor does anyone misunderstand the frustration of the police officers upon whose shoulders has fallen the task of looking after prisoners in police cells when they should never be there. Does my hon. Friend agree that, although it is time to talk and to listen, it is also time to be tough when it comes to coping with the tiny minority of warders who have held the rest of the prison service to ransom, which is inexcusable at a time when the Government are having some success in cutting crime rates?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is wholly right to imply that it is the business of a Government to back a governor who is doing his job properly and efficiently. We are in the business of doing that, and we propose to do just that.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): It is sad that the mentality behind this problem is such that one hon. Member used the old-fashioned word "warders". In his eagerness to condemn my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the Minister will not admit that anything is wrong. he did not mention that there would be a meeting. There is a crisis in all our prisons, not just in Wandsworth. I am a member of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. For nine years, that Committee has been releasing reports on prison education. Prison education has been cut to the bone and nothing is ever done about it, even though prisoners are asking for education facilities. The Conservative mentality does not want to solve the problem because it costs money to do so. The Government will not admit that prisons are overcrowded and that the crisis is endemic.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is reinforcing the point that I have made about him in the past—he does not know what he is talking about. The plain fact is that the prisons are not in crisis and things are much better than they were. I have already made the point that, by the mid-1990s, we will have created about 25,000 new places, which will

substantially reduce overcrowding. We have introduced fresh start, which has enormously enhanced the position of prison officers. I am glad to say that we are working most effectively on enhancing regimes. Conditions in prison are substantially improving.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will my hon. Friend stand firm on the matter? To people such as myself who have made professional visits to gaols over the past 25 years, it is quite obvious that many officers are as bloody-minded as the people whom they guard and that their rigid working practices have made prisons more miserable than they need to be. Many inmates are kept in their cells 23 hours a day. They are kept behind closed doors because of the closed minds of those who guard them.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend has robustly put his point. In October last year, prison officers at Wandsworth agreed to admit 1,555 prisoners. I wish that they would now do what they promised to do three or four months ago.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When Government representatives meet prison officers' trade union representatives over beer and sandwiches, whenever they meet, reverting to the question put by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), will the Minister tell them that there is no question of de-unionising those who work in the prisons and that there will be no GCHQ? If he does not do so, the situation will be even further inflamed.

Will the hon. Gentleman express the view that there is nothing wrong with people in a trade union fighting for better wages and conditions, especially when the number of people they have to look after has increased so rapidly during the past 10 years? A trade union is set up to protect that right. As a lawyer, the hon. Gentleman should know that, especially just now.

Mr. Hogg: I rather fancy that the meeting tomorrow afternoon will be primarily spent in going over the agreement that was made in October last year. I fancy also that the officials who meet the POA representatives will say, "Look, in October of last year, and in return for a manpower review which you have now had, you agreed to admit 1,555 prisoners. The time has come to deliver your part of the agreement."

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is it not true that important work and education programmes for prisoners have been disrupted by the dispute? In the discussions that my hon. Friend is about to have, will every effort be made to ensure that the promised work and education programmes for prisoners are delivered by prison officers and all others who are responsible?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend's remarks are important, but it is even more important to get prison officers to deliver the agreement that they made last October.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Is not the real crisis in our prisons the one that the Minister consistently refuses to address, which is that we imprison more people and for longer periods than any other country in western Europe? Is that not the root cause of the problem with the Prison Officers Association and others? If the Minister would address that matter, he could forget panics about prison building and endless industrial debates, and deal with the need for a lower prison population. It would be better for everyone if he were to do that.

Mr. Hogg: We are most certainly tackling the problem of overcrowding, in part by the building programme which I have outlined and in part by encouraging courts to seek non-custodial options. In these matters the hon. Gentleman would do well, as would his right hon. and hon. Friends, to assert that it would be right for prison officers to respect the instructions of the governor because prisons cannot be run unless governors' instructions are complied with.

Points of Order

3.50 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during business questions on Thursday and subsequently on a point of order questions were asked about a statement on the London rail study. If the London rail study alone was published and the matter concerned a range of options, one could understand that it was not a statement of Government policy. However, two documents were published: "Transport in London" and a central London rail study. A third document called "Statement of Transport in London" was also published, section 6 of which deals with strategy and investment, so it is a statement of Government policy. It was not sent to hon. Members, at least not in the envelope that I received, although it was available in the Vote Office and the Library.

When the Government make a decision to apply to you, Mr. Speaker, to make a statement of policy or when other ways in which the matter could be raised are considered, will you take into account in particular whether it is a statement of options only or a matter of policy? As I understand it, this was a matter of policy and perhaps the Government or other people were not aware of that choice at that time. All I am asking you to do, Mr. Speaker, is to look into the circumstances surrounding these decisions so that in future matters on London, which has more Members of Parliament than Scotland, are the subject of statements on the Floor of the House on the appropriate occasion.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has just asked about statements by Ministers. Labour Members are always complaining that Ministers do not make statements when they should do so. As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has issued a White Paper on the National Health Service which he claims is Government policy, should he not be here to answer questions from us?

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In your quarter of a century of distinguished service in this House you must have witnessed many great occasions when this House became the focus of the nation's affairs. Indeed, when you became Speaker I suspected that you would want to preserve that tradition because democracy means little if we are not given the chance to hear first. Government proposes, this House disposes. Will you please protect not just Back Benchers, but this House from an Opposition who are so irresponsible that they handle —I use that word in its criminal sense—stolen documents and prevent this House from becoming the first place to discuss such matters?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As one who has been concerned on many occasions with attempts at kidney legislation, I wonder whether you have received a request from the Secretary of State for Health to make a statement on legislation that may be urgently required in the light of the decision, much publicised by a journalist, about the commercial sale or otherwise of kidneys. Has the Secretary of State for Health given any sign that he proposes to make a statement on this matter to the House?

Mr. Speaker: I shall deal with all the points of order together. I missed the point last Thursday that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was making. I think that it arises from the answer to a written question. I shall certainly bear in mind what he has said in so far as it is within my responsibility.

The other matters are patently not for me. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I am not responsible for what hon. Members say in the House, provided that they are in order. Whether it is right to make use of documents which have been leaked is a serious matter, but it is not one for the Chair.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You are on very safe ground in respect of that very narrow issue. All these leaks began during the Westland affair when Ministers were leaking documents to each other. You were wise enough on that occasion, Mr. Speaker, to keep your nose out. I do not know how the document reached my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), but the chances are that the precedent was being followed and we will have to get that precedent in "Erskine May".

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman, as a chairman himself, has given me some good advice. I shall keep my nose out of it!

PREVENTION OF TERRORISM (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) BILL (ALLOCATION OF TIME)

Ordered,

That the Report [26 January] from the Business Committee be now considered.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Report considered accordingly.

Question, That this House doth agree with the Committee in their resolution, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) and agreed to.*

Following is the report of the Business Committee:

That—

(1) the order in which proceedings on consideration are taken shall be new Clauses; new Schedules; Admendments to Clause No. 1, Schedule No. 1, Clauses Nos. 2 to 4, Schedule No. 2, Clauses Nos. 5 to 13, Schedule No. 4, Clause No. 14, Schedule No. 3, Clauses Nos. 15 and 16, Schedules Nos. 5 and 6, Clause No. 17, Schedule No. 7, Clauses Nos. 18 to 28 and Schedules Nos. 8 and 9;

(2) on the allotted day which, under the Order of 23 January, is to be given to the proceedings on consideration and Third Reading those proceedings shall, subject to the provisions of that Order, be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the second column of the table set out below.

Table

Proceedings	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
New Clauses, New Schedules, and Amendments up to the end of Clause No. 14	7 pm
Remaining Amendments	9 pm
Third Reading	10 pm

Orders of the Day

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill

[ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Part II

EXCLUSION ORDERS

3.56 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I beg to move amendment No. 27, in page 3, line 22, leave out Part II.

The Opposition believe that this amendment goes to the heart of the criticisms of the Bill which has been examined in great detail in Committee upstairs. There is nothing more repellent to Opposition Members, or to many people in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, than the exclusion order. The whole thrust of this amendment is to remove the exclusion power.

If we were to stop most people in the United Kingdom and asked them what the Government's exclusion power in this Bill means, they would not know. They could not give a very articulate response. It is only to be expected that the lay person would not know what an exclusion order meant because such an order falls on only a very small number of United Kingdom citizens. However, those citizens are affected in a quite amazing way.

Few people in this country realise that there is a power under the law of this land which means that a citizen can be excluded from Great Britain to Northern Ireland or from Northern Ireland to the mainland and, under the law, those people cannot discover the reasons or the evidence against them for the imposition of the order. Under that order, a citizen has no right of appeal and cannot question the order. It cannot be questioned in the courts; it is all-embracing and cannot be challenged.

In these days of glasnost, we are witnessing changes in the Soviet Union which we all welcome. There are also real changes in attitude in the Soviet Union towards political prisoners and civil liberties. We hope that those changes will continue. However, the kind of power that the exclusion order represents is more familiar to eastern European countries. It is more like the medieval powers used by monarchs to exclude powerful barons who were a threat to the throne.

The exclusion order is a formidable power to exclude and exile citizens of this country to one part of the country. We object very strongly to the order because it is probably the most disgraceful and villainous part of the Bill. It infringes all civil liberties and rights to live under the law for which British people fought over many generations. We are not the only ones who believe that exclusion orders are wicked and should be abolished; a string of eminent authorities are in agreement with us. There is no doubt that this exclusion power was introduced by my party when it was in Government, but we say that, 14 years on from its introduction, it is high time that it was taken away. I say that because I am sure that the Government will say, "But you introduced it. This is a draconian power, but it is yours."

Although the power, when introduced, may have been necessary at that time—the Birmingham pub bombings created a climate in which perhaps draconian measures could be understood—14 years on, the Labour party has learnt a great deal about the terrorist and his mind. We believe firmly and fundamentally that this power should not be used by any Government in a civilised society. We have changed our mind. It is a healthy sign when a party can change its mind because of changing circumstances.

It is not just the Labour party which has changed its mind. Eminent authorities have been asked by successive Governments to study the exclusion power and to assess the working of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Given the number of exclusion orders, all the problems and a fair assessment of the overall working of the Bill, those independent reviewers—I confess that they have not said, "Let us scrap the Prevention of Terrorism Act—have increasingly said that the Prevention of Terrorism Act does not need this section. Lord Jellicoe, in 1983, spoke ambivalently about this section and came down in favour of recommending keeping the exclusion order power, although he was not happy about it. Sir Cyril Phillips, in 1985, in an independent Government assessment, recommended that exclusion orders should go. Perhaps the most powerful and recent voice is that of Lord Colville. In both his assessments of the overall working of this legislation, he recommended that exclusion orders should no longer be part of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

When one reads the Colville report and considers the hard work and detail put into it, one is impressed, even if one does not agree with every section of it. It was disclosed in Committee that, rather than having some vast bureaucracy helping Lord Colville in his investigation, he had a tiny staff. Lord Colville took the task of assessing the legislation seriously. The Opposition do not agree with some parts of his assessment, but there were many points with which we do agree. Even where we disagree, we believe that the assessment was fair, given the criteria on which he was asked to make it.

Lord Colville pointed to a number of aspects introduced by the exclusion order. I should like to go through those aspects so that the House can be clear about how draconian this legislation is. First, exclusion orders deprive certain people of the right to move freely around the United Kingdom—in other words, to live where they please. That is why I have described it as a draconian power and one which runs against the civil liberties with which we are familiar.

Whether this power affects only a small number of people is not the point at issue. What Conservative Members often do not understand is that when civil liberties need most to be defended is not in the crystal clear case of right or wrong, but in the marginal case. People who care deeply about civil liberties will take up a case not because they feel it is the best in the world, but because the essence of fighting for civil liberties is to take up a marginal case. If we consider the history of academic freedom and immigration law, we know that it has often been the marginal case that has been used as the test case to show where the parameters of civil liberties must be drawn. That applies to the broader conception of the exclusion power.

The exclusion power does not apply to a large number of people each year. Eighty-three orders were enforced in 1976; 99 in 1977; 150 in 1978; 196 in 1979; and 241 in 1980. In 1982, 248 orders were enforced, the most there have

[Mr. Barry Sheerman]

ever been. In the last period, it was down to 106 orders. The number of exclusion orders could be dismissed as affecting an insignificant number of citizens.

The case that we make, in Committee and today, is that it does not matter about the number. What is important is what the power does to civil liberties and individual rights. In Committee the power as it affects the citizen was described as almost Kafkaesque. I believe that what was meant by that expression was that it was intolerable. How redolent of a novel of Kafka is a situation in which a citizen cannot find out the charges against him, who has given information against him or why the decision has been made. He cannot challenge the decision in any court, but his or her life can be ruined by it.

The Minister may say that it used to have no time limit, but it now has a limit of three years. We would say that three years in a career, in a job, in a marriage or in separation from one's family—one's wife and one's children—is a long time. It can become a life sentence if the job is lost, the career ruined, the family split up or the marriage destroyed. Sadly, there have been cases in which that sequence of events has been recorded.

Exclusion orders represent an Executive power of such force that it belongs to an authoritarian regime and is unlike anything in the British tradition of parliamentary democracy. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have admitted that the Bill is draconian, but the orders represent the most draconian power to be exercised by the state. They are unacceptable to all true democrats and champions of civil liberty.

The Bill, as drafted, is similar to previous prevention of terrorism legislation. It is argued that, if the exclusion orders add to the propaganda effort of the Government, they can be excused. In other words, a certain number of people become subject to the exclusion orders to justify that power.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am listening carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said, as I did in Committee. He appears to oppose exclusion orders on principle. Therefore, why did the Labour Government of 1974-79 include exclusion orders in the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974 if the Labour party opposes them as a matter of principle?

Mr. Sheerman: I have already dealt fully with that matter. We have acknowledged that the introduction of the power, in very different circumstances from today and shortly after the Birmingham pub bombings, was understandable. That does not mean that, on mature reflection, we believe that we were right. We believe that we were wrong and thank goodness there are political parties in this country that are able to say that they do not have a divine right to believe that they are always correct. A good historian will understand why we got it wrong. The introduction of the power was wrong, and we regret it.

It appears that the existence of the exclusion power is the main reason why the British Government have not signed the fourth protocol to the European convention on human rights. Article 2(1) of the protocol states:

"Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence".

That the fourth protocol has not been signed by the Government is a sad comment on our country. If part II of the Bill was deleted, we could sign the protocol, which would bring us more into line with the thinking of our European neighbours.

Exclusion orders can divide families and make it difficult for people to get jobs. They also make it difficult for people to get away from former terrorist associates. We believe that there is nothing more effective than enabling those who have become enmeshed in the tentacles of terrorist organisations to make a clean break. However, exclusion orders do not make clean breaks possible.

The restrictions are feasible only because of the existence of the Irish sea. If terrorism existed in Scotland, Wales or any other part of Great Britain, exclusion orders would be unworkable. To treat other parts of the United Kingdom as separate and distinct from Northern Ireland is an insult to its people. If they are a part of the United Kingdom, they should not be treated differently. Exclusion orders create a distinction, and that is unacceptable.

4.15 pm

Another fundamental objection to exclusion orders is that they cannot be used against a naturalised or British-born citizen from another country who becomes involved in terrorism in Britain. What an anomaly. We all know what happens when a terrorist is excluded to Ireland. It is not a fanciful notion to suggest that terrorists love repressive legislation. Terrorists like to see the Governments of the countries in which they are active bringin draconian legislation—the more draconian, the better. Terrorists use such legislation to justify their actions. To repeat what I said on Second Reading: the Prime Minister may say that terrorists need the oxygen of publicity—they may like it—but they also need the oxygen of repressive legislation.

If part II of the Bill was deleted, it would deliver a hammer blow to the terrorists. When a terrotist is excluded to Ireland, that event is always used by terrorist propaganda. I have already said that one of the aims of terrorism is to incite a Government to introduce repressive measures, and their subsequent unpopularity is used by the terrorists to increase their criticism of those measures and also as an excuse for increased violence.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): Can the hon. Gentleman square his argument with the fact that the Governments of virtually every Western liberal democracy, in the face of the threat of terrorism, have felt obliged to introduce extra powers? It is not just this country or the hon. Gentleman's party that has introduced such powers; it is a universal pattern followed by Governments throughout western democracy.

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman obviously did not listen to what we said on Second Reading, in Committee or what I have said today. Exclusion powers are not used by any other European state, or by any other democracy in the western world.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): In relation to what the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) has said, would the hon. Gentleman care to state what other countries use a form of internal exile? There must be a clear distinction between exclusion from one country to another and a form of exclusion that operates within one jurisdiction.

Mr. Sheerman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his help. Conservative Members will appreciate that that is

the thrust of our argument. No other civilised, democratic society has such a power. That is why it is so objectionable. The power of exclusion is reminiscent of the middle ages and characteristic of non-democratic regimes. We hate terrorism and terrorists, and we understand that terrorists must be pursued, but to pursue them with the wrong laws and powers gets us nowhere. That helps terrorism.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Some countries have had such powers. Stalinist Russia expelled some quite distinguished people to Siberia, and so did Tsarist Russia. If that is the company that the Government want to keep, they are welcome to it.

Mr. Sheerman: That is precisely the point that we made over many hours in Committee.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Gentleman has said that the IRA and other terrorist organisations welcome these draconian powers for exclusion orders. He has said that in Northern Ireland terrorist organisations use exclusion orders for propaganda purposes. Can he give any examples of people who have been excluded from the United Kingdom mainland publicising that in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Sheerman: The hon. Gentleman knows that there are some examples of that. I do not have the references with me, but I am sure that some of my hon. Friends can supply them. It is rarely done, but it happens, and certainly in the context of exclusions that people feel are frivolous or amusing. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has given the example of an Irish folk dance group that was excluded. That is one way in which the law pertaining to terrorism and terrorists can be sent up by the terrorists. The power to exclude is unacceptable in democratic societies.

There is no real opportunity to challenge the evidence upon which the Secretary of State makes an exclusion order. One of the main thrusts of the criticism that we have levelled, not only against the exclusion power but against the Bill as a whole, is that the Executive power is great and runs throughout the Bill. That power is untrammelled and unchecked by the kind of checking by a legislature or judiciary that is normal in a civilised and democratic society. There is no regular review procedure either. That contravenes article 6.1 of the European convention on human rights, which says:

"In the determination of his civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charge against him, everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law."

Such avenues are not open to people who are subject to exclusion orders. It could not seriously be said that the current right to make representations to the Secretary of State constitutes compliance with article 6(1).

The Secretary of State has advisers on exclusion orders. They are appointed by the Secretary of State and he normally listens to their advice and acts on it. That is not the thrust of our criticisms. It is that this is a private and secret hearing and does not give any chance for the evidence upon which an exclusion order is based to come into the public domain or even to be brought to the attention of the person who may be excluded. Most people in the United Kingdom are totally ignorant of that element in the Bill—that one's rights to live in any part of the United Kingdom can be taken away without challenge.

Not only are normal judicial powers not involved in exclusion orders, but there is no real accountability to Parliament. That is because the Secretary of State will not discuss such cases in Parliament and hon. Members are not permitted to see evidence. That means that there is not only no judicial involvement, but no legislative involvement. That shows again that the power of the Executive is untrammelled. There is no statutory right to be informed of the reasons for the granting of an exclusion order or of the evidence or information that is being used. That means that there is a possibility of inaccurate evidence being used, such as evidence from unreliable informers. The difficulty in challenging an exclusion order is even more dramatically highlighted by that.

The gist of our criticism will by now be clear to hon. Members. The exclusion power should not be in any legislation in a democratic society, and we have it only because it has been with us for a long time. I should like to go into some detail on the assessment of Lord Colville of Culross, a former Conservative Minister, who was asked to look at the legislation and its working in an objective way, In assessment 11.6.1 Lord Colville says:

"Lord Jellicoe took the view that exclusion orders, of which there were then over 240 extant, materially contributed to public safety in Great Britain; and in Northern Ireland too, though there it is necessary to put into the balance any added risk to the security forces. I have to agree that it is probably an effective way of getting rid of people from an area where otherwise they might cause great trouble; and that it disrupts terrorist lines of communication and supply of arms, ammunition and explosives."

Lord Colville was fair in putting that on record. However, he says:

"I am not convinced that the ends justify these means. I renew my recommendation, made in the annual report on the Act for 1986, that Part II of the Act should not be renewed in 1988, or not replaced in the new Bill. The Home Secretary announced earlier this year that after careful consideration he had decided it would not now be wise to discontinue this power. I recognise that the alternative is a hard decision, but I express the view that it would be the correct one both in terms of civil rights in the United Kingdom and this country's reputation in that respect among the International Community."

There could be no clearer condemnation of the exclusion power. That largely says it all.

The Minister has had some time for mature reflection and, as Lord Colville said, this is a hard decision. Some decisions in politics, such as those that flow from a knee-jerk reaction or that are in line with what has gone before, are easy to make. It takes a true politician, perhaps a true statesman, to make a difficult decision. On Second Reading, in Committee and again now, we asked the Minister to show that he has the mettle to take tough decisions. The Home Secretary likes to tell us, in press conferences and on television, that he is capable of taking tough decisions and of looking at how things have been done over a long period and taking a new direction. There is little evidence to date that, on the Bill, he has done anything of the kind.

4.30 pm

Let us put exclusion orders in context. Through the Bill, new clauses are added to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. The Bill is a civil servant's dream. Everything has been added and nothing lost. Not one ha'p'orth has been taken out of the Bill. Whatever the arguments of the Opposition in Committee, almost every

[Mr. Sheerman]

comma and dot of the Bill remains as it was. The Committee made no change to the Bill either in detail or in its main thrust.

We welcomed one provision of the Bill, that which will prevent the flow of money to terrorists. We welcome that power, although we thought that it was not necessary to have another Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill to legislate for it. The Government have bolted it on to this old and creaking Act.

Here is an opportunity at least to unbolt the worst part of the Bill and to discard the exclusion orders. It has not been done in this House. Perhaps the Government will have time for greater reflection in the other place.

Had the Government dropped exclusion orders, they would have sent a signal to Northern Ireland and to the people on the mainland that the House of Commons, and perhaps even the Government, were taking the argument on civil rights and people living under the rule of law more seriously than they had for some time. Lord Jellicoe moved towards this position and independent assessment moved progressively towards asking the Government—any Government—to get rid of the exclusion power. It did not come about, but we hope that tonight the House will vote to make sure that the exclusion order power comes off the statute book.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: When I told my constituents, through my weekly newspaper column, that I was serving on the Committee examining the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, a number of them said, "That won't take very long because it must be a bipartisan Committee with the Labour party supporting the Bill." I had to disabuse my constituents by telling them that the Labour party was opposing the Bill, which renews the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. It is difficult to understand why the Opposition oppose it, especially after hearing the speech of the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). It lasted for 38 minutes but he was not able to tell the House why a Bill that was first introduced by Lord Jenkins of Hillhead, when he was a Member of Parliament In 1974, should not now be supported by the Opposition. In 1974, the Act was given the support of the then loyal Opposition, the Conservative party.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield said that the decision had been taken after mature reflection, and he asked Conservative Members to praise the Labour party for having changed its mind on this subject. If I felt that the Labour party had changed its mind on mature reflection, I might have been able to listen to its arguments with some respect, but, once again, that change of mind took place only when the Labour party went in to opposition.

In five years of the previous Labour Government, Labour Members supported the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. They had no mature reflection between 1974 and 1979—they were happy to support it. Their mature reflection began only when they formed the Opposition and no longer had the responsibility for governing the country and protecting the nation against terrorism.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Does the hon. Gentleman tell his constituents that the most effective way to fight terrorism is to pass an Act labelled "the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act"? Does it not depend to some extent on what is in the Act? Lord Colville is not a member of the Opposition, and he agrees with my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) about this provision.

Mr. Bennett: I tell my constituents what is in the Bill, and I shall return to its provisions in a moment. I am just drawing attention to the Labour party's behaviour on this matter because we are seeing in this, as in so many other subjects, the Labour party in opposition putting forward a different view from that which it put forward when it was in government. An analogy is the case of nuclear weapons. The last Labour Government were a firm supporter of nuclear weapons and independent deterrent policy. They even wanted to modernise it. Their Prime Minister, now Lord Callaghan of Cardiff, had to exclude the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) from the Cabinet discussions in case they were leaked, but the right hon. Member for Chesterfield was happy to work for five years in a Labour Government who supported nuclear weapons and then to change his mind when he left office.

The same is true on this issue. The Labour party opposes legislation only when it goes into opposition. We are entitled to ask what is happening when the Opposition are prepared to do a 180-degree turn.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Get on with it.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) may not like what I am saying. If he wants to take part in the debate, perhaps he should get up and say why the Labour party has changed its mind rather than shouting from a sedentary position. I shall give way if he wishes to intervene, but he obviously does not wish to do so.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Member cannot accuse me of changing my mind on this. I was here when the Act was first published and I have been here for the passage of each Bill that renewed and amended the Act. The hon. Gentleman has not yet referred to the amendments that we are debating. The atmosphere in 1974, when the Act was first introduced, was horrific, and it arose from the Birmingham bombings. The then Labour Government realised that there was hysteria and panic among the public, as there was among some Members of Parliament. Many of us, including myself, fought against the Government of the day. Many people are now opposed to the Act because of the over-enthusiastic and brutal way in which the Government are carrying out the Act's provisions and adding to it every time it is renewed. That is one among many reasons why we have changed our minds.

Mr. Bennett: Amendment No. 27 deals with exclusion orders. There are now fewer exclusion orders in being than there were in the last year of the Labour Government. The hon. Gentleman may talk about hysteria, but this Government have a balanced view towards the use of exclusion orders and have reduced the number.

If the hon. Member for Huddersfield believes that we do not need exclusion orders, he must face two different ways. The first is to say that exclusion orders do not work, and so are a waste of time. I believe that that was what the hon. Gentleman meant to say. The alternative is that exclusion orders work and have been successful and we do

not need them any longer. Whichever way the Government face—if they were to accept the Opposition's point of view and withdraw exclusion orders or, as we propose, continue them—the hon. Member for Huddersfield would attack us. On the one hand, the hon. Gentleman is saying that exclusion orders do not work, but that, on the other hand, if they do work, they reduce the number of people involved and are therefore no longer necessary. That is a catch 22 position which it is not respectable for the Opposition to put forward.

It is not respectable for the Opposition to advance such a view when the Opposition contain some hon. Members who actively support terrorist organisations. It is not respectable for them to claim that every Opposition Member supports that point of view. I know that the overwhelming majority of Opposition Members support the Government——

Mr. Flannery: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will the hon. Gentleman give chapter and verse to support his claim that Opposition Members support terrorist organisations, or will he withdraw it?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is not a point of order for the Chair, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman who has the Floor will now explain himself.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said "actively"; he did not just say, "supporting". One might support people in general terms, perhaps wrongly, but the hon. Gentleman said "actively", and that is not good enough.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We had these points of order in a similar debate earlier and they were dealt with at that time. The hon. Gentleman is not naming any one person —he is generalising—but I hope that he will explain himself and now come to the amendment before us.

Mr. Bennett: Let me name an hon. Member who actively supports the so-called freedom fighters. The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who is often in the Chamber to question Ministers on Northern Ireland matters——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I dealt with a similar matter earlier in the debate, and I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw what he has just said.

Mr. Bennett: I withdraw the hon. Gentleman's name, and shall quote an anonymous hon. Member who has said that the IRA are freedom fighters——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We do not have anonymous Members in this House. This matter has been dealt with earlier in the debate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will conduct himself in a proper parliamentary manner.

Mr. Bennett: I apologise, and withdraw my remark, but it is a fact, in public print, that statements have been made which are capable of the analysis that I would have made if I had continued.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman should withdraw his comment, not paraphrase it——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is on record that the hon. Gentleman has withdrawn his comment and apologised. I now ask him to come to the substance of the amendment.

Mr. Bennett: The purpose of amendment No. 27 is to get rid of exclusion orders. It is a matter of judgment and balance as to whether exclusion orders work. It is clear that, when Lord Jellicoe considered the matter, he believed that they worked, and that the police officers representing England, Wales and Scotland believe that they work and are effective. Lord Colville has opposed them because he believes that the end does not justify the means. However, he is not arguing that those means do not have effect, and do not work. It must be a matter of judgment on the part of individual Members whether the means justify the end.

If the end is to exclude people whose behaviour and actions would lead to the maiming and destruction of human life in this country and to explosions on the mainland of Great Britain, and if those people are known to be involved or there are good grounds for believing that they would act on behalf of the IRA, the Government have the right to exclude them from the mainland of the United Kingdom. The House would not be right to take away from the police and security services that valuable weapon which is clearly effective when used sparingly as at present. It is not a suitable argument for the Opposition to claim that terrorists welcome such a clause, because clearly they do not. It attacks the heart of the organisation and disrupts its supply lines, organisation and terrorism. We should therefore welcome it and take note of the comments of the people who have to deal with it at the sharp end—the police officers and the security services—and back them in supporting the retention of the exclusion clause in the Bill.

4.45 pm

Mr. Robert MacLennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Perhaps it is true that the further one is from office the more difficult it is to put oneself in the shoes of the Secretary of State for the Home Department. That might have something to do with what the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) has described as the Labour party's change of mind about exclusion orders. It was not clear from his speech whether he and his hon. Friends took the view that it had never been right to use exclusion orders or that exclusion orders were now unsuitable because the circumstances had changed. Those are two very different positions. As I understand it, there was no doubt within the Labour Government that, although those measures were unpalatable and draconian in terms of their undoubted curtailment of human rights they were justified in terms of their impact on the safety of the community.

If the situation had changed, we were entitled during the hon. Gentleman's 38-minute speech to hear some reasons for that. The arguments adduced by the hon. Gentleman might as well have been deployed when the Labour party was still in government. They did not address the question of the present threat in a different way from that which had prevailed before the present Government took office.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Perhaps I might suggest the change of circumstances that has caused that change of heart. In 1974, the people in control of the Labour party were the decent, good Socialists who always

[Mr. David Sumberg]

run the Labour party and manage to get elected, whereas the people now in control are members on the Left, as represented by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). Hence the decision to oppose the exclusion orders.

Mr. Maclennan: I do not wish to devote much of my speech, which will not be as long as that of the hon. Member for Huddersfield, to cross-examining the Labour party. However, if that is the best argument that can be made against the continuation of exclusion orders, it is not very strong. Clearly, no Home Secretary will adhere to the policy of supporting exclusion orders which plainly infringe human rights, unless there are overwhelmingly strong reasons for so doing and those reasons are bound up with the protection of our citizens from the threat of terrorism and the particular threat of terrrorism in Northern Ireland. Unlike much of the rest of the Bill, these measures are not designed to deal with the general threat of terrorism. They are concerned exclusively with the Northern Ireland threat.

In this debate, we are bound to consider extremely closely the recommendations of the Government's appointed reporter on the operation of the prevention of terrorism legislation, Lord Colville of Culross. I have no doubt that the Government did so before rejecting Lord Colville's recommendations. Earlier contributions to this debate suggest that the Government paid a great deal of attention to those recommendations, although they decided not to follow his advice.

Some changes in circumstances can be seen if one considers carefully what Lord Colville said about the operation of exclusion orders. There is a decline in the number of people subject to such orders. There is an increase in the number of people who are successfully appealing against them, using the internal mechanism of addressing the adviser, to whom they have access as of right. Lord Colville's remarks suggest that that increased use may indeed reflect some growth in confidence among those to whom exclusion orders have been applied—that there is a fairness and open-mindedness in the examination of the case by the adviser and the Home Secretary.

It is important to recall the facts as stated by Lord Colville, who pointed out that, in the year that he was reviewing, two of the new orders and three of the renewed orders were revoked. I refer to paragraph 11.3.1 of the report, which hon. Members no doubt have to hand. At the time of writing, representations had been made against eight of the 17 new orders made so far. In four cases, the order had been confirmed and the remaining four were still receiving consideration. In addition, representations were made against four of the 16 orders renewed in the first quarter of the year. Two of the orders were confirmed and two revoked.

I dwell on those points because I think it important to realise that, although this is a draconian power, being exercised without recourse to the courts to test its exercise by the Executive, it is being exercised with some discretion, and some of those subject to exclusion orders are having them revoked. I do not regard that as the rule of law in any normal sense, and I share Lord Colville's natural predisposition to call into question an Executive action that so curbs fundamental rights and freedoms.

I cannot think, however, that it would be right for the Home Secretary to give paramount consideration to that factor in deciding whether the powers should be renewed for another year. He must decide whether the powers materially contribute to the safety of our citizens. If, in the light of his knowledge of the general circumstances and of particular cases, he feels able and bound to tell the House that he requires such powers, I do not think that it is open to us to do more than ensure that he has addressed himself to the right questions and given the measures concerned the attention that they merit.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) read out Lord Colville's crucial assessment, and I shall not repeat it, but it should be recognised that Lord Colville did not call into question the efficacy of exclusion as a means of controlling terrorism and terrorists' movements. He suggested that, if the powers did not exist, considerable risks would be posed. He described the powers as effecting the disruption of terrorist lines of communication and supply of arms, ammunition and explosives, and as an effective way of getting rid of people from an area where otherwise they might cause great trouble.

Mr. Heffer: I heard the hon. Gentleman's intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). The hon. Gentleman represents a party that is supposed to be deeply concerned with civil liberties. Do his comments mean that he has not yet caught up with a member of the Tory party, and that his party is not really in favour of the civil liberties of which it claims to be in favour?

Mr. Maclennan: I think that my record on the issue is perhaps even clearer than the hon. Gentleman's. I promoted a Bill, which he did not support, to incorporate in our domestic law the provisions of the European convention on human rights, and I am very sensitive to any derogation from the convention or any provisions that curtail the fundamental rights and freedoms of our citizens, as are my right hon. and hon. Friends. There are, however, circumstances, recognised in the convention, in which Governments must circumscribe those liberties. They include circumstances in which there is a threat to national security—that phrase is drawn from the convention—and we are dealing with such circumstances here. No one can doubt that the power of terrorists in Northern Ireland to create havoc and mayhem on both sides of the Channel remains very strong.

That is why, with great reluctance, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I feel bound to accept the Home Secretary's judgment on this issue for this year. We are glad that the Government have introduced the legislation in a form that will enable us to address these questions again, for the powers cannot be extended beyond the operative date without renewal by the House. We should and must give the powers scrutiny no less detailed than Lord Colville's when we reconsider them in a year's time. We expect the Home Secretary not only to scrutinise each case through his own system of internal review, but to consider whether such a curtailment of fundamental rights and freedoms is justified in terms of the perceived threat, and to do so with continuity, before he comes back to ask for a further renewal of his powers.

Mr. Hunter: I do not propose to pursue the line, or the tone, of the robust contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). I had no intention

of speaking until the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) responded to my intervention, as did the hon. Members for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

Let me make it clear that I do not for a moment dispute the sincerity of any declaration by Opposition Members of their opposition to terrorism. The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) said on Second Reading that all that we were talking about was the best way in which to deal with terrorism, and I broadly accept what the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said.

I wonder, however, whether the hon. Member for Huddersfield has fully appreciated the depth and the extent of part II. His reply to my intervention suggested to me that he, and perhaps the hon. Member for Hillsborough, regarded part II as merely an internal mechanism of exile. That is not the case. It is clearly stated that clauses 5 and 7 enable the Secretary of State to make exclusion orders

"prohibiting a person from being in, or entering"

Great Britain, Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom. We are not dealing merely with a mechanism to keep terrorists in Northern Ireland, as I believe the hon. member for Huddersfield said in Committee. Part II is far wider than his reponse to me suggested.

On Report, as on Second Reading and in Committee, all hon. Members have been inclined to appeal to their sources of authority. Opposition Members have often turned to Lord Colville, and found that parts of his report differed from the Bill, but he is not the only authority to have pronounced on the legislation. Lord Jellicoe concluded that exclusion powers

"materially contributed to public safety in the United Kingdom."

I readily confess that I adopt that attitude.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield would have been on safer and surer ground if he had not attacked exclusion per se but rather the scope of exclusion orders within part II. It might be asked why they were connected only with the affairs of Northern Ireland. The Bill deals too excessively with terrorism related to Northern Ireland and does not sufficiently take into account the phenomenon of international terrorism.

If the hon. Member for Huddersfield and other Opposition Members had said that part II was too limited, they might have found significant support from Conservative Members. Our quarrel, far from being theirs —that there should be no exclusion orders—is rather that the exclusion orders within part II are too limited. If, as the Home Secretary said on Second Reading, the aim is seriously to confront international terrorism, the Bill is limited, rather than deficient.

5 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend and I have both made a similar point. He may recall that the Minister said that he would give the matter further consideration. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept my intervention as a prompt, to obtain some information from the Minister about how he has addressed the problem since we were in Committee.

Mr. Hunter: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that comment in Committee. We look forward to the Minister replying to it.

The essential argument is that terrorism, far from relying on the oxygen of abnormality, is itself an, abnormal phenomenon and requires abnormal responses. That is why I totally support the Secretary of State's having the right to exclude. I entirely support part II. The arguments of the hon. Member for Huddersfield are deficient in that they are limited. I hope, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford said, that before we conclude the debate the Minister will comment on that fact.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) did the debate a service when he said that he would make no imputations about any hon. Member supporting terrorism or violence. I welcome that. Having sat through the Committee which considered all these matters carefully with a great sense of responsibility, and having had to sit through the timetable motion debate last Monday, I was appalled that, rather than dealing with the issues, the debate almost reached the stage of "holier than thou". A series of people attitudinised, posturised and, to use a more basic word, craw-thumped.

I accept, as does the hon. Member for Basingstoke, that all hon. Members involved in the democratic process are against violence, terrorism and sin. Our discussions are not about who was holier than thou, and when, but about how best to deal with the mutual problem. I hope that Conservative Members will not find it necessary to accuse —in oblique or other terms—hon. Members who feel strongly about the legislation of being soft on or actively supporting terrorism. Opposition Members should not have to thump their breasts every time they speak and state that they oppose violence or terrorism.

The exclusion orders send out two messages. First they send a clear message to the people of Northern Ireland, from whichever side of the tragic political divide. The general message is that the north of Ireland is not as British as Finchley, as the Prime Minister keeps trying to tell us, but is different. It is a place to which to send people whom one does not want to retain within England, Scotland or Wales. There is a feeling of resentment within the Unionist community about that, because it is offensive to those who regard themselves as British. It is also offensive to those who, like myself, do not wish to see a continuation of the link with Britain one day longer than the time it takes to end it by peaceful democratic means. The message to both the Unionist and the Nationalist communities is that, in effect, they are dumping grounds for those who are excluded.

The message is offensive to those in Northern Ireland who are constantly told that the laws of Britain and the membership of this Parliament are the fundamentals by which they should abide, yet a distinction is made in legislation. In terms of the Bill, Finchley is a long way from Belfast or south Armagh.

The second message is to people involved in terrorism. When someone is served with an exclusion order, it is served not on evidence but on intelligence. There is a remarkable gap between intelligence and evidence. The clear message to those involved in terrorism is that there is no evidence on which he can be convicted. If there were, he could be charged before leaving Northern Ireland, when he entered this country or on the way out of it. This is a suspension of a basic form of justice and the substitution of an abnormal means of dealing with the problem on intelligence rather than evidence. That is a fatal flaw.

[Mr. Mallon]

Even worse is the fact that there is often no hard evidence or intelligence. For that reason, the exclusion orders should be removed, as was suggested by Lord Colville. It is difficult for people who, through no fault of their own, but because of the area in which they live, or their relations' activities, about which they may not know, or a matter of which they have no knowledge, are excluded.

I know that people will nod sagely and say that that will not happen, because there are checks and balances. However, such people should read a book published this morning by a former brigadier in the Parachute Regiment about his attitude to Northern Ireland. It has been said that we should listen to what our police and Army say. We should not just listen, but ask them questions. I recommend that people read that book and realise that, sometimes, what the Army does would not be approved by the House—for example, announcing that there was a bomb on a railway line between Belfast and Dublin when, patently, there was not; and covering up the death of a young soldier in south Armagh so that the incident would not give, in the words of the army brigadier, "publicity to the IRA." We are all against sin, but let us realise that human and legal rights should not be determined always on the word of those whose statements may be difficult at times to substantiate.

Substantial financial losses are often suffered by people involved in exclusion proceedings. Perhaps it is important to remind the House on all occasions of the 80 per cent. unemployment that exists in parts of Belfast. There is 60 per cent. male unemployment in my constituency. Many of those who are unemployed in Northern Ireland have to come to England, Scotland and Wales to get work, and once they come to the mainland, they are immediately under suspicion. It is among those people that the problems of exclusion orders arise.

The problems are not confined to someone losing a job here that he will not be able to find in Northern Ireland. There might be a loss of unemployment benefit. If an individual has built up a business and he is caused to leave it, there will be a loss to him and his entire family. We discussed these matters at length in Committee and I repeat my view that the Government's approach is a harsh one. We argued that some form of compensation should be arranged in certain circumstances, but the Government did not agree.

There are many forms of subterranean activity in Northern Ireland. It is a small place, and news travels fast. When an exclusion order has been placed or when someone has been detained prior to an order being placed, others get to know of it quickly. That knowledge in itself can result in the assassin's bullet. For that reason we should always be extremely careful. Knowledge of the placing of an order, or of detention, is almost enough to result in assassinations as individuals defend their homes.

This part of the Bill is seen to be fundamentally anti-Irish in its structure and in the way in which it will be implemented. It is seen—perception is often more important than reality—as a piece of legislation aimed at those who live on the other side of the Irish sea, and only those. That has a political effect on relations between the two Governments, and those relations must be good and must work positively if terrorism is to be defeated. If legislation of this sort is retained when it could be done away with, we shall destroy the climate that must prevail if the problem is ever to be solved. How long has such legislation been on the statute book, and has it worked? I know that some will say, "If such legislation had not been in place, we can imagine the terrible things that would have happened." In other words, one would be asked to prove a negative, which would be impossible.

When we consider the Bill in its totality—as we shall later—and the element that we are now discussing in detail, we must ask, "Why, after 14 years, has legislation of this sort, bearing in mind the powers and the means that it gives to the police, the Army and the authorities in both countries to defeat terrorism, not proved to be successful in defeating terrorism and realising the successes that were claimed would result from its implementation?" Why are we still dealing with the problem? I still believe that the wrong approach is to use the punitive type of legislation that we see before us. It has helped terrorism in the past; it has not stopped it.

5.15 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): My hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) speaks with authority and knowledge of what is happening in Northern Ireland. Having been a Member of this place for some time, he knows a great deal of what happens in the Chamber. Many of us have sat through many debates of this sort over the years—indeed, there is a plethora of Irish Bills being pushed through the House. They are passing through it like lightning. My hon. Friend referred to the timetable motion that was debated last Monday. I was involved in a debate on Thursday of last week—consideration of the Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill—there is tonight's debate on Irish matters, and there will be another one tomorrow. The Government are forcing us to concentrate on Irish affairs to the exclusion of other issues and we are having an arduous time. It seems that each Irish Bill deals with and follows on from another Irish Bill.

I stay in Pimlico and I often walk along the embankment on my way to this place. As I walk past a tall block of flats I always notice a small obelisk at the side of it. I am sure that most people do not know about the obelisk. For a long time I walked past it casually, but on one occasion I decided to examine it. It is only a few feet from the ground and it bears a plaque on which it is stated that on the site of the obelisk was the old Millbank prison. It was the spot on which deportees to Australia last saw their homeland.

The habit of exclusion continues—there was deportation to Devil's island by the French and by many other countries to many other places—and it is terrible that that should be so. Charles Dickens was well aware of the practice of deportation. He wrote in "Great Expectations" of Abel Magwitch, whose great expectations were given to Pip. Abel was one of those who went, and many of them went innocently. Vast numbers of them were Irish. They were taken to Australia and they had to live there. Some take the view that certain actions will stop people behaving in a certain way. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) used vindictive language and almost accused many of my hon. Friends and others of supporting terrorism.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: I shall give way in a moment.

The hon. Gentleman used an expression that suggested that he thought that everyone who was excluded was a terrorist. Even if that were true, exclusion would still be appalling. Most of those who are excluded are not terrorists. Unfortunately, the hon. Gentleman thinks that they are, and considers that many of us are supporters of terrorism. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have given way to him on so many occasions that if a count were made the result would be unbelievable. He is a congenital intervener. I give way to the hon. Gentleman. It seems that he does not want to intervene now. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh tells me that he thought that the hon. Gentleman wished to intervene.

Mr. Mallon: Coitus interruptus.

Mr. Flannery: Coitus interruptus, as my hon. Friend says. I would not have dreamt of saying such a thing.

The vindictive approach of the hon. Gentleman deepens and intensifies the problem we face. My hon. Friend attends funerals with melancholy and frequent regularity within his constituency. His life is in danger, as are the lives of others in Northern Ireland. He saw fit to speak about the element of danger. As soon as it is known that someone has been excluded—he may be innocent, having done nothing—he is immediately in line for the assassin's bullet. The issue should be dealt with more lightly and more gently. The Government's approach is better than it was.

No one can prove that exclusion orders have had the slightest effect on the political position in Northern Ireland or in this country. All they have done is satisfy the vindictive and terrorise people who have been wrongly excluded. They deepen their feeling of alienation from a society which dares to exclude people who have done nothing wrong. Like the Bill, exclusion orders are anti-Irish. They even victimise people who have an Irish accent or name. They do not do what they set out to do —all of which could be done under existing legislation. A United Kingdom citizen, or an alien, can be excluded from Britain to Northern Ireland if the Home Secretary is satisfied that he has been involved in political violence related to Northern Ireland. Such a person is condemned as being involved in those activities, even though he may not. Many times in the House we have raised the cases of people who did nothing to justify their being excluded.

The previous Act and this Bill are examples of the appalling approach of, first, the Labour Government, and especially the Conservative Government, to Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland. They are treated as dustbins. The Government can say, "If you remain in this country, you may engage in terrorism, so we shall send you to Northern Ireland." They shrug their shoulders and say, "You may do it in Northern Ireland, but you will not do it here." That attitude is personified by the hon. Member for Pembroke, who tried hard not to withdraw and apologise for what he wrongly said.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I withdrew the remarks, having not been in a position to make the quotations that I would have made had you allowed me to, is it in order for another hon. Member to attack me?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): It is common courtesy that, once a matter has been settled, it should not be referred to in that manner again.

Mr. Flannery: I accept that, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I was slightly needled by the continuing discourtesy and the traducing of honourable people.

This part of the Bill has piled grave injustice and great human misery on to innocent people. As many hon. Members have said, it means internal exile. Lord Colville described the power as the most draconian in the Act and opposed exclusion orders. In 1985-86, Sir Cyril Philips, reporting to Parliament on the 1984 Act, recommended that no new exclusion orders should be made. Lord Colville went further and recommended withdrawal of that part of the Act.

That is what the Opposition advocate. We know that we have no chance of winning the vote, but we believe that it is democratically correct to place on record our arguments against the measure. We struggled against the Labour Goverment to do that, and eventually we won them over. People and Governments can be won over, but this Government are a more difficult proposition.

Since 1977, 4,358 people have been detained, 3,701 of whom were neither charged nor excluded. The number of exclusion orders has varied from year to year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said, there were 248 in 1982, 99 in 1977 and today between 116 and 120. What misery they have heaped upon many honourable people. We have often been abused, sometimes by good people, because of our opposition to the Act. Even in this Chamber, we are pointed out as supporters of terrorism. But we oppose exclusion orders, just as we have opposed the entire Act.

Mr. Heffer: I support the amendment. This part of the Bill should be dropped altogether. I am not particularly enthusiastic about the Bill. That does not mean that at one stage of my life I did not go along with the Act. I do not think that I ever voted for it, but there were occasions at the beginning when I did not vote against against it. The reason for that was the horrific events that were taking place at the time. Most of us felt that some immediate action had to be taken. We were not happy about the Act, and we were certainly not happy about the basic problem of civil liberties.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) asked why the Labour party is now against the Act officially, when the Labour Government introduced it in the first place and supported it thereafter. That is a fair question, and it deserves a fair answer. The reason is that, as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said, after 14 years the Act has changed nothing. The problem remains the same. We need to look at the reasons behind the troubles in Northern Ireland. Why are there still shootings, killings, and terrible sectarian murders? Has the Act, particularly this part, contributed to changing the position? I believe that it has not.

What worries me about this part of the Bill is that it can be, and is being, interpreted as anti-Irish. Some of us who are, unfortunately, old enough to remember the Second world war, remember that thousands upon thousands of people from Southern and Northern Ireland came to this country and joined the Army, Navy and Air Force. They fought alongside people from England, Scotland and Wales to defend the liberties of the people of these islands

[Mr. Heffer]

against the Nazis. Thousands of them were killed. There is a special relationship. Our history shows that the English, with the Scots and the Welsh, dominated Ireland for centuries. The Cromwellian efforts in Ireland were not something of which we could be especially proud, yet I am a good parliamentarian and I believe that we would not have the liberties that we have now were it not for Cromwell and the parliamentarians and what they fought for.

We must recognise that a special relationship exists with the peoples of the whole of Ireland—not a phoney relationship, such as the one with the United States. It is therefore scandalous to read in part II that people who have lived and worked for many years in this country, but who come under suspicion—perhaps because some of their relatives have taken a different position and have ended up in gaol in Northern Ireland or they have relatives in Southern Ireland—may find themselves being excluded from this country.

5.30 pm

The Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I do not want to misinterpret what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but I believe that he was saying that a person could be excluded from Great Britain even if he had been ordinarily here for many years. That would not be right.

Mr. Heffer: In that case, I cannot read. The Bill says:

"In deciding whether to make an exclusion order under this section against a person who is ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State shall have regard to the question whether that person's connection with any country or territory outside the United Kingdom is such as to make it appropriate that such an order should be made."

Perhaps I have not understood that correctly. Can the Minister assure me of that?

Mr. Hogg: If the person concerned is a British citizen and has been ordinarily resident in the relevant part of the United Kingdom, he cannot be excluded.

Mr. Heffer: I did not say anything different from that. I was not arguing about the position of a British citizen; I was talking about people who may not be British citizens, who may be citizens of Southern Ireland, but who have lived in this country for 25, 30 or 40 years and who could be excluded from this country under the provisions of part II. The Minister seems to agree that that is what the Bill says.

Mr. Hogg: I am trying to follow what the hon. Gentleman is saying. If I do him an injustice, I apologise. I thought that he was talking about people from Northern Ireland who were ordinarily resident here and who might be excluded.

Mr. Heffer: I did not say that. People who live here, work here and vote here can be excluded under the provisions of the Bill and can be as much involved in the exclusion order as anybody else. That is not internal exile, although it would be internal exile if a person from Southern Ireland was sent to Southern Ireland under an exclusion order.

Mr. Mallon: I am becoming confused about the Minister's point. I understand that, under law, I am a British citizen. Under the Bill, I could be excluded from England, Scotland and Wales; so, in effect, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) is correct. However, if the position has changed—although I am not aware that it has—and I am not a British citizen, I shall lead the trek down to the bar in another place and I shall buy at that bar with great pleasure.

Mr. Heffer: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has made that point. The Bill proposes two types of exclusion. There will be internal exile if people who have lived in this country and who are British citizens are excluded to Northern Ireland. Equally, people who may not be British citizens but who are from Southern Ireland may be excluded. We have had this special relationship for a long time. People who may not be guilty of anything other than association because they have relatives could be picked up for any reason and excluded from this country, even if they have been here for 30 to 40 years. That is exactly what happened in Tsarist Russia and Soviet Russia, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) pointed out earlier.

I now come to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman). He said that the matter was one of basic civil liberties. We cannot accept the exclusion order, but must argue and fight against it. I am glad that the Minister accepts that Labour Members are not in favour of terrorism, but I am worried that some newspapers and some Conservative Members consider that because I am putting forward this argument —and had the temerity to query what had happened to four people in Gibraltar—I am automatically a supporter of terrorism. The finger is pointed at me. However, we should still stand up and fight for what we believe to be right, especially when civil liberties are involved. The day that we cave in on that, all our basic liberties and concepts of democracy and freedom will go for all time and we shall be craven people from then on, living in terror. If we believe in the democratic process, we cannot accept that.

I now want to deal with the point made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). I do not know how his party can talk about its Liberal background—even its Social Democratic background—and say that it is the champion of freedom and democracy. I heard the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) make quite a good speech on the platform at his party conference—it was, in many respects, an excellent speech. He attacked what the Government was doing in relation to civil liberties in a forthright manner, which was perfectly acceptable to me. But the party's practice is very different from its speeches at such public demonstrations.

Social and Liberal Democratic Members prove that, when they run away from dealing with issues such as the one today because they fear that the issue is unpopular or that they may be misinterpreted. Even if one fears misinterpretation, one must take a clear stand on the issue. I hope that we shall have maximum support for the excellent contribution made by my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Opposition's case is that we should do away with the exclusion order-making power. It is perhaps desirable to remind ourselves of the arguments that they have made in support of amendment No. 27.

The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who was nothing if not robust, described the exclusion

order-making power as disgraceful and villainous. He said that it was unacceptable to all true Liberals and true champions of democracy. He asserted, in other words, propositions of fundamental principle. However, if his difference with the Government is a matter of fundamental principle, how was it that the Labour Government introduced these provisions in 1974 and 1976?

It is not good enough to say, "After mature reflection we have changed our mind," because although after mature reflection on matters that are nicely balanced one can certainly change one's mind, it makes no sense when one is talking about matters of fundamental political philosophy. To say, "After mature reflection we have changed our minds," is not a proposition which hangs together in such cases and, because it does not hang together, I find the whole case deployed against the exclusion order-making power unacceptable.

It is desirable that we reflect on the circumstances in which the exclusion order-making power can be made. It is set out in clause 5, which states that the Secretary of State may make an exclusion order

"If the Secretary of State is satisfied that any person—

(a) is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism to which this Part of this Act applies; or

(b) is attempting or may attempt to enter Great Britain with a view to being concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of such acts of terrorism,".

As the House knows, similar powers apply in the case of Northern Ireland and rest with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Those powers are tightly drawn and they are subject to further restrictions, such as those set out in the remainder of part II, which limits the power in respect of British citizens, ordinarily resident in the relevant part of the United Kingdom for three years or more. It is interesting to note Lord Colville's views about how the order-making powers have been operated. The one thing that he made wholly plain was his conviction that the powers are used in a fair and reasonable manner. He said:

"if exclusion orders were to stay, I am entirely satisfied that the applications are prepared with great care and processed by officials in both Departments concerned with meticulous regard to the statutory grounds set out at the beginning of this Chapter."

Ms. Mowlam: We must be careful of the Minister's nasty habit of quoting selectively from Lord Colville when it suits him. The Minister quoted from points 45 and 44, but, with the logical consistency that we have learned to love in the Minister, he missed point 43 which states:

"the authorities in Northern Ireland would not be severely handicapped by the abolition of the exclusion orders."

Will the Minister please put his comments in context?

Mr. Hogg: I am perfectly well aware of Lord Colville's conclusions, but at the moment I am dealing with the narrow point of whether the order-making powers are being exercised in a fair and reasonable manner. The plain fact is that, having examined this matter, Lord Colville concluded that they were. Perhaps that is not wholly surprising when one bears in mind the fact that, at the end of last year, only 144 orders were in place in the United Kingdom. If we can be sure that the order-making power is being exercised meticulously and carefully and with full regard to the statutory criteria——

Mr. Sheerman: The Minister knows that the case that we made many times in Committee was that surely good law, which guarantees rights and civil liberties to individual citizens in this country, must be above the individual whim and practice of particular Home Secretaries. We embarrassed the Minister several times by contrasting the attitudes of different Home Secretaries to different parts of the legislation. Bad law presents a vacuum that can be filled in different ways by different Home Secretaries.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman should direct his mind to the need for the order-making power, to which I shall now turn. The questions that the House must consider are, who says that we need the order-making power, and why do we need it? Once again, the answer to those two questions appears clearly in Lord Colville's report, which makes it plain that all the senior officers of the police forces in England and Wales are ardent supporters of exclusion orders. Lord Colville stated:

"With one accord they say that they would not be able to provide surveillance for all the Irish terrorists who might arrive."

Later in the report, under the heading "Assessment", Lord Colville's more qualitative judgment of the effect of the powers is:

"I have to agree that it is probably an effective way of getting rid of people from an area where otherwise they might cause great trouble; and that it disrupts terrorist lines of communication and supply of arms, ammunition and explosives."

5.45 pm

It is perfectly true that in the end Lord Colville came to a different conclusion from that which I commend to the House, but there is no doubt that he was satisfied that the powers address a real need and have a real and desirable consequence.

It is wrong to suppose that where facts exist that justify the making of an exclusion order, there inevitably exist facts that justify the institution of criminal proceedings against such a person. That, too, was one of Lord Colville's specific findings.

However, in the end, there is no answer to the question that was posed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on Second Reading when he outlined to the House the fact that earlier in 1988 he had had to deal with a number of terrorists operating in London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, against whom it was not possible to press specific charges, although they were known to be about terrorist business. My right hon. Friend has to ask himself whether he should do noting or whether he had to make an exclusion order. His decision was to make an exclusion order, and that would have been the decision of every person who has had direct responsibility for carrying through such business. It is for that reason that I reject the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 2

Exclusion Orders

Amendment made: No. 6, in page 24, line 5 leave out 'if necessary by force'—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg]*

Clause 12

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION ABOUT TERRORIST FUNDS

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 7, line 38, at end insert 'express'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, we may discuss Government amendments Nos. 2 and 3.

Mr. Hogg: I move the amendment formally, but if specific questions arise, I shall be pleased to try to answer them.

Mr. Archer: I do not wish to detain the House, but I should be grateful if the Minister would explain the case for amendment No. 1. On the face of it, I cannot see the difference between a police officer giving "express" instructions to someone to take a particular course of action or implying that he has given those instructions and allowing someone to think that this is the course of action that he wishes them to take.

Mr. Hogg: In the absence of the word "express" there could be dispute. People might assume that they have received implied consent and there could be an argument about that. It is better by far to make it plain that the consent must be express. that is why we have tabled the amendment.

Mr. Archer: I only hope that it will be made clear to police constables that they should take great care and not let anyone think falsely that he is being encouraged to take a particular course of action.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. MacLennan: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Amendment No. 28 was not a Government amendment. I wonder whether there is any way of the House knowing at this stage whether the Government accepted that amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: There is no way now that we can go back to that. The Government have not accepted the amendment.

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 7, line 43, after 'made', insert

'after he enters into or otherwise becomes concerned in the transaction or arrangement in question but is made'.

No. 3, in page 7, line 44, at end insert

'but paragraphs (a) and (b) above do not apply in a case where, having disclosed any such suspicion, belief or matter to a constable and having been forbidden by a constable to enter into or otherwise be concerned in the transaction or arrangement in question, he nevertheless does so'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 13

PENALTIES AND FORFEITURE

Amendments made: No. 29, in page 8, line 41, leave out from 'property' to end of line 44.

No. 30, in page 9, line 3, leave out

'to which subsection (5) above applies'

and insert 'under this section'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 4

FORFEITURE ORDERS

Amendments made: No. 31, in page 28, line 45, at end insert—

'(cc) directing a specified part of any money, or of the proceeds of the sale, disposal or realisation of any property, to which the forfeiture order applies to be paid by the proper officer to or for a specified person falling within section 13(6) of this Act;'.

No. 32, in page 28, line 48, leave out 'or (c)' and insert ',(c) or (cc)'.

No. 33, in page 29, line 5, after 'under', insert 'sub-paragraph (1)(cc) above or'.

No. 34, in page 34, line 27, at end insert—

'(bb) directing a specified part of any money, or of the proceeds of the sale, disposal or realisation of any property, to which the forfeiture order applies to be paid to or for a specified person falling within section 13(6) of this Act;'.

No. 35, in page 34, line 30, leave out 'or (b)' and insert ',(b) or (bb)'.

No. 37, in page 34, line 34, at end insert 'sub-paragraph (1)(bb) above or'.

No. 39, in page 40, line 26, at end insert—

'(cc) directing a specified part of any money, or of the proceeds of the sale, disposal or realisation of any property, to which the forfeiture order applies to be paid by the proper officer to or for a specified person falling within section 13(6) of this Act;'.

No. 40, in page 40, line 30, leave out 'or (c)' and insert ',(c) or (cc)'.

No. 41, in page 40, line 35, after 'under', insert 'sub-paragraph (1)(cc) above or'.

No. 7, in page 31, line 36, leave out second 'the' and insert 'a'.

No. 8, in page 32, line 3, at end insert—

'(6) Sub-paragraph (8) of paragraph 3 above applies for the purposes of this paragraph as it applies for the purposes of that paragraph.'.

No. 9, in page 37, line 32, leave out second 'the' and insert 'a'.

No. 10, in page 37, line 50, at end insert—

'(7) sub-paragraph (7) of paragraph 13 above applies for the purposes of this paragraph.'.

No. 11, in page 41, line 6, after 'take', insert 'that'.

No. 12, in page 41, line 29, after 'charged' insert 'in Northern Ireland'.

No. 13, in page 43, line 17, leave out second 'the' and insert 'a'.

No. 14, in page 43, line 33, at end insert—

'(6) sub-paragraph (8) of paragraph 23 above applies for the purposes of this paragraph as it applies for the purposes of that paragraph.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 5

PORT AND BORDER CONTROL

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 48, line 35, leave out from first 'him' to end of line 36.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 8

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 22, in page 64, line 4, at end insert—

'(4) In Schedule 14—

(a) in paragraph 5, for the words "section" 12(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984" there shall be substituted the words "section" 14(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989"; and

(b) in paragraph 6, for the definition of "the terrorism provisions", there shall be substituted—

"'the terrorism provisions' means section 14(1) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 and any

provision of Schedule 2 or 5 to that Act conferring a power of arrest or detention.'.'—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 4

Forfeiture Orders

Amendments made: No. 36, in page 34, line 30, at end insert—

'(1A) The Court of Session may by rules of court prescribe the powers and duties of an administrator appointed under sub-paragraph (1)(b) above.'.

No. 38, in page 35, line 4, at end insert—

'(3) The accountant of the court shall supervise an administrator appointed under paragraph 11 above in the exercise of the powers conferred, and discharge of the duties imposed, on him under or by virtue of that paragraph.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 14

Arrest and detention of suspected persons

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move amendment No. 23, in page 9, line 38, leave out 'five' and insert 'two'.

This amendment, if carried, would require the Government to respect and observe the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of Brogan and others. That is to say that, if carried, the amendment would require the Government to accept that men and women should not be detained for seven days without either charge or judicial review. In the limited time available for this debate—just over an hour to consider whether the Government were right to derogate from the court's ruling—there is no opportunity to do more than discuss three central issues which should dominate our consideration of the amendments.

The first is the issue of principle—whether it is reasonable in any circumstances to detain a suspect for seven days without charge or judicial review. The second issue is whether it is reasonable to derogate from the European convention on human rights in these circumstances. The third issue is whether it is reasonable for the Government to invite us, as they do today, to pass into law a Bill which, if we are to take the Government's word, as I do, they hope substantially to amend in the immediate future. In each case, the Government's conduct is unreasonable.

By far the most important of the three issues concerns the question whether seven-day detention without judicial review is right, or, for that matter, necessary. The European court adjudges that, in general, it is not right, and it adjudges that for specific reasons. Men and women should be held in prison only when they are suspected of specific offences and when it is at least anticipated that they are to be charged with specific offences, not when their detention is convenient to the Government to deter others or to trawl for information. We know that the immediately previous Home Secretary has been explicit in saying that the prevention of terrorism powers were intended for exactly the purposes that the European court, and, indeed, all civilised people, deplore.

Sir Leon Brittan's own words in the House were these:

"The use of the powers of detention under the legislation has acted, first, as a deterrent to persons other than the people who have been detained and, secondly, it has in the course of the detention of those concerned enabled some to be excluded and charged on the basis of information to be obtained that was of direct value in the battle against terrorism, even though it did not lead to action against the people concerned."

[*Official Report*, 24 October 1983, Vol. 47, C. 55-56.]

In Committee, the Minister quoted the Solicitor-General before the European court expressly denying that the Government would use detention for those disreputable purposes which the previous Home Secretary said were the intention of the Bill. But it was the Solicitor-General's duty—I do not blame him for carrying it out—to put the best possible interpretation on the Government's actions when he addressed the court. If the previous Home Secretary is to be believed, there is no doubt that, if they wished, any Government could disreputably use the present Act and the proposed powers of the new Bill. Indeed, if the previous Home Secretary is to be believed, there is no doubt that the Government have disreputably used the present Act and the present powers. I repeat that there is absolutely no doubt that, if they choose, future Governments could use such powers to trawl for information.

On 24 October 1983, I asked the previous Home Secretary this question:

"Is he saying that it is right in a free society to detain innocent people without charge for the purpose of obtaining information from them?"

His answer was categorical:

"It has been made clear not by me but by the courts that that is a legitimate and necessary use of the power."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 56.]

I repeat again that I am well aware that in Strasbourg the Solicitor-General said that the Government would not use these powers for that disreputable purpose, but, unless Sir Leon Brittan was ludicrously wrong, the best that can be said of the Bill is that it provides the power to control that information, and all we can do is hope that no future Government will employ it for that purpose.

In our view, and in the traditional view of the House, it is unacceptable to legislate on the basis that powers may be provided, but there is no need to worry, for the Government will not use them in the way that is allowed. We have contended that, in place of such power, we should apply the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The Secretary of State, who I thought would be here, but is not—I do not blame him for that; he has been here all afternoon—replied to our proposal with an answer which was prolix even by his usual standards:

"under PACE the powers of arrest can be exercised only where a constable has reasonable grounds to suspect that a particular offence has been committed or is about to be committed".

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that, under the Bill, it is possible to detain an individual who is

"suspected of being involved in terrorism in circumstances where one cannot prove, or does not have reasonable grounds to suspect, the commission of a specific arrestable offence."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 10 January 1989, c. 295.]

It is worth while dwelling for a moment on what the Minister said. Once again, as so often is the case with Government Bills that the Opposition regard as severe infringements of liberty, simply to state the power in the Government's own language shows how wrong the position of that power is. The Minister said that the Government wished for powers, demanded powers and would insist upon powers that allow them to detain a man or woman who there were no reasonable grounds to suspect had committed an arrestable offence—a man or woman who was not simply innocent because they had not been tried and proved guilty, but a man or woman against

[Mr. Roy Hattersley]

whom there was insufficient information to mount a charge. Yet the Government insist that against such persons seven days' detention is essential.

The Under-Secretary went on to say that the powers of detention under PACE were "insufficiently strong". Apart from the issue of principle—putting aside the question of propriety, whether we should ever detain a man or woman against whom no charge can be made—two questions immediately arise from that answer. First, why do we need to detain for seven days a person who there are no reasonable grounds to suspect has committed an arrestable offence? The Under-Secretary of State has not answered that question, other than to say that he will "obtain information" which he did not give to the Committee.

6 pm

The second question which the Under-Secretary's answer requires is more fundamental. Is it ever right to detain for seven days a person whom one does not have reasonable grounds to suspect is involved in an arrestable offence? In a free society, the answer must be that such detention cannot be justified. It can only damage the reputation of any country which makes such a proposal.

If we are to have any sort of debate on this important question, time allows only the briefest of references to the two other questions about the Government's attitude to the Brogan judgment which I posed at the beginning of my speech. The Government have entered a derogation from the convention. I have made it clear that I well understand that the Government are wholly within the terms of their agreement and are entitled to make such a derogation. There is no question of the Government having acted illegally or unlawfully, or having broken or abandoned their commitment to the convention in general. Sovereign states would never become parties to such conventions unless such derogations were possible. The question is not whether the Government were within their legal rights—clearly they were—but whether they were just and wise to use their legal rights as they did.

Clearly the terms of the derogation—the notion that terrorism is now putting at risk the whole of the United Kingdom—are palpable nonsense. But I suspect that the Home Secretary will say that the words are no more than a technicality and that if there were to be a derogation it had to be in those terms. The important part of my question does not concern either the technicality or legality. It concerns the justice and wisdom of what the Government have done in terms of fundamental human rights. The Government have chosen to dissociate themselves from the convention in that particular.

Mr. Archer: Lest there be any misunderstanding, can my right hon. Friend confirm that the wording of the derogation is not a matter of technicality? Unless the Government can bring themselves and the situation within the rules they are not entitled to derogate.

Mr. Hattersley: My right hon. and learned Friend, who is careful in these matters, will notice that I am almost as careful, and said that the Home Secretary would undoubtedly attempt to argue that the words are a technicality. If he does not, he will find it difficult to justify on the evidence of the language that the situation on which he relies operates in the whole United Kingdom. As I understand it, to make the derogation he must make that point. I look forward to seeing whether he calls it a technicality, as I predicted, or attempts to justify the words in their literal sense and application to the United Kingdom, which I believe would be impossible.

I reiterate my basic point, with which I know my right hon. and learned Friend agrees, which is whether the Government were right in principle, wisdom and justice to make the choice which they were legally entitled to make. My view, which is the view of my right hon. and hon. Friends, is that, as well as being wrong in principle, to erode our commitment to the cause of freedom which the convention enshrines was also deeply unwise, because it damaged the cause which the Government claim to serve. When the Government attempt to cut funds to the IRA by attempting to have passed through the House a Bill which is specifically in part designed to achieve that objective, by taking their decision about derogation they are providing for IRA fund raisers a propaganda weapon of incalculable value.

The Government will say in the derogation that terrorists are having a profound effect on the life of the whole United Kingdom. Terrorists will say that the Government at Westminster are prepared to abide by the rule of law when it is convenient, but that, when it is inconvenient and the Government wish to detain men and women for seven days without trial or judicial review, they fly to the derogation, with all the consequences involved.

The third question, which I asked a quarter of an hour ago and which I repeat in slightly greater detail, concerns the Government's decision to press ahead with the Bill, although, according to their published statement, they hope to replace it with new powers almost as soon as it becomes law.

If we are to take the Government at their word, which I do, they still hope to arrange a system of judicial review which would provide an examination of the justification of detention after four days, thus bringing our law into line with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. The Government are by no means sure that they can achieve that end but I give them credit at least for attempting to being that alternative about. Until we know how they want to organise detention, it is palpably unreasonable to ask the House to pass a Bill which stipulates one form of detention about which the Government may change their mind next year.

The Government have known about the Brogan case for several years. There was a specific reference to it in the report on the prevention of terrorism published by Lord Colville in 1987. Yet the Government behave as if the ruling and their need to react to it came as a complete surprise towards the end of last year. After some confusion, which the Home Secretary will remember well and which I shall detail for him if he wishes, and some contradictory statements about when the Government could or could not make an announcement, whether they would have to derogate and whether the derogation would pe permanent, the Under-Secretary eventually sent a letter to members of the Committee. That letter, sent on 10 January, said in terms that the Government could not announce how they intended to proceed with the question of detention and the possibilities of a judicial review, and therefore with the necessity for permanent derogation, until the Bill becomes law, as the Government purpose, on 24 March.

The House is left in an absurd position. We are being asked to support a Bill which, if it becomes law, the Government will do their best to change almost immediately out of all recognition. Simply in terms of good government, sensible management of business, courtesy to the House and demonstrating that they have a clear, concise and cogent line on civil liberties, the Government should have come to the House specifically describing which of the alternatives was likely to be the permanent feature of the legislation before they asked us to complete every stage of the Bill's consideration on the Floor.

This is an example of incompetence, but it is the sort of incompetence that invariably comes about through arrogance and a stubborn refusal to admit error and agree to rectify mistakes. If it is impossible—as we understand it, because of the opposition of the Northern Ireland judiciary—for a judicial review to examine the case of men and women detailed under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, arrests should be made under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. That is the sensible as well as the principled response to the dilemma in which the Government find themselves. Support for our amendment would achieve that end.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I listened with great care to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and I want to confine my remarks to two of his major points. He asked whether it was reasonable for the Government to derogate from the Brogan judgment and the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, and to detain people in these particular and peculiar circumstances for seven days without trial or judicial review.

Although I was young at the time, as no doubt was the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, I remember that there were very strong draconian powers of detention during the second world war. I appreciate that we are not at war in the strict, technical sense of the word, but it is clear that the Provisional IRA is quite willing to use the phrase "armed struggle". If that phrase means anything, it means the use of force to obtain a political end. The IRA uses that phrase to all intents and purposes, if it is not a war, it is certainly a quasi-war. Given those circumstances and the use of that phrase by enemies of this kingdom, we are entitled to look at the realities of the situation rather than at the legalistic aspects. The reality is that we cannot deal with those people with the ordinary powers of the law.

It is naive in the extreme to say that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 provides enough power for the security forces and the intelligence services to provide the police with adequate information to bring certain people within the PACE regulations, under which there must be reasonable suspicion that an offence has been committed or is about to be committed.

I accept that the intelligence services will be able to provide certain information to the police, but it might not be sufficient to allow the police to say that an offence had been or was about to be committed. However, I believe that there would be sufficient information for the police to detain in almost every case. I do not want to know what that information or intelligence is. I cannot believe that it is the end of the world if someone with terrorist connections and about whom there is intelligence is kept for no more than seven days.

Surely it is better to be safe than sorry. Surely the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook must consider the fact that more than 3,000 people have been killed over the past 20 years. Surely it is better that someone should be inconvenienced—and I do not diminish that inconvenience—by being detained without charge for that time, than that someone else on the mainland or in the Province is murdered. Is that such a price to pay? I think not.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that it was unwise to use the powers because there was a public relations aspect. Although he was not specific about this, he said that it might upset people in the United States of America or elsewhere in Europe and that it would in some way contribute to the funds now being channelled to the Provisional IRA. I suppose that that is possible. However, can the right hon. Gentleman imagine the effect on another part of the public—the citizens of Northern Ireland?

I was in Belfast last week. The most remarkable idea, suspicion or feeling was obvious there that the Government were in some way weakening and preparing to remove themselves from the Province. I believe that that is untrue. This Government, like previous Governments, have made it abundantly clear that they will stand by our co-citizens in Ulster. However, some people on the Unionist side of the community divide were saying that.

If the House accepts this amendment, we must consider another public relations aspect to the issue. People in the Province would say that it was more evidence that the Government are not determined in their fight against the terrorists. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook should examine his conscience. Even if he thinks that people should not believe that, that is what they will believe. The provision in the Bill to which the amendment refers is a sign of the Government's determination to use a weapon against the Provisional IRA and any Protestant paramilitary organisation which might fall foul of it; more generally, it is a weapon against the forces of violence. It is not too high a price to pay.

Please God that we return to a time when these provisions are not necessary. However, 20 years on from the start of this struggle, these powers are still necessary. It is infinitely better to be safe than sorry. It is better to be sorry that some people no doubt will be detained when in other circumstances they would not. However, I would be more sorry if someone was murdered, assassinated or maimed as a result of this amendment being accepted.

6.15 pm

Mr. Archer: I hope that the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) will forgive me if I do not immediately take up his arguments. I want to be brief because this is a very short debate. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will allow me to voice a protest about the completely inadequate amount of time given for this Report stage by the Government business managers. They have brought this situation about.

I want to respond to only one of the three matters explored by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), but not because the other two points are unimportant. In fact, I agree with my right hon. Friend that his first question was the most important. But I have seized opportunities at other stages during our deliberations on this Bill to deliver my views on those two points. It is important that

[Mr. Archer]

something should be said in relation to my right hon. Friend's second point. The *Official Report* of this debate will be widely read internationally and many people will want to know whether hon. Members are urging the United Kingdom to be concerned about its international obligations.

There is an international consensus that terrorism is an international problem and that it must be dealt with on an international level so that those who seek their political ends by the use of violence will have no resting place or hiding place. On 15 July 1986 the *Financial Times* reported that Interpol spends 10 per cent. of its time on investigating terrorist offences. There were complaints from Conservative Benches when Ireland appeared to be dragging its feet in respect of the European convention on extradition, one of the major purposes of which was to deal with international terrorism.

The European convention on the suppression of terrorism agreed in 1977 was, very properly, ratified by the United Kingdom in 1978. It has now been substantially enacted into our domestic law. Action has also been taken within the EEC, although some people believe that the EEC is not primarily concerned with terrorism. The Trevi group of Justice Ministers has committed itself to a co-ordinated policy and the sharing of information to bring terrorists to justice.

All those initiatives have helped to make it clear that it is not simply terrorism that is international, but that law and order is international as well. Those initiatives show that terrorism will be fought at international levels. That means that nation states should accept some restrictions on their freedom of action and some limitation on their sovereignty in the interests of their people.

The other side of that coin is that we agree on international standards of human rights and limitations —which are proper limitations—on the power of the police and the investigating authorities, so that a citizen of any of the countries which are part of this consensus can expect certain standards from his or her Government. The nations of Western Europe have accepted that they are, and should rightly be, answerable before an international tribunal to their own citizens when there is a complaint about those standards. Those who invoke, quite properly, the international consensus to deal with terrorism, to pursue terrorists and to prevent terrorism are committed equally to that same international consensus from the other purposes—to the commitment to the rule of law.

I hope that not only will there be an agreement throughout the House on that principle, which can be read in the report by those in other countries, but that it will not be in issue that this country is bound in international law by the provisions of the European convention. There will be no issue that we were right to accept that obligation and to ratify the convention and that we were right to submit ourselves to the jurisdiction of the European Court and to the right of individual petition. I believe that that has not been brought into issue even by this Government, who have denied so many of the political propositions which we thought at one time formed part of the political consensus.

It is said that it is our right within the convention—we are entitled to derogate. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, the right of derogation is part of the convention. It is not, however, something to be embarked on lightly. It was not intended by those who drafted the convention, who agreed with it and who ratified it, that it should be invoked by a Government every time they found it inconvenient to abide by a ruling of the European court.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook reminded us, the Government have publicly proclaimed that the activities of the IRA fall within the wording of article 15, which provides that we are entitled to derogate

"in time of war or other public emergency threatening the life of the nation."

If there is room for argument about the meaning of those words, it has to a great extent been resolved. We have the guidance of the European court in the Lawless case. The court said:

". . . in the general context of Article 15 . . . the natural and customary meaning of the words 'other public emergency threatening the life of the nation' is sufficiently clear; . . . they refer to an exceptional situation of crisis or emergency . . . which affects the whole population"—

not just the population of Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom, but the whole population—

"and constitutes a threat to the organised life . . . of the community of which the State is composed."

If that was what the Government were describing in the words of their derogation, it ill fits some of the things which they have said about the success of those who are containing the IRA, which was said with the agreement of many of the Opposition and was something which we welcomed. There will be great rejoicing in the IRA at the wording which the Government have now publicly placed on record.

I do not intend to embark on any of the other issues raised by this debate, but, if that issue is questioned before the European Commission and subsequently before the European Court, I venture to predict that the Government will have quite a rough ride. I do not suppose there is much danger of it, but I would not like to be the advocate who had to argue the Government's case. The provision we are discussing is one which other Governments in Europe, who too have experienced terrorism, have found themselves able to live with. Our commitment to the convention should go out from this House to our friends abroad.

Mr. Mallon: I believe that this provision in the Act has caused more problems than any other, because it has been the most widely used part of the legislation, especially in the North of Ireland. The words of the former Secretary of State, Sir Leon Brittan, were quoted by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). The former Secretary of State said in October 1983 that it was a legitimate and necessary use of power to detain people to obtain information.

One need only look at the figures to realise the extent of this appalling exercise. Sixty-nine per cent. of those held in the North of Ireland under this power of detention have been released without charge, and 91 per cent. of those detained in England, Scotland and Wales have been detained without charge. The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) glossed over the point and said that it would be better if people were detained for seven days rather than that they should be killed because of the activities of those involved in terrorism. That is a spurious argument when one considers the figures, the law as it stands and what I believe should be one of the golden rules

of any legal and judicial process, which is that the purpose of the law is to administer justice and to protect the individual as well as society.

The figures speak for themselves, and there can be no doubt that what Leon Brittan confirmed as a fact is something which has continued until this day. It is known in the North of Ireland and readily admitted privately by the Army, by the police, by the people involved and by everyone in the community that the provision is used for that reason. If dogs in the street could talk, they would be saying the same.

Surely the Act was draconian and punitive enough without the Government involving themselves in abuses of it. I believe that the protections in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 should be given in the North of Ireland. I mean not just the implications of the various measures under PACE, but the protection of the codes of practice, because that does not apply under PACE as it applies in the North of Ireland under the Northern Ireland order.

What, therefore, can we rely on for protection? Should we rely on the judges' rules, which are completely unstated and, I believe, not clearly defined by the judges or understood by them? The judiciary would be the first to admit that. Alternatively, should we rely on the codes of practice of the RUC, which were not given to this House, or the codes of practice of the Army, which, under new legislation, would be a matter for prosecution if one were to divulge them? There are no codes of practice for people detained under the Act, which is something which should and could have been put right by applying to those people in the North of Ireland the codes of practice of PACE. Unfortunately, that has not been done, so that there is no protection, because none is provided in any other way.

The reality of temporary derogation is that we cannot be a la carte: we cannot take what we like of European judgments and ignore what we do not like. We must abide by the rules. If we do not, we will be seen as acting as bad Europeans. We must ensure at all times that we have a proper supply of inverted commas in our pockets so that they can be put around such words as temporary, when we see how long temporary may be in this type of decision.

I believe that the Secretary of State has three choices in relation to the Brogan decision. He should obey the decision of the director of the European Court, he should change the laws so that they accord with those which exist in the rest of Europe, or he should simply derogate. I believe he has chosen the worst of all worlds. He has done something that will not help to resolve the problem. It will add to the feeling that, when it comes to dealing with the problem of justice in the North of Ireland and the choice between retaining the integrity of justice and the Government's commitments in Europe, they will opt to behave in such a way that not only shows contempt for the European Court of Human Rights and the European convention on human rights—the British Government played a central role in developing them—but demonstrates that they are prepared to pursue an atavistic attitude that is endemic to them. In the last analysis, that atavism will be one of the downfalls of the Government because it is destroying the integrity of the law and the integrity of justice, which must be the foundations of any free society.

6.30 pm

Apart from the contempt the Government have shown for Europe and its laws, it is intrinsically wrong for the Government to show such scant regard for the basic concepts of human rights. They are throwing them out of the window, but, sooner or later, there must come an end to repressive punitive legislation. Someone must call a halt because we are almost at the end of the road and, once we reach it, we must then row back up the river against the tide. The Bill represents one more waterfall on the way back to the type of normality that alone will solve the problems in the North of Ireland.

The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) made a dangerous claim when he said, I believe with some pleasure, that there was a war going on in the North of Ireland. The only people who want to believe that there is a war are those fighting it. For years the Provisional IRA has said that its prisoners should be treated as prisoners of war. Hence the problems in the p ons with people in compounds who are not treated as ordinary prisoners and who believe themselves to be prisoners of war. To confirm that what the Provisional IRA has said all along is correct —that the country regards itself as being at war—is most dangerous for the people of the North of Ireland. It is also dangerous when one considers that in the light of a publication today and considers it through the minds of those who are on the other side of the coin in the supposed war—those in the Army serving the Government.

Mr. Hunter: I expected that there would be more robust support for the Government's stance from the Conservative Benches, but the mantle falls on me.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) repeated what he has said in Committee about the need to avoid punitive and repressive legislation. Our essential argument is that the Bill is neither but gives the Government the powers necessary to combat an ugly situation.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) delivered his thesis—it is familiar to us and we heard it in Committee from his hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman)—which must be rejected. Surely in Northern Ireland we are dealing with a unique situation. It does not exist in any of the other countries that are signatories to the European convention on human rights. The judgment that the right hon. Gentleman has sought to exploit to his political advantage duly acknowledges that the circumstances in Northern Ireland are unique.

The Government are in the unenviable position of having to seek to reconcile irreconcilable legal traditions. A variety of national legal traditions led to the composition of the European Court of Human Rights which must be reconciled by that court. The legal systems are not the same. On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary referred to the Brogan case and said that, in other European countries, the equivalent to the magistrate plays a much earlier role in the interrogation and investigation process than is the case in this country.

I do not know what my right hon. Friend will say in reply to this debate. He may respond to the judgment in the Brogan case, but I fancy not. I suspect that he will ask for more time and that that request will be well received by Conservative Members. This is such a serious matter that we cannot leap to judgment and we should not try to score

[Mr. Hunter]

cheap political points at each other's expense from it. We want to proceed in a judicial manner. We want to ensure that our procedures are acceptable to other European countries, but our circumstances and traditions are unique. We must ensure that we do not rush into making a judgment that will detract from our ability to combat terrorism.

The powers of arrest and detention enshrined in the Bill are needed to guarantee that we are able to combat terrorism. They should be supported because they are necessary for that purpose. It is also important that we do not rush into making a judgment about how to deal with the Brogan case.

Mr. Maclennan: The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke about the reasonableness of using the power of detention in any circumstance. He and other members of the Labour party have been consistent in arguing that the time for the use of such powers has passed and that they are not prepared to support their use.

Although there is no doubt in my mind that the powers in the Bill are a substantial infringement of a citizen's liberties, are draconian and unwelcome and that it is essential that they should be subjected to periodic scrutiny by the House, the case for retaining them within the prevention of terrorism legislation is powerfully made by the evidence of Lord Colville. That argument is most forcefully and compellingly put in appendix C to the report, which describes the events in the week beginning 25 October 1986 in Scotland. A number of people were held under the detention powers, as a result of which, at the end of that week, 10 individuals were charged with serious criminal offences and were convicted.

Apart from that example, the weight of evidence given by Lord Colville about the use that has been made of the powers by the law enforcement authorities is compelling. It is bound to carry weight with all who review these matters. We shall have to return to this question not only because of what has happened in Europe but because of the sense of repugnance felt by hon. Members about detaining people without the strongest possible arguments about the practical necessity for it.

I shall now turn to the second question posed by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. It is convenient to follow his example because it will enable me to be brief. I have been consistent about derogation from the moment that this problem arose. I have called upon the Home Secretary to seek some means of complying with the judgment and to interpose judicial scrutiny at an appropriate stage in detention. I said that, if he was not able to do that during the passage of the Bill, it would create—here I agree with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook—some international embarrassments. It will raise questions about our willingness to abide by the international rule of law and the provisions made for the international protections of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

The argument has moved on since the Home Secretary first addressed it. I listened with care to what he said in the debate on the timetable motion a week ago, and I have no doubt from what he said then that he and his colleagues are seeking means of complying with the ruling of the court in the Brogan case. I hope he will be able to tell us that some means of complying with the judgment will be possible, although he said earlier that that is extremely unlikely before the passage of the legislation is completed. He and his colleagues are engaged in a quest for a means of complying with the judgment of the court. I hope that he can tell us that he is somewhat more optimistic than when he spoke on the subject last week, when he said that he was engaged in an uphill struggle. Those who are responsible for the maintenance of law and order in Britain would do well to co-operate with the Secretary of State in his quest because it is of great assistance to this country to be able to remain fully within the ambit of the convention.

I do not think that the consequences of derogation are as the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) described them. The Labour Government in which he was Solicitor-General derogated from the European convention in 1978 on the issue of detention in respect of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. That derogation lasted until 1980 when the use of the powers in the Act were suspended. That was an unfortunate derogation, and many regretted that the Government of the day thought it necessary. However, that was the Labour Government's judgment and the House accepted it. The Home Secretary now judges it to be necessary. Unpalatable though it may be, we shall return to the issue regularly and frequently because we are not persuaded that it is impossible—although it may be difficult to do it now——

Mr. Archer *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: I wish to conclude, because I know that the Home Secretary wishes to speak, but I shall give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Archer: Would the hon. Gentleman at least remind the House that, when the Labour Government derogated from the convention, they did so in respect of part of the territory of the United Kingdom—Northern Ireland? They did not undertake to prove that there was a danger to the national existence of the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclennan: I am not at all clear that, when the Labour Government derogated from the convention, they sought to justify it in the precise language that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has used. I have the terms of the note that was put before the Council of Europe, and it does not spell out the provisions in the manner in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggests. Be that as it may, the Government of the day thought that it was necessary, and that was not questioned. The Home Secretary has given evidence of his good faith and intention in this matter, and I hope that the House will support him in pushing to achieve the judicial review process that is necessary to maintain our position on the international protection of human rights. I deeply regret that so far he has not been able to do that, because that would have made his task with the House and the country much easier. I hope that, before the Bill leaves the other place, which may be in a matter of weeks, that will yet prove possible.

6.45 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The debate has been quietly conducted, but the discussion on the amendment is about the risks that we are prepared to run with terrorism. The amendment would be prepared to run risks that are unacceptable. The House has again been searching to find a balance between the protection of the community as a whole and the protection of the legal rights of the individual. We think that the balance is rightly struck in the Bill, and that the amendment would tilt it unacceptable against the safety of the community.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) conveniently organised discussion under three headings. I agree that his first heading is the most important, so I shall deal briefly with the other two. The Brogan judgment did not say that it was wrong or illegal to detain an individual without charge for seven days. It could hardly have done so, because in France, for example, the limit for detention without charge is four months. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) was right in what he said about the different legal positions.

The Brogan judgment said that a judicial mechanism needed to be interposed so that some independent person could review detention after a certain time. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and I have been entirely open with the House and the Committee about this. I am quite clear in my mind that it would not be safe to leave the police without the power of detention. The nature of terrorism, which we all read about over Christmas and the new year, bears that out.

Of course we would have preferred not to derogate, and the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) was right when he said that this is not a subject to be taken lightly as a matter of convenience. We continue to look for a judicial mechanism; the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) gave a fair account of that quest. I cannot add to the information that I gave him on the subject last week. I said that there were three jurisdictions and that we could not have consulted judges on a hypothetical basis. Had we done so, we would probably have gone well astray, because the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights was not the simple rejection of the use of a power, but was on the proviso that I have mentioned.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook argued that in some way we should have held up the Bill until the position was clear. I entirely accept that the timing is awkward for the Government and the House, but the right hon. Gentleman left out of account the fact that, unless the Bill containing the detention power passes into law by 21 March, the present Act will expire and the power will fall. That could not be justified.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West dealt in some detail and quite legitimately with the grounds of article 15. His argument was somewhat torpedoed by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland. I am leaving out the question about a time of war, because I agree with the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). There are many reasons why it is a mistake to discuss this situation as a time of war, and we are not required to do so under article 15 of the convention. The relevant phrase is:

"public emergency threatening the life of the nation".

We are all one nation and one people. Although the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West derogated for Northern Ireland alone, since the terrorist campaign began there have been in Northern Ireland nearly 3,000 deaths and over 30,000 injured and in Britain, nearly 100 deaths and over 1,400 injured. Recent reported events show the extent of the threat, and that it affects more than just one part of the Province or one part of the kingdom.

On the central point, it is our firm and considered view that in some cases—a small number—the police should have more time than the maximum available under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. My hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) was right on that. Terrorist investigations tend to be considerably more complex than the cases dealt with normally under that Act. I need not repeat the argument of Lord Colville on this point, and the different examples that he gave, or those given by my hon. Friend the Minister in Committee. However, those examples made the point, and the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook has not addressed them.

I can give two more examples. On 29 April 1986, the police arrested five people in a flat in Strabane and a search of the premises revealed two grenade launchers, two grenades, three rifles and a quantity of ammunition. An extension of detention was authorised to enable the police to await the results of forensic and ballistic tests and to question each man in detail about his involvement. On the fifth day of detention, as a result of this work, the police were able to charge all five men with a variety of terrorist offences. They were later convicted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

My second example came within my time in office. We received information of the presence in this country, and in this part of the country, of people planning terrorist attacks on behalf of the Abu Nidal terrorist organisation. I allowed three days of extended detention. This led to further arrests. I authorised further detentions in respect of six of the suspects for the full five days permitted by the Act, and as a result, I was able to authorise deportation orders, on national security grounds, of all six people concerned. That is a clear example, for only by the use of the extension of detention power in the Act were possible acts of terrorism averted by the proper use of deportation procedure. It could not have been done without that information.

The case is clear, and it is reasonable to require that people detained in this way should have safeguards. They exist under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in this part of the kingdom. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh spoke about the situation in the Province, but as he knows that there are safeguards in place—there is not much secret about that—following the action taken after the Bennett report in 1979.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the Home Secretary for pointing out that there are technical safeguards. What safeguards for people held in Northern Ireland under emergency legislation are written into codes of practice or statute?

Mr. Hurd: I am talking about what is in place as a result of changes made after the Bennett report. There has been widespread discussion about the extent of those, and I believe that the situation is adequate.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, and the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, made the point—that

[Mr. Hurd]

the legislation is essentially pre-emptive. It is designed to prevent acts of terrorism, and its powers are often exercised while terrorist crimes are being prepared. The fact that a terrorist is not charged does not invalidate the grounds on which the detention was made. In answer to the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, there has to be an intention on the part of the police to develop their suspicion to the point where they have evidence to jusify charges or to consider applying for exclusion or, as in the Abu Nidal case, deportation orders. He was unfair in his quotations from my immediate predecessor, because my predecessor was talking, quite clearly, about the possible results, and not the purpose, of such investigation.

If I thought that there was no purpose beyond gathering intelligence, I would not authorise an extension of a period of detention. Often, the discussions that take place on a request for an extension revolve around that point. In some cases, preparations may not have gone far enough for charges to be brought, or the information available to the police may be too sensitive to be brought before a court, or it may not be admissible in evidence. The case for this power, which was not introduced by the Conservative party, remains valid. Under the law, such a power could not be and should not be used widely. It should be used sparingly, but because of the nature of terrorism, it is needed. I am grateful for the support of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland on that point.

If we did away with this power, which would be the effect of the amendment, we would in a small number of cases, but a small number of important cases, be imperilling the public. We are not inventing this power —we are simply trying to prevent the Opposition from removing it. The amendment would put citizens at risk. Arguably the prime purpose of Government is to provide the necessary protection for our people, who are looking to us for that protection. We should not do anything that would withdraw or weaken that protection. Therefore, I advise the House not to accept this amendment.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary has been kind enough to leave me three minutes to offer our comments on his justification for his proposal, and I do so in the form in which I began the debate. First, I shall discuss the principle. The Home Secretary is at best ambivalent in his attempt to describe the real meaning and purpose of the powers. He said that detentions were made only when the police officer had a genuine wish to proceed, and the genuine intention of proceeding, with criminal charges. If that is the case, there must be many frustrated and disappointed police officers, for they are constantly making detentions under these powers which do not lead to prosecution. It is only reasonable to assume that, time after time, detention is made without any real expectation that a prosecution will follow in the case of the man who is arrested.

It is all very well for the Home Secretary to say that we did less than justice to his predecessor, but the quotations from that person were exact in every particular. The Home Secretary of the day, in introducing the extension and continuation of these powers, said that it was wholly legitimate, and approved by the courts, that these powers should be used either as a deterrent or in order to trawl for information. Mr. Barry Porter *indicated assent*. Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) nods, honestly and honourably, as he should, because he advocated use of these powers for exactly that purpose.

The Home Secretary must not, or at least should not, tell the House that the powers exist but will not be used in a way that most people regard as reprehensible, because if the powers are there and can be used for that purpose, there may one day be a Home Secretary less reasonable than the right hon. Gentleman. Who knows, Sir Leon Brittan may be rehabilitated and repainted back into the Cabinet photograph from which he has been removed, and may again adopt the view that he was open in adopting when he commended these powers to the House.

I am disappointed with the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who is always on the side of liberty, but not enough to vote for it. In many ways, he demonstrated the position of a reluctant Liberal—a reluctant Liberal with a capital L and, today, a reluctant liberal with a small one—anxious to show that he has the libertarian qualifications, but unwilling to express them in the Division Lobby.

Much more important than the hon. Gentleman is the attitude taken by the Home Secretary to our reputation in the world. I did not make any point concerning public relations. Public relations in these matters are unimportant. However, I did refer to the general political reputation of this country as a genuine democracy, which applies the rules of democracy even when it is inconvenient to do so. That applies to our success in fighting terrorism as well as to our general reputation in the world. It is assumed that, by taking such draconian and arbitrary powers, the war against terrorism will be won.

It seems to us that, time after time, we are losing battles against terrorism. Genuine, honest and decent-minded people are worried about our real commitment to liberty and democracy. Unless we convince the law-abiding population of Northern Ireland that we are on the right side, we will not win the battle and, for that reason, we press the amendment.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant, to the order [23 January] and the resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the amendment be made.:—
The House divided: Ayes 134, Noes 241.

Division No. 60] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank

Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bottomley, Peter
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trotter, Neville

Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: No. 4, in clause 15 in page 10, line 5 leave out 'if necessary by force'.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Schedule 5

Port and Border Control

7.15 pm

Ms. Mowlam: I beg to move amendment No. 24, in page 47, line 43, at end insert

'and may not be a strip search (that is, a search involving the removal of more than the outer clothing.)'

Mr. Speaker: With this we may take amendment No. 26, in clause 22, page 15, line 15 leave out 'one-third' and insert 'one-half'.

Ms. Mowlam: We shall speak briefly on amendment No. 24, as we went into the subject at some length in Committee.

Opposition Members consider that strip searching as practised in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales is humiliating and degrading to women. We do not believe that it fulfils any meaningful security purpose. We do not wish to change the nature of intimate searches or to stop the security forces from being able to examine clothes; we understand the need for specific items of clothing to be examined when someone is going into or out of prison. We see no point, however, in strip searching as it now exists. We do not think that a visual examination of an unclothed man's or woman's body serves any valid security function, and we should like to know why the Government consider it necessary. Opposition Members would argue that there are alternatives such as rub-down searches, and that many mechanical instruments can be used without inflicting the humiliation of a strip search.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I do not want to be difficult, but I am sure that the hon. Lady will appreciate that amendment No. 24 is limited to examining officers under the port and border controls in schedule 5. The broad issues that the hon. Lady is discussing do not fall under the amendment.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I understood that we were talking about a right for examining officers to strip-search any visitor to the United Kingdom from anywhere else, or anyone leaving the country or crossing the border in Ireland. The general question of strip searching for anyone crossing those borders is what is at issue.

Ms. Mowlam: That is exactly the point that I am making. The Minister was correct to point out that the amendment relates specifically to port of entry, but we want to get across the fundamental arguments that we discussed in Committee, while—as my hon. Friend says—relating them particularly, on this amendment, to entry at ports into Northern Ireland or the mainland. It is the principle with which Opposition Members are concerned.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does the hon. Lady agree that it is scandalous that men are prepared to use women to carry bombs, knowing full well that those women will be blown up? We must do something to protect such women against themselves.

Ms. Mowlam: It is scandalous for men, women or children to carry bombs, but I do not agree that this kind of strip searching deals with the problem. We accept the need for rub-down searches, examination of clothing and, when there is reasonable suspicion, intimate examinations. Can the hon. Lady explain how a bomb can be carried by a woman whose clothes have been taken off? It is the visual examination to which we object. We understand the need for searches when there is reasonable suspicion, but strip searches merely allow the humiliation and degradation of women.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *indicated dissent.*

Ms. Mowlam: The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) shakes her head, but the present arrangement is ridiculous. An individual will be examined, but a pram containing a baby will not be. The Government's position is illogical and inconsistent. We are asking not only for consistency and logicality, but for the rights of women placed in such a position to be defended.

Mr. Hunter: Can the hon. Lady explain why a strip search is more humiliating for a woman than for a man?

Ms. Mowlam: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but if he reads the records of women who have been strip-searched in Northern Ireland he will understand why it is so humiliating. Six or seven male prison officers—in the main, prison officers are not female—will stand around a woman who has been asked to take her clothes off, chatting, gossiping and making rude comments about her body. It is not a question of security, as the hon. Member for Lancaster tried to suggest, but of degradation—and that is what we object to. We understand the nature of security but that is not what strip searching is about.

Ms. Short: As I understand it, the amendment applies to the strip searching of men and women. I say to the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) that there is no question but that women find the idea of being strip searched deeply offensive. Men make less fuss. I do not know whether men do not mind running around naked in front of each other and having their bodies examined, but most women find the idea deeply repulsive.

Ms. Mowlam: I am sure that the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) will respond when he wants to.

Alternatives are available. I am sure that Conservative Members will remember that when the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) was directly concerned with Northern Ireland affairs, he said that he would investigate and consider alternatives to strip searching. The time to do that is now here.

There has been an improvement in security instruments, and if they are good enough for the House of Commons and airports they should be applied to prisons. There is no need for strip searching as it is done now.

Opposition Members are not alone in pressing such an argument. Many organisations that have studied the matter in detail also call for strip searching to be abandoned or changed. Those organisations include Amnesty International, A Christian Response to Strip Searching, the TUC, the Student Christian Movement of Ireland, the Irish Information Partnership, the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Government's own advisory body, the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. The Prison Officers Association has called for a review of practices in prisons, both in Northern Ireland and on the mainland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I hate to be tiresome but the amendment has nothing to do with strip searching in prisons. It is exclusively related to strip searching by examining officers under the port control powers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I shall tell the hon. Lady when and if she is out of order.

Ms. Mowlam: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister's point highlights my argument. We are particularly concerned that the port powers can be administered by a customs officer or an examining officer. There is a host of individuals who may not have the training, experience or knowledge of prison officers. We are even more worried that such individuals may be involved in strip searching. We oppose strip searching in prisons; in relation to port powers it is even more worrying and threatening.

I am sure that the Minister will well remember the discussions we had in Committee about the standard of facilitie and rooms at many of the ports. We are anxious about the standard of facilities in prisons—I am sure that the Minister can stretch his mind to the anology—and even more concerned about those at ports. We are more worried when people are less protected and more open to abuse by people seeing what is happening.

Ms. Short: I am surprised that the Minister protests so much. We are talking about the power of examining officers—without needing to have reasonable suspicion —to take the clothes off any individual who comes into or leaves our country. The examining officers are entitled to strip-search anybody to find out whether he or she might have done something in breach of this legislation. "Welcome to Britain," we say to tourists. "We might force you to take off your clothes completely if we feel like it, if we spot you and pick on you."

We know that, when we give these powers to examining officers——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Lady and her hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) are taking this to extremes. The amendment refers to the "removal of more than the outer clothing."
People have to take off rather more than a mackintosh —there is nothing about stripping naked.

Ms. Short: I am afraid that the hon. Lady has not followed this subject closely. I shall describe a strip search. A woman is required to take off every article of clothing, including her underclothing, which is examined piece by piece by the examining officer. If she is menstruating she is required to remove her sanitary protection and have it examined, too. That is what we continually do in prisons in this country.

The amendment would prevent us from doing this to people who visit our country, or cross the border between the Six Counties of Northern Ireland and the 26 counties of the South, which is what many people who live in those parts do all the time. It is unbelievable that the amendment is unacceptable. It is serious enough to take the power to strip-search if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion, but I can see a case for the Government doing so. Strip searching without reasonable grounds is giving examining officers a blanket power.

As I said, we know that the officers will not strip-search everyone. They will suspect certain categories of people —for instance, younger people of Irish origin. There are 80 million people of Irish extraction in the world, 40 million of them Americans. Examining officers tend to be suspicious of younger people from the Arab world—obviously, there has been a history of terrorist action in that region. They tend to suspect young people from Africa who might be sympathetic to the ANC and its struggle in southern Africa.

This power enables examining officers to instruct people to take off all their clothes without those officers needing to have reasonable cause for suspicion. I cannot believe how complacently the Minister interrupted my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) to say that, as this was not about prisoners, she should not be so concerned. It is even more intolerable that people visiting our country should potentially be subjected to this kind of treatment, and that there should be no restraint on Government powers.

I have studied strip searching is some detail. I visited Armagh gaol, where it started, but it is now spreading through all our gaols, and it particularly affects women prisoners. I must tell the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) that I do not know why men do not find strip searching as objectionable as women do. However, we know from the protests that women find it deeply offensive, and that other women are offended by the thought of women being treated in this way. Remand prisoners are treated like this twice a day—it is a continual process of humiliation.

A woman who is determined to smuggle an object can smuggle it internally. We are given all sorts of assurances all the time by prison governors that they will never move to forcible internal searches. We now have technology that is capable of detecting anything dangerous—for instance, the bomb referred to by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman). It would be more efficient to use sensitive detection equipment to pick up something that might be carried internally than to force people to take off their clothes and have their underwear and sanitary protection examined.

Strip searching is unnecessary. There are better ways, using the available equipment, of ensuring that nothing is being smuggled, than putting people through this humiliation.

The Government stress the money that can come into the United Kingdom from tourism, but with the value of the pound moving up so quickly we may hear less of that. In any event, the message will be something like this: "Welcome to Britain. If we feel like it, we can force you to take off your clothes before you come in. We can do so without having any reason to suspect you of anything. We are entitled to look to see whether you may be committing an offence under the Bill. After your holiday we can do it to you again before you leave the country."

[Ms. Short]

7.30pm

Many hon. Members do not appreciate that, because the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic is not a natural or historical one, there are those who live near the border who cross it constantly. They cross it when they go to church. Some farmers have fields on both sides of the border. That is true of many members of my family. The Bill takes the power to strip-search any woman who lives in the border area. That could be done daily if the authorities chose to do so. None of us thinks that the situation has deteriorated to the extent that the powers would be used constantly on everyone, but they are being taken in the Bill. Unless the Minister is willing to accept the amendment—it should be acceptable to him—the warning is that our officials will be entitled, if they feel like it, to strip-search any man or woman who enters or leaves the country, or crosses the border between Northern Ireland and the 26 counties. They will be able to do that whenever they feel like it to search for information.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said that strip searches are unpleasant and that they should be avoided at all costs. There is something in what she says, but she must consider allowing strip searching within the context that we are discussing, which is not the ordinary one. The schedule provides for examination on arrival or on departure. The second paragraph sets out the situations in which someone can be searched on entering the country or leaving it. It is clear that those who may be searched will have given rise to suspicion among officers of Customs and Excise, the police and the security services. If they have given rise to the suspicion that they are involved in terrorism, the issue will have to be pursued.

We are talking of those who have not been able to give a satisfactory explanation of their movements to an officer who is responsible for the security of the people of the United Kingdom. That is why he will possibly proceed to a strip search. It is an extraordinary power to deal with an extraordinary set of circumstances. Terrorism is not a normal activity. If someone is suspected of terrorism, surely there are circumstances in which the power of strip searching, which the hon. Member for Ladywood dislikes so much, can be exercised. I am sure that no one would advocate that it should be exercised unless he or she feels that its use is absolutely necessary.

Ms. Short: Unless I have misread the schedule, the hon. Gentleman appears to have misdescribed the Bill. Irrespective of whether an examining officer has grounds for suspicion, he will have the power to proceed to a strip search. That is one of my complaints. There do not have to be reasonable grounds for suspicion. The examinig officer will have the power to subject anyone to that sort of examination.

Mr. Hind: This is where common sense enters into it. Paragraph 2(1) of schedule 5 provides:

"Any person who has arrived in, or is seeking to leave, Great Britain or Northern Ireland by ship or aircraft may be examined by an examining officer for the purpose of determining—

(a) whether that person appears to be a person who is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism".

The paragraph then refers to exclusion orders. Sub-paragraph (c) refers to:

"grounds for suspecting that any such person has committed an offence under section 8 of this Act."

The power that we are discussing must be built on top of all the other powers that have been given to the police and the immigration officers at the ports. It applies especially to those who come into the United Kingdom as immigrants who might be illegal or who might be bringing in drugs, arms or whatever. No officer will search someone for the sake of doing so. He will proceed to strip-search only if a suspicion is raised in his mind.

Ms. Short: Then let us put that in the Bill.

Mr. Hind: It is a bit late to do that.

Ms. Short: Ask the Minister.

Mr. Hind: We are talking of a power that is being given to deal with terrorism. It is there for all to see.

Under the Bill, an officer must satisfy himself that the person with whom he is dealing is not involved in terrorism. Under other legislation he has the same power to search. He will be able to search for drugs, for example. Is the hon. Lady saying that we should not allow strip searches in other circumstances such as those which involved drugs, for example? Is she saying that no member of the security services and no police officer will be allowed to strip-search for anything?

Ms. Mowlam: The hon. Gentleman has spoken of common sense. He has developed an argument, however, and reached conclusions that lack common sense. He says that no officer would embark on a strip-search without having sufficient evidence that it was necessary. Is he arguing analogously that, of the 38,178 who were arrested in the past four years under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, there was specific information in relation to them all? Since the beginning of the PTA, 344,650 houses have been searched. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that there was reasonable evidence in relation to each of those houses? That would appear to be the logic that he is deploying.

Mr. Hind: With your leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall try to stay within order.

The hon. Lady advances a good argument, and she has put her finger on one of the extraordinary features of terrorism. The power to strip-search in certain circumstances is an extraordinary one that is intended to deal with extraordinary circumstances. It is not easy to secure evidence against alleged terrorists that will stand up in court. Witnesses are intimidated. They are frightened and they will not come forward. The consequence of that is the power to place exclusion orders. They are used where we know that there is evidence and that if the witnesses would come forward it would stand up in court. In dealing with straightforward criminal law, as with terrorism, a person who is arrested may be interviewed by the police to ascertain whether he will pass on information, under caution, that will assist in building a case against him. That is entirely normal. No one complains about that procedure when the police use it in dealing with ordinary crime.

When someone is arrested under the 1984 Act and he says nothing, and as a consequence there is no evidence against him other than that of witnesses or complainants who will not come to court because they are likely to be

intimidated, there will be complaints from Opposition Members if the accused person is released. We must examine our procedures within that context.

If we exclude the power to strip-search at our ports —it relates specifically to terrorism—we shall create an anomally. In some circumstances, we shall allow strip searches when there is a suspicion of drug carrying, for example, and in others, especially those related to terrorism, we shall not.

May I go on to show why, in some circumstances, we cannot allow that to happen? People who wish to bring in items or papers relating to terrorism will use a great deal of ingenuity to conceal them. It may be necessary to ask them—men or women—to remove their clothes so that their ingenuity can be discovered. The explosive Semtex is an interesting example. It is odourless and non-metallic and cannot be detected by the machines about which the hon. Member for Ladywood talked. If it was placed underneath clothing, or sewn into clothes so that it could not be detected by touch, a strip search would have to take place to discover it.

There are many similar examples. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who has served with me on many criminal law Bills, could give examples of people concealing items—often drugs—in the body, either internally or in the body orifices.

Ms. Short: How is that relevant to a strip search?

Mr. Hind: That is the only way in which such items can be discovered.

Ms. Mowlam: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point. Our amendment would not avoid intimate searches, so it would be possible to search body orifices. The amendment does not argue that clothes should not be examined. We have allowed for clothes to be passed out so that officers can look, for example, for items sewn into hems. We are trying to stop men's or women's bodies being visually examined, which we believe is illogical, irrational and counter-productive.

Mr. Hind: This is at the root of the problem. If someone conceals something within the orifices of his body, how else will it be found? The amendment would create a farce. A full strip search would be allowed under ordinary legislation, perhaps in relation to drugs. Does the officer at the port say, "Under the amendment to the schedule, I cannot search for anything related to terrorism"? Suddenly he will become interested in drugs and say, "I am strip-searching this person to look for drugs." If the port authorities are as devious as the Opposition suggest, they could do that without difficulty. The amendment would create inconsistency and, at the end of the day, nonsense.

Ms. Short: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would choose his words more carefully. Items that are carried internally are not caught by a strip search, so the hon. Gentleman has wasted much of his case on the possibility of people smuggling items internally. A strip search is not part of an internal examination. If people are determined to smuggle something, they can do so internally, so that making them take their clothes off will not be effective. Of course, if they are carrying nothing, it is humiliating.

Mr. Hind: I disagree forcefully with the hon. Lady. I have been involved in drugs cases where Customs officers, by strip-searching the courier coming through the port, were able to remove drugs from inside the body orifices. Those drugs were seen as soon as the clothing was removed. I appreciate that the hon. Lady is talking about a full internal search, but I am not. I am talking, from hard experience of dealing with similar cases, about the common-sense way of doing it, and I believe that it is necessary to have a strip search.

7.45 pm

As the hon. Member for Ladywood said, the border between the Six Counties and the Republic is not a natural border. It is very long and impossible to police adequately, and people do not always cross it using roads. They go down many of the cart tracks that criss-cross the border. But the majority of the arms, explosives and equipment used by the IRA is brought into Northern Ireland via that border. Many of them are brought into the Republic from all over the world. People who cross the border immediately come under suspicion, and they are the sort of people whom sub-paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of paragraph 2(1) are designed to catch. They must explain their movements——

Ms. Short: They live there. They go there in the ordinary course of their lives.

Mr. Hind: I appreciate that.

People who have an honest and legitimate explanation for their movements have nothing to fear. Anyone who is carrying on his business normally has nothing to fear from the schedule. But if people cannot give an adequate explanation, there must be further investigation. Common sense applies very much in this regard. It is nonsense for the hon. Lady to say that the people who live there and who cross the border regularly should be exempt from strip searches. Those are exactly the people who should be searched, if they cannot give a reasonable explanation. They must be asked, "If you have nothing to fear, why do you not go through the normal check points? Why do you cross fields or use cart tracks?"

This is an unusual power to deal with a difficult problem. Had it not been for the horrors and the disasters caused by terrorism, I am sure that the House would not even consider such a power. But it is necessary, and I urge my hon. Friends to vote against the amendment.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Having heard the speeches of the hon. Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), one would have to be extraordinarily insensitive not to appreciate their argument. I do not know whether there is any value in pursuing the question whether men are less offended than women by intimate searches and strip searches, but I speak for most men when I say that I would find it a degrading experience which I hope never to undergo. I cannot believe that it is probably reasonable to say that it would be even worse for women.

We must start from that point. I have always believed that if someone is innocent, the sense, not just of shame and embarrassment, but of sheer outrage on being subjected to such an examination would be greater than almost any other experience at the hands of the Executive arm of the Government.

That is the inevitable prelude to my next point, which is that we must consider what the Bill exists to do and under what general power the power of search exists. The Bill provides the framework within which to deal with the

[Mr. Steve Norris]

extraordinary and unique situation in the United Kingdom. Of necessity we convey to officers under schedule 5 wide powers to enable them to deal with an adversary who, on any logical interpretation, will use whatever processes, devices, tricks and methods of concealment are available to help him or her to achieve an evil and detestable object—the maiming of innocent people.

It is significant that the Bill never mentions intimate searches or strip searches, but simply gives officers the power to search. The hon. Member for Ladywood knows that well, because she knows the subject better than I do and I defer to her experience. Paragraph 4(2) of schedule 5 says that an examining officer may

"search that person and any baggage belonging to him"

in accordance with the powers and responsibilities vested in that officer under paragraph 2. That power must, deliberately, be wide and my first concern about the amendment—I do not say "objection", because the amendment does not justify that word; whatever else, it is clearly proposed in a spirit of humanity and concern for the rights of women—is that as soon as one qualifies a search and says that only certain parts of the body may be searched, or certain items of luggage or clothing, one immediately gives the terrorist—the only person with whom we are concerned—the avenue he seeks. The terrorist will know that he or she has the right not to be subjected to a particular type of search and, bearing that in mind, will devise an appropriate method of concealment.

The hon. Member for Ladywood mentioned the searching of a pram but she knows of the diffidence and reluctance of members of the security services about searching a pram and making a mother take her baby out of the pram and throw the clothing to one side to see what is underneath the pram. But she also knows—it is a matter of great sadness to millions of women in this country and in the Province—that such diffidence has resulted in devices being carried in prams and those devices have caused death to innocent mothers and babies. My anxiety is that, the minute the power of search is qualified, in the way the amendment seeks, we tie the hands of the officers and that is inconsistent with providing the necessary power to ensure that a thorough search is carried out when it is needed for the examining officer's inquiry.

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that a fundamental frame that we have used in law when talking about restricting people's liberties or locking them up is to give power to the Executive to carry out those actions when there is reasonable cause. Would it not be better, if we are giving officers the power to strip off people's clothes, to provide that there must be some grounds for suspicion before that power can be used?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Lady has made a good point about the width of the powers given to examining officers. Were it not for the exceptional context of this legislation, the House would be well advised to examine that power in great detail.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Norris: I shall give way when I have finished my reply to the hon. Lady.

I do not believe that under the power given by the Bill to search to determine

"whether that person appears to be a person who is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism to which this paragraph applies",

one can start with sufficient evidence for a prima facie case before one is allowed to search. We all know that in the context of normal customs investigations, customs officers who are experienced in such matters look at a queue of people passing through the green and red channels and occasionally they will ask a person in the green channel to stop and they will ask a few more questions than usual about his trip and what he is carrying. They do so for a combination of reasons, one of which is that such a random search shows others that it is not worth while to abuse the privilege of ease of passage that the green channel gives.

Another reason is that the officers have built up years of experience from which they can identify tell-tale signs that lead them to say: "I don't know what it is, but something about the person worries me. I may have seen him before and he is acting in a way I regard as suspicious." That is the basis on which an experienced investigating officer works. To define that in law other than in the broadest terms is genuinely difficult and we should be careful about that when drafting. None the less, that power is a necessary one to give to officers.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as well as dealing with Irish terrorism, which is the main stream of the Bill, the schedule also refers to other types of terrorism? We are dealing not only with Northern Ireland, but with international terrorists who come through our airports in situations such as my hon. Friend has outlined. That is why the powers are necessary.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend made that point when he raised the subject of drugs and the necessity for officers to have wide powers to search for drugs. The issue is the same, and the Bill is concerned with the prevention not only of Irish terrorism but of terrorism generally.

I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) for not having given way to him. However, I am delighted and flattered that he is taking such an interest in my speech. I trust that he will stay for the end of it, which will arrive shortly. I want first to make the point that the hon. Member for Ladywood knows that the Bill requires that a search of the person may be carried out only by a person of the same sex. I regard that to be as necessary as the hon. Lady considers it to be. It provides some protection from prurient interest and from exploitation of an intimate examination to which the hon. Members for Ladywood and for Redcar have both rightly referred. We should be adamant in ensuring that that provision continues.

The Bill is almost unique in our current parliamentary framework, in that Parliament renews annually powers that, wisely, it has not taken to itself in perpetuity. The rationale for that is that the situation in the Province changes each year, so each year the House endeavours to ensure that the restrictions we put on freedom of the individual and freedom of passage to and from the United Kingdom and across the sea is only as severe as is appropriate to the threat to the peaceful order of the country at the time.

The hon. Member for Ladywood introduced the idea that perhaps the searches could be carried out by machine. My understanding is that, sadly, that is not the case. I say "sadly" because I assure her that if satisfactory evidence were available that machines that could be applied externally were utterly foolproof and that examination for substances or objects could take place without the necessity for anyone to take off any article of clothing—inner or outer—I would want this provision removed from the Bill. However, sadly, I do not believe that that is the case.

Mr. Greg Knight: Does my hon. Friend agree that the main point is that most law-abiding people are prepared to accept some embarrassment if that means that the risk of them, their neighbours or relatives being killed is diminished?

8 pm

Mr. Norris: We all accept the intellectual logic of my hon. Friend's argument. He makes a reasonable point which, I hope, is the reaction of most honest people who are asked where they have been on holiday when they arrive back in this country with their perfectly lawful duty-free allowances.

I am prepared to accept that the hon. Members for Ladywood and for Redcar have reflected the genuine sense of outrage which not only women, but men, feel if an examination goes further than merely cross-questioning or further than a cursory examination such as one has every time one travels on an aeroplane, and involves taking off clothing and so on. I accept that that process involves indignity and that it is one to which we should never subject people without overriding reasons. Those overriding reasons exist in the context of the prevention of terrorism. As there is not at this stage a satisfactory technical alternative, those powers must remain until that technical alternative is available.

Ms. Mowlam: Our point followed a statement made by the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) when he was a Minister at the Northern Ireland Office. He said that he would review the procedures in relation to alternatives. Does the hon. Gentleman know whether the Northern Ireland Office has carried out such a review? We are concerned because sometimes words are cheap, but the actions cost a little more.

Mr. Norris: I am not answerable for the promises or undertakings given now by my hon. Friend, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who expresses exactly the point that I am seeking to make, although more succinctly.

Our aim is to prevent terrorism and to examine people who enter this country to determine whether they are bringing in with them explosives, weapons or any other items that they might use in the commission of terrorism. The aim is not gratuitously to offend either women or men. Although I cannot speak for my hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), I repeat that if I were satisfied that a satisfactory technical alternative existed which would mean that it was clearly and demonstrably unnecessary for anyone to remove any item other than rainwear, I should be the first to say, "Let us thankfully take the power out of the Bill." I believe that there would be unanimous support across the House for that view. However—when the hon. Member for Redcar reflects on this, I am sure that she will agree that this is the case—there is at best equivocal evidence that such a technical facility exists, and at worst the suspicion that our technical expertise in that area is not up to the dangerous task in hand.

Mr. Heffer: I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) since his return to the House. Having listened to some of his hon. Friends, it is a real pleasure to listen to him because he has a somewhat different and more humane approach. I take on board his honesty in this matter. I do not believe that he wants to see strip searching or any other type of searching that could cause humiliation. I believe that he is genuine about that, and I understand the dilemma that he is in —and frankly we are all in—on this matter.

Let us examine what happens in relation to stopping terrorists or potential terrorists from getting into other places. Nowadays it is clearly vital that we have measures of protection at party conferences. That is obviously the case for the party in government, but we in opposition also do the same—although up to a point I cannot understand why. We prevent, for example, people entering the hotels at which the hierarchy are staying. However, as far as I know, no one who enters the portals of the Conservative party conference is strip-searched. Of course, they are searched effectively, as we are. In fact, I get a bit fed up with it at times because the security people look under one's fingernails, under one's coat, up the bottom of one's trousers and goodness knows where else. To say the least, it can be slightly annoying, but one understands that it has to be done. However, as I have said, nobody is strip-searched.

Day after day, people enter the House of Commons. I well remember some events in the House before security was tightened. I remember somebody throwing a smoke bomb—thank God it was not a real bomb.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: That happened twice.

Mr. Heffer: Yes, there were two. I also remember a farming gentleman throwing something other than a bomb. It landed over here and made quite a mess. Rightly, efforts were made to protect Members of Parliament somewhat more effectively than they had been protected before, but nobody who comes to the House of Commons is strip-searched.

Those are three places where, despite strict protection, nobody is strip-searched——

Mr. Greg Knight: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument, and I am not sure whether he is making a good point. First, will he accept from me that each delegate who attends the Tory party conference must produce a security pass which has a photograph appended to it? That is a little different from encountering a couple of people dressed as farmers in a country lane in Ireland.

Secondly, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that police dogs enter the House before the House sits, and that they not only sniff out the Chamber for explosives, but go upstairs.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): The dogs come in when no one is here.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has made a good point. The dogs come in when nobody is here—apart from a few people walking about.

[Mr. Heffer]

I agree that people coming to this country must have a passport, but if such people come from Northern Ireland, they are United Kingdom citizens. Although people may come here from another country by way of Northern Ireland, people from Northern Ireland are citizens of this country.

This is a difficult problem. I am not saying that it is easy. I am not arguing that we should do nothing because this issue is of no consequence; it is of consequence. However, I have always had a dreadful image of strip-searching. I have seen photographs and films—thank God I have not seen it done myself, although I was in the forces—of what we all know happened to the men and women who were stripped naked by the Nazis. We know of their terrible humiliation. The first thing that is done to humiliate a person is to strip him. There is nothing worse than being naked in front of several people. Dreadful things are done. We live in a civilised society. We do not use the methods of uncivilised people. If we did, we would cross the Rubicon from civilised behaviour. That is not acceptable.

It is about time we spent more money on getting machines to do searches. We remember the dreadful, horrible business of the plane being blown up. People from several companies came to me saying, "We have had machines for some time that would find that sort of thing, but they have not been used. They have not been taken on board." I do not know enough about the matter, but we should examine it and put some money into research to ensure that we create the appropriate machines. If we can go to the moon, we can surely do something to stop such humiliation.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I apologise for not being in the Chamber for the beginning of the debate. I am struck by one of the hon. Gentleman's points. He started speaking with perfectly humane motives. However, such motives can easily lead to sentimentalism and a confusion of categories. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Nazi analogy applied to us, whereas the problem is that we are dealing with people who have Nazi instincts. They are the killers, and we are trying to prevent them from killing. We must not allow one's justified concern about strip-searching to lead to a fundamental confusion of categories.

Secondly—I do not want to try the hon. Gentleman's patience—if we were to say "No, this is too abhorrent; let us stop strip-searching," what would be the practical result? It would be that people would take advantage of that to camouflage their terrorism more effectively.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman has reduced the argument to a simple matter. It is not a simple matter. I do not agree with the methods of terrorism and violence to solve political questions, but we cannot say that, in all circumstances, people who conceal weapons necessarily have Nazi tendencies. For example, the people in Europe whom we supported and provided with arms to fight the Nazis did much the same thing. The Nazis called them terrorists. We regarded them as freedom fighters. It depends on what angle one takes.

We are talking about methods that are used now. Whatever happens, the ultimate solution to the problems of Ireland—North and South—is a political settlement. Violence by anybody on any side will not solve the problem—after all, we have had it for a long time. We must examine the problem from that angle.

I ask the House to support the amendment—perhaps with some reservations—because of the humanity involved and the fact that it will prevent humiliation. Many innocent people are affected. Powerful arguments have been advanced on that point, and they should be supported.

8.15 pm

Mr. Sumberg: This has been one of the best debates on the matter that I have listened to. Some hon. Members have discussed this topic for a considerable time, both in Committee and in the House. I enjoyed the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris). I was crouched forward because I had not heard him speak in the House since before the last election. It was good to see him back and to hear his speech.

All decent instincts have come to the fore in the debate. None of us can be entirely happy that we are to pass a piece of legislation that will allow strip searching. As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said, there is a history to the matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said that it would not be right to be sentimental, but images of the past and of the present make one frightened that such things must happen. There can be nothing more humiliating for a man or a woman —I make no distinction between the sexes—than to be stripped before others, or even before one other person, to prove his or her innocence. I have never experienced it, and I hope that I never will.

Throughout the Bill's proceedings, I have said that civilised society faces a great challenge to all things that we believe in. Hon. Members have referred to many of them in this debate. All civilised values are under threat from terrorists. The hon. Member for Walton was right to say that there must be a political settlement. However, until there is a settlement of peace and until law and order are established, such a settlement cannot happen.

Ms. Short: I put that point to the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) whose return to the House I, too, enjoy. The hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) agrees that making someone strip off their clothes in front of uniformed individuals is oppressive and that none of us would like it. Does he agree that, if the power is necessary in some circumstances, there should be a requirement to show reasonable cause to do it? Under the Bill as it stands, an examining officer can do it to search for information. Does the hon. Gentleman consider that that goes too far?

Mr. Sumberg: That promotes various difficulties. If reasonable cause must be shown, it can be challenged. We are dealing with an emergency in which a decision must be taken immediately. We are relying on the good faith and good sense of the officer involved.

As I said, society faces a challenge. Over the past 10 years, terrorism has increased. More and more people are being killed and maimed. Examples are invidious. The fact that we must contemplate this legislation means that the terrorist has achieved some form of victory. That is the price that we have to pay.

Dr. Reid: The hon. Gentleman has discussed at some length and in the abstract the principles involved in some

of these issues. As a relative newcomer to the debate, may I ask him with no mischief intended to consider to what practical end strip searches are carried out? I ask in all innocence. Have any of the maimings been prevented by dangerous weapons and substances, detonators and so on being found during such strip searches? If so, to what extent? If not, to what end are we insisting on strip searches?

Mr. Sumberg: I do not have all the figures, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister does. Even if I could say that nothing has been found, it would still be reasonable to include strip searching, because it acts as a deterrent. It is a preventive measure against people taking the chance of importing explosives or other materials that can maim and kill. It works on the same principle as customs, as my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest mentioned, when we may try to smuggle in something less dangerous. Not everyone is checked, but each of us knows that if we go through the green channel we may be challenged, searched and found out. As in other matters, I believe in the deterrent effect, although perhaps some Labour Members do not. Strip searching acts as an aid to fight terrorism.

I hope that we can look forward to the day when these measures are not necessary and when we have the technicality and science to avoid them. I hope that we are working on that. For a variety of reasons unconnected with Northern Ireland it is essential that people can travel safely. Until that day arrives measures of this sort are needed. I hope that it will not be long before they are redundant.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: First, I apologise for the absence of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, who is unwell and in bed. He is sorry not to be here to reply to this and a subsequent debate. Nevertheless, I am glad that the Northern Ireland Office is represented by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary.

This has been a good and far-ranging debate, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) said. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), I well understand the anxiety and distress articulated by the hon. Members for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). Those fears are more theoretical than real, but to the extent that they are real they may require further consideration.

I shall focus on the rather narrow amendment No. 24 which requires careful consideration.

Ms. Short: That is what we have been considering all along.

Mr. Hogg: I heard that remark. I said that this had been a wide-ranging debate involving discussions on strip-searching in prison and elsewhere. We are talking about the exercise by examining officers of their powers at the port controls and it is on that that I wish to focus.

It is plain that many of the circumstances described are covered either by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act codes of practice, particularly by code C, annex A, or by sections 54 and 55 of PACE. Where a person has been arrested by the police and brought to a police station, which could happen under paragraph 6(4) of schedule 5, or where a person is arrested by the police under clause 14 and brought to a police station, the safeguards contained in sections 54 and 55 apply. For that matter the provisions in annex A of code C also apply where a person is detained by the police in a police station. That is a power of detention which arises under the schedule, but which falls short of the exercise of a power of arrest.

As the hon. Ladies will know, page 64 of the code deals with strip searching and states:

> "A strip search (that is a search involving the removal of more than outer clothing) may take place only if the custody officer considers it to be necessary to remove an article which the detained person would not be allowed to keep."

So in many of the circumstances that we have discussed, the position is already safeguarded either by sections 54 or 55 of PACE or by annex A of PACE code C.

There remains a gap. If a person is detained not by a police officer and not in the police station, the position is not covered by either of those two sections or by the codes. The same is true if a detention or an arrest is made by an examining officer who is not a policeman because, as the House knows, examining officers, although usually policemen, are not always policemen. There is a gap which has been identified.

Dr. Reid: As the Minister is discussing the difference between the theoretical and the real position can he answer my question to the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg)? In reality, rather than in theory, what has been the result of strip searches in terms of discovering anything that could be regarded as remotely dangerous?

Mr. Hogg: I am afraid that I do not have with me a detailed summary of the result of searches, and I would not wish to try to summarise what is clearly a large subject. I shall not try to answer that question because I do not have the factual information to enable me to do so.

Dr. Reid *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No, I have answered that question and I cannot clarify it further. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I did answer the question. I said that I did not have any information. It may not be the answer that the hon. Gentleman wanted, but it is a perfectly clear answer, it is the best that I can give, and I give it.

A gap that requires further consideration has been highlighted. It is unattractive that, in the certain narrow circumstances that I have described, strip searching could take place without any of the safeguards that would have applied had the person been arrested by a police officer. Therefore, I should like to reflect on the matter to consider the extent to which further safeguards should and could be incorporated in the Bill. I will arrange for that to be done.

Ms. Mowlam: I appreciate the Minister giving way and acknowledging the obvious loopholes and weaknesses in this section of the legislation. When he refers to the PACE provisions, can he further reassure the House—he has already explained the weaknesses that exist about controls at ports—that the PACE provisions for Northern Ireland contained in statutory instruments currently before the House will include exclusions in relation to the prevention of terrorism as they have done in the past? May I assist the Minister by answering the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid)? If the Minister had read the *Hansard* of the Standing Committee he would be aware that all that had been found from strip searches was perfume, £5, a couple of letters and a key.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will consider very carefully the hon. Lady's first point. I am grateful for the information that the hon. Lady gave about searches.

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 5

PORT AND BORDER CONTROL

Amendments made: No. 15, in page 47, line 45 leave out 'if need be by force'.

No. 16, in page 48, line 3, leave out 'if need be by force'.

No. 17, in page 48, line 6, at end insert 'and he may, if necessary, use reasonable force for the purpose of carrying out his functions under this paragraph.'.

No. 42, in page 48, line 9, at end insert 'and may, if necessary, use reasonable force for the purpose of performing those functions'.

No. 18, in page 48, line 35, leave out from first 'him' to end of line 36.

No. 19, in page 49, line 22, leave out 'if necessary by force'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Schedule 7

TERRORIST INVESTIGATIONS

Amendments made: No. 20, in page 58, leave out lines 22 and 23.

No. 21, in page 61, leave out line 36.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 20

INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 5, in page 13, line 32, at end insert—

'(1A) A constable or examining officer may, if necessary, use reasonable force for the purpose of exercising any powers conferred on him under or by virtue of any provision of this Act other than paragraph 2 of Schedule 5; but this subsection is without prejudice to any provision of this Act, or of any instrument made under it, which implies that a person may use reasonable force in connection with that provision.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Clause 22

RESTRICTED REMISSION FOR PERSONS SENTENCED FOR SCHEDULED OFFENCES

8.30 pm

Mr. Archer: I beg to move amendment No. 26, in page 15, line 15, leave out 'one-third' and insert 'one-half'.

The purpose of the amendment is to retain the existing position with regard to the remission of sentence under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, so that by definition it relates almost exclusively to people serving sentences in Northern Ireland. If it will assist the Minister when he replies, I accept at once that on reflection, as the amendment is intended only to retain the existing position, we might have done better to move to delete the clause. I am sure that the Minister will not take refuge in draftsmanship, because the draftsmen will have ample opportunity during the discussions on the Bill to take it away to whatever dark recesses they inhabit, turn it into classical English and return it to us.

The Government are proposing to change the maximum period of remission from one half the sentence to one third. No doubt a casual reader of the Notice Paper —not the Minister, because he will have read it carefully —might say that that is the position in the rest of the United Kingdom because in the rest of the United Kingdom, give or take a few exceptions, the maximum period for remission is one third. "Why," a casual reader may ask rhetorically, "should it be different in Northern Ireland?"

The answer is to be found in the parole system. In the rest of the United Kingdom, normally a prisoner serving more than 12 months may earn remission up to one third of the sentence and then serve a further one third on parole. He may actually serve only one third of his sentence in custody. There is no parole system in Northern Ireland, and that is the reason for the difference in remission.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) was Home Secretary, he introduced the provision for half remission in Northern Ireland. On 4 November 1975 he referred to a

"prison population unnecesarily high because of the absence of a parole scheme".—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1975; Vol. 889, c. 238.]

That was true, and it will not be a blinding revelation to the House if I state that the effect of the proposal in the Bill will be to increase the prison population at a time when we all agree that there is a crisis of overcrowding in the prisons.

If the Minister knows anything about the situation in Northern Ireland, I am sure that he will agree that it is not unreasonable to try to get prisoners, particularly young prisoners, out of prison in Northern Ireland as early as is reasonably possible. I cannot speak with knowledge of the present position because I am a little out of date. However, when I knew anything about the prisons in Northern Ireland, they were operating as the Sandhurst of the paramilitaries. Young people in prison received training by the paramilitaries in the techniques of paramilitary activity. It is not unreasonable to want to get them out of prison.

An extraordinary aspect of the proposal in the Bill is that it runs completely contrary to the recommendations of the Carlisle committee. It recommended in paragraph 274 of its report that those serving sentences of less than four years should be eligible for parole after they have served one half of their sentence.

I would be the first to admit that we got this wrong in Committee. When the asymmetry was pointed out by Justice, at the suggestion of Justice we tried to restore symmetry by proposing the introduction of a parole system in Northern Ireland. On reflection, I accept that that was not the right solution. It would impose an impossible strain on the probation service, particularly when it is dealing with people who in many cases regard themselves as political prisoners. It is perhaps ironic that, when the present one half sentence remission was introduced, it was expressly stated that it heralded the end of the special category status. It was said that the two went arm in arm.

It cannot be said that the present system has been outstandingly unsuccessful. The reconviction rate for adult male offenders in Northern Ireland is 42 per cent. as against 57 per cent. in England and Wales. The reconviction rate for those convicted of scheduled offences

is only one in five. It is perhaps worth remembering that the crime rate overall in Northern Ireland is lower than anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): When the right hon. and learned Member quotes percentages of those reoffending in terms of scheduled offences, does he accept the difficulty facing the authorities in convicting people of scheduled offences? Does he recall that, of the 177 murders committed by the IRA in my constituency, 92 per cent. have not been resolved through the courts by the due process of law? Therefore, he should recognise that percentages can be deceptive.

Mr. Archer: Of course I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. Statistics must be viewed with some reserve. I have always had a suspicion of statistics since I saw a document headed "The House of Commons broken down by age and sex." But I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that arithmetically the same problems of conviction apply at both ends of the equation; just as it may well be true that there are people who commit scheduled offences and are not convicted a second time, there are those who have not been convicted the first time. Arithmetically the statistic evens out; and it is still significant and worth quoting that only one in five of those convicted a first time are reconvicted a second time of a scheduled offence when we consider the reconviction rate of 53 per cent. across the board for the United Kingdom.

No case has been made by the Government for the proposal in the first instance.

Mr. Norris: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is seeking to establish a disparity between arrangements in the United Kingdom and those in Northern Ireland. Will he comment on the effect on his argument of the 1983 announcement by the Home Secretary on policy towards remission on sentences for crimes of violence which, in effect, established that such criminals would serve a minimum of two thirds of their sentence? Would not the acceptance of his amendment mean that a prisoner on the mainland would serve longer for a terrorist offence than he would in the Province? Would that not be a worse disparity than he is suggesting currently exists? Does not the Bill make logic out of what is at present a rather illogical situation?

Mr. Archer: I accept that it is an illogical situation, and that the most logical way of dealing with asymmetry would be to have the same situation on both sides of the water. If we cannot do that, the best that we could do would be to have the same provisions for remission. It may be that we have set ourselves an insoluble problem, but what we would like to hear—I do not want to take up too much time because this is an abbreviated debate, the reason for which is to be laid squarely at the door of the Government's business managers—is the case for the Government's proposals. We discussed this in Committee, and I am bound to say that the reasons for the proposal were never made clear to us. Perhaps the most helpful course I can adopt is to sit down and invite the Minister to intervene at a fairly early stage to tell us the Government's case for their proposal and then we can debate that case.

Mr. Mallon: I believe that a most fundamental mistake will be contained within this Bill, for a number of reasons. Anyone who knows anything about the history of Ireland knows the potency of the gaol situation. Anyone with only a cursory knowledge of Irish history will realise the way in which it has been changed not in the streets, not in the fields and not in the roads, but in the gaols.

I do not have time or the inclination to go back over the past, but I believe that we would all ask the question: if the action taken in 1916 had been different, would things be different now on the island of Ireland? If, in the recent past, a broad view had been taken within the prison service, would we have had the trauma of the hunger strike and the effect that that had and is still having in Northern Ireland and throughout Ireland? When we talk about prisons, we are talking about probably the most sensitive area of life in Northern Ireland, which has had and no doubt will have a substantial bearing on what happens in future. I believe that one of the keys to a solution to this problem lies within the prisons and the approach to them.

8.45 pm

I spend quite a bit of time talking to young people in the prisons, be they Loyalists or Republicans, and invariably the same sort of attitude comes through. They say, "What are we doing sitting here for 15 years when other people are out enjoying themselves? Why have we become the martyrs for spurious ideologies when, in effect, the world is still going on outside?"

I have no doubt that, rather than keeping people in gaol, getting people out is the way in which we should be moving. It has been seen since the early 1980s that, when people have been released back into the community in a spirit of consideration, that permeates its way down through the community—right down into that person's family and street. It has had a remarkable effect, as I have seen in my constituency. It is for that reason that the godfathers of violence—the people who run the paramilitary organisations—are afraid of the situation in the prisons being eased. It is there that we are making the fundamental and crucial mistake.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) asked what the Government's reasons are for the Bill. The only reason given in Committee was that it would act as a deterrent. If anything has been proved over the years, it is that prison does not deter those people who are highly charged and motivated ideologically. The given reason does not stand up.

I should have thought that what happens on the streets, in the towns, and in the villages in Ireland shows that if, one treats the prison situation in a hamfisted way, we will end up with trouble.

Sir Leon Brittan, the former Secretary of State, made mistake after mistake about prisons and was told time after time that he was building up something which would have disastrous effects. Arrogance, however, got in the way of his powers to listen, and we ended up with the most traumatic situation, one for which we are still paying. Many of the young people in prison today would not be there had it not been for that terrible period surrounding the hunger strikes and deaths in prison.

I again ask the Government to listen to the view of the people who live in Ireland—because they know instinctively and see it in their everyday lives—that this is the wrong path to take.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West pointed out that the parole situation in Ireland is not the same as in the rest of Britain or the Republic of Ireland. The parole system does not exist, because the probation board would not be in a position to fulfil the functions that

[Mr. Mallon]

such a board does in other places. People are sentenced against a background of emergency legislation, such as the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 and the Diplock courts. It has been sought to put a normal face on an abnormal type of process, which leads to conviction and a process which of itself is doing damage to the cause of finding a solution in Northern Ireland.

Another anomaly is that of scheduled offences, which were discussed at great length at Committee. There are unlimited examples of people who commit a scheduled offence being convicted under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 for an offence which was patently nothing to do with paramilitary activity are unlimited. This clause takes no cognisance of that and makes no allowance for it, but simply ploughs along a mistaken road.

Probably the most damaging part of the clause is the problem that it creates for young offenders. Northern Ireland has at present a large number of young offenders, because of the socio-economic situation in which they must live. We shall see a situation developing where young people who are sentenced are committed for civil offences to a young offenders centre, but, if they come under the heading of this clause, will find themselves serving their sentences out—for an offence which patently was not a scheduled offence in the first place and which was being served in a young offenders centre—under the temporary provisions Act. For that reason, the clause is a great mistake.

Unless we can reach the stage at which young people are convinced that the system of law and justice not only punishes them but protects them, we are fighting a losing battle. The problems will simply demand another piece of legislation next year, or in five or 10 years. Where does that lead? Unfortunately, the unholy spiral continues.

Presently, the prison population in the North of Ireland is going down. That is one of the remarkable things about the Bill; that, at the time when the prison population is going down, we are about to extend the length of sentences to keep more people in prison. It is clear from the treatment of life-sentence prisoners and Secretary of State pleasure cases, how an imaginative, charitable approach, which is based on good judgment tempered by that quality of mercy necessary when dealing with prisoners, has had an effect. We are curtailing that effect in a brutal, unthinking manner.

During the past eight years, how many people committed to young offenders centres have subsequently been charged and sentenced for scheduled offences under the emergency legislation? I asked that question in Committee, but I did not get an answer. I hope that I shall today, because this is a crucial point. I do not think it is good enough to say that the Northern Ireland Minister is not here so the figures are unavailable. I put that question on record in Committee, and it is the Government's job to provide those figures. Unless we have those figures, we will make a decision in the absence of the necessary information.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) will be aware that, in the United Kingdom, the peak age for offending is 15 years for both sexes. A third of all reported crimes are committed by people under the age of 16. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that those 5 per cent. who commit 70 per cent. of the crimes for which conviction has been obtained—the recidivist element—almost inevitably had an early association with the criminal justice system. His argument that more should be done to keep people out of prison would find favour in all quarters of the House. It is welcome that the prison population in Northern Ireland is reducing and that, in the United Kingdom, the total of reported offences is reducing.

It is a fatal admixture to go on to deduce from the oft-quoted theory that prisons are merely universities of crime that we should not deal severely with sentences for terrorism.

Mr. Mallon *indicated assent.*

Mr. Norris: I note that the hon. Gentleman is nodding, so I will not labour the point. Suffice it to say that the public would be outraged if they felt that those convicted of crimes of violence and crimes demanding sentences of more than five years were not to be kept in prison, on the grounds that their continued detention would allow them to practise their criminal skills.

Everybody who deals with crime and the judicial system accepts that, to some degree, prison is a university of crime. I do not believe that any serious attempt should be made, however, to exclude serious crimes of violence from the due process of the law and the due sentences of the court.

In the absence of parole, the real inequity is that since the announcement in 1983 by the then Home Secretary, Sir Leon Brittan, a terrorist convicted of an offence in the United Kingdom will serve two thirds of his sentence in prison, whereas in the Province it is possible that he will serve only one half of his sentence. Surely that is inequitable. The Bill will rectify that omission.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: For much the same reasons as have been advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), I cannot commend the amendment to the House. We need to be clear about the nature of what we are doing.

First, the provisions are not retrospective; they are prospective only. Secondly, they apply to scheduled offences in respect of which sentences of five years or more have been imposed. It will be helpful to remind the House of the classes of crime that fall within the list of the scheduled offences. They are murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, aggravated burglary, robbery, membership of a proscribed organisation, and explosives, firearms and hijacking offences. One can understand at once that they are offences that are capable of being the most serious kind. For the purposes of the Bill they must attract a sentence of five years or more.

The purpose of the Government's change in the law, as set out in the Bill, is to reduce remission from 50 per cent. to one third. In answer to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), that brings the situation in Northern Ireland broadly in line with that in Great Britain. As my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest rightly said, the position on parole has changed substantially as a result of the statement made in 1983 by the then Home Secretary, Sir Leon Brittan. He made it plain that, normally, parole will not be granted to offenders who are convicted of offences of drugs or violence which have attracted sentences of five years or more. As a general rule in such cases, parole will not be

granted. Consequently such people must serve either two thirds or nearly two thirds of the sentence imposed by the courts.

If we accepted the amendment and left the present situation unchanged, we would have a bizarre and unacceptable state of affairs. People convicted of terrorist-type offences in Great Britain would serve longer than those convicted of similar offences in Northern Ireland. That cannot be right. It is against that background that the Government have introduced the proposals in the Bill which will make persons convicted of offences in Northern Ireland serve, broadly speaking, the same period of imprisonment as will be served by persons in Great Britain convicted of like offences. That is right.

I have a personal regard for the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). We served on the Standing Committee for a long time and I know his personal integrity. However, in this matter I cannot agree with him. We are dealing with people who have been convicted of abominable offences, for which long sentences have been imposed by the courts. The idea that people convicted of such offences should leave prison after having served only half the sentence that the court thinks appropriate makes no sense and is abhorrent to most people who reflect on it. I make no apology for saying that the criminal law is, at least in part, about punishment. That is a perfectly proper part of the criminal law.

Ms. Mowlam *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall not give way, because we must finish by 9 o'clock. Deterrence and retribution are also perfectly proper parts of the criminal law. I see no reason why we should not say to people convicted of serious terrorist offences for which they have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, "You will have to serve a substantial part of the sentence imposed by the court." To tell them that they will have to serve only 50 per cent. of the sentence makes no sense. Two thirds is wholly right and anything less would be wrong.

It being Nine o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [23 January] and the resolution this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Amendment negatived.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question on the remaining amendment moved by a member of the Government.*

Schedule 8

CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment made: No. 22, in page 64, line 4, at end insert—

'(4) In section 14—

(a) in paragraph 5, for the words "section 12(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984" there shall be substituted the words "section 14(1)(b) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989"; and

(b) in paragraph 6, for the definition of "the terrorism provisions", there shall be substituted—

"'the terrorism provisions' means section 14(1) of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 and any provision of Schedule 2 or 5 to that Act conferring a power of arrest or detention.".'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

9 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

In commending the Bill to the House I propose to be brief, not least because the Bill and its predecessors have been scrutinised in considerable detail in this Session and on previous occasions. If time permits, and with the leave of the House, I shall seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if any points require further clarification.

We need to try to define the truth of the matter. The plain truth from which the debate must start is that we are likely to face the threat of terrorism for some time to come. That threat is most acute in Northern Ireland where more than 3,000 people have been killed since the troubles began. However, as the tragedy of Lockerbie reminds us, the threat is not confined to Northern Ireland or to the affairs of the Province. Terrorism threatens us all and no person, however young or innocent, can be said to be safe.

We should be failing in our duty if we did not take such steps as we properly can to meet this assault on democracy. That was the view of the Labour Government in 1974 and 1976 and in 1978, when they passed the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act. It remains our view today. I entirely reject the idea, now apparently the official policy of the Labour party, that the ordinary powers of law are sufficient to meet the exceptional challenge and threat of terrorism. Nobody who has had or now has direct responsibility for these matters believes that the ordinary powers of the criminal law are sufficient. That fact may be regrettable, but it is true.

The reputation of the Labour party is on the line. Opposition Members proclaim their hatred of terrorism. They must give us a practical expression of that assertion. They must give us the statutory powers that every Government since 1974 have deemed necessary. If they will not or cannot, they will be judged by their failure.

9.3 pm

Ms. Mowlam: There has not been any disagreement on the need for a firm stand against terrorism. There has been no disagreement on the need to protect the people of Northern Ireland and Great Britain from the threat of political violence or on the need to bring the paramilitaries to justice.

In moving the Third Reading the Minister in some ways misled the House, because there has been clear agreement on the goals. However, there is a fundamental difference —we heard it on Report and in Committee—about the most effective method of attaining those goals. I ask my hon. Friends to vote against Third Reading not because there is any disagreement on the ends or the goals but because there is disagreement on the means.

We oppose the Bill for many reasons, and in view of the many arguments that we have heard, I shall comment on only three. The first is that the Bill is ineffective in tackling terrorism. On Second Reading, the Home Secretary told the House that this is a prevention of terrorism measure, rather than a punishment of terrorism measure, which is what the Minister suggested it is. In that case, the Home Secretary must justify the 1,784 deaths that have occurred in Northern Ireland since the temporary provisions Act came into force. It is unacceptable for the Government merely to point to the existence of terrorism as the justification for the Bill. The test of any legislation must be its effectiveness and what is the evidence for the

[Ms. Mowlam]

effectiveness or the success of this legislation? All we have is the level of deaths—1,784—that have not been prevented.

In previous debates, the Government's argument, backed by Tory Members, has been that the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act works like preventive medicine. We believe that the Government's medicine is far from preventive. We would argue that it seems to make the patient's disease worse. Far from effectively combating terrorism, its major achievement has been to alienate large proportion of the Northern Irish population. Far from being effective, it is counter-productive.

Under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act a total of 30,178 people have been arrested and released without charge in the past four years. Over 344,000 house searches have been carried out since the Act was introduced, and they increased by 29 per cent. between 1986-87 and by 100 per cent. in the first half of 1988. Those figures suggest not prevention of terrorism, not winning over the population of Northern Ireland to the cause of peace, but alienating people—achieving the exact opposite of what the Act set out to achieve. Terrorism can be effectively defeated only by undermining support for terrorism in the community.

With this legislation, the Government are trying to out-terrorise the terrorists. We must instead try to understand people's motives for supporting the terrorist force, however weak. Is it hard to understand why a family who have had their front door smashed in with a pick axe and their sitting room floor taken up with a pneumatic drill by the Army in a fruitless search will be less than co-operative with the security forces? Is it difficult for Tory Members to appreciate why children who have seen their parents searched in a reasonably rough fashion by the RUC grow up being distrustful of or doubting the system of criminal justice? The Act has been high on repression and low on results. Therefore, it is not working effectively.

The second reason for our opposition to the Bill is that it represents an unacceptable erosion of civil liberties. I understand that in a democratic society a balance has to be struck between individual rights and the power of the state to fight terrorism. I accept that that is a difficult balance for the Government to achieve. However, under the Act, it is far too easy for the Government to suspend the normal workings of the criminal justice system, to reduce the rights of citizens and to heap more and more exceptional powers on to the security forces. It is far more difficult, but far more effective, to address the fundamental causes of terrorism—something that the Government are not doing with this legislation. The Minister acknowledged that a military solution in itself is not sufficient. We have to address the root causes of the problems of Northern Ireland.

The Government have fallen into the trap of dealing with the symptoms of terrorism without properly and effectively tackling its causes. We argue that the Government fail to understand that terrorism can be defeated only by winning the hearts and minds of the overwhelming majority of the population in Northern Ireland. Every time the Government tighten the screw of security, every time there is a further act of suppression against the majority of people and every time that democratic rights are denied, we argue that support for the solutions to the Northern Ireland problem becomes more and more difficult and the defeat of terrorism all the less likely.

Mr. Barry Porter: The hon. Lady suggests that the rights of the majority are being suppressed. Will she expand on that assertion?

Ms. Mowlam: Given the numbers of house searches and of people detained without charge, the legislation appears to be working in the opposite direction. The majority of people believe that their democratic rights are being denied and that the ways in which they could be defended are in fact working against them. An Act designed to prevent terrorism is therefore creating an alienating environment and the opposite situation to that which it was intended to achieve.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Surely the hon. Lady is not suggesting that the majority of people in Northern Ireland believe that their rights are being denied?

Ms. Mowlam: I accept the right hon. Gentleman's point. The prevention of terrorism legislation affects both communities and both sides of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland. Those people can be stopped and searched day in, day out, and can be stopped on entering Northern Ireland. The community does not want to live in those conditions. There may be some satisfaction with the present legislation, but the impact on daily life affects the majority of the community.

Conservative Members will acknowledge that it is difficult to strike a balance between liberty and security. It is difficult, for example, to tell a woman whose husband has been shot dead by terrorists that the people suspected of the murder must have their rights protected. That may seem a heartless response which it is impossible for the wife to comprehend. However, Conservative Members should not lose sight of the fact that there is a two-way process. Civil rights include both sides of the community. If we care about the mother whose husband has been shot dead by terrorists, we must also care about the mother of Michael Tighe who was in the wrong place at the wrong time and was shot by the security forces. Unless we accept that civil rights are a two-way process, we shall not acknowledge the importance of civil rights and of the need for the criminal justice system to be seen to give legal redress to both sides of the community.

Mr. Maginnis: I should be grateful if the hon. Lady would clarify the point that she was making a moment ago. I agree that we should have sympathy with victims' families irrespective of which side of the community they come from and of whether they are victims of terrorist killings or of accidental killings or misjudgments by the security forces. Will she explain what she meant when she illustrated her argument by quoting the case of Michael Tighe and explain the connection with the prevention of terrorism Act?

Ms. Mowlam: I gave two examples to try to prove my point. First, we can feel sympathy with a woman whose husband has been shot dead by a terrorist. Our hearts go out to her immediately, and we realise that it is difficult for her to understand when Opposition Members talk about civil liberties. But we should also consider the mother of Michael Tighe, against whom there seems very little

evidence. It appears that he was in a barn, in the wrong place at the wrong time, and was shot by security forces. Out hearts must also go out to that mother, who may find it equally difficult to accept that Conservative Members are willing to sell his civil liberties down the line. We must take into account that civil liberties are a two-way process, regardless of the origins of the case.

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will be thinking of the parents of the Army lads killed at Ballygawley, who had to spend Christmas without them. But, whether we think of them or of the mother of someone killed by a terrorist, we should legislate not on the basis of emotional stories or historical prejudice but on rational fact. We are here to prevent terrorism, but the Bill will not do that. It is ineffective, it erodes civil liberties and it may have the opposite effect to that which is intended.

My final objection is to the way in which the Government are making the existing Act permanent. That clearly signals to the people of Northern Ireland that the Government lack a precise or positive strategy for their future, and that what has been acknowledged since 1974 as a temporary suspension of normal democratic conditions has now become long-term legislation. We are sending a public message to the Irish people that the current level of violence is here to stay. What clearer message could there be that it is no longer the United Kingdom Government but the men of violence who are setting the agenda for Northern Ireland?

I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will live to regret the time when we made the prevention of terrorism Act permanent. It is no good the Minister saying that there will be an annual review. Opposition Members know what that means: Northern Ireland business will be debated late on Thursday night, marginalised, and there will be no requirement for a Committee stage and debates such as this in the House as would happen if the legislation were renewed every five years. Surely that is the least that we can do in view of the lives that are lost in Northern Ireland.

In Committee, the Minister acknowledged that when a Bill goes on the statute book it becomes far more difficult to change or to repeal. In the 1984 debate, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said prophetically:

"Can the House really be sure that when the new Act expires, some time in 1989, it will not immediately be replaced by yet another version, which may be scheduled to last even longer or may even be intended to be permanent, but which may still be called temporary? A six-month Act was finding a permanent place on the statute book for powers which the Home Secretary"—

it was the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) at the time—

"describes as wholly unacceptable and inimical to our tradition of civil liberties."—[*Official Report*, 25 January 1984; Vol. 52, c. 1013.]

We have outlined three of the many reasons why we consider that the Act will not achieve the goals that both sides of the House would like to see.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) put it clearly in an earlier debate when he said that, if we wanted to evaluate the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, we must ask, "Does it prevent terrorism? Does it work towards peace in Northern Ireland?" It fails on both counts, so we shall vote against it.

9.20 pm

Mr. Hind: I find it sad to follow the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlem), who said that the Labour party would vote against the Bill. The public will find that difficult to understand.

This is one of the most important Bills that I have discussed in Standing Committee. It makes Britain a safer place in which to live, and protects the public from those who would take up arms against the state and kill and maim for political purposes. That is an honourable cause which should commend itself to all hon. Members and the public.

I shall take up one point made by the hon. Member for Redcar. She said that we should not introduce legislation to prevent terrorism because one group in the community in Northern Ireland will feel that it works against it. That is a fatuous argument that falls to the floor when closely examined, because that group is as protected against terrorism as every other section of our community.

If we take the line that we should not legislate because one group will feel offended or aggrieved, those who kill and maim will be able to hide among the legitimate, honest, straightforward members of the community and not be brought to justice for their terrible crimes. We have a duty to protect those innocent people and ensure that the terrorists are brought to book.

Terrorism is extraordinary. I agree with the hon. Lady and many of her hon. Friends who opposed some aspects of the Bill. We are forced to take extraordinary measures to protect the community in which we live. The Bill is designed to last only five years because the House recognises that it contains extraordinary measures. In the past, temporary provisions Bills were introduced because of the serious nature of the measures that they introduced into the law of the United Kingdom.

I say to hon. Members representing Northern Ireland that the Bill does not deal only with Northern Ireland. When the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill was introduced in 1974, hon. Members probably thought that it related only to Northern Ireland. However, circumstances are different today.

Since the early 1970s we have seen the rise of international terrorism. It was brought home to us forcefully in the recent Pan Am disaster at Lockerbie that we must take international terrorism seriously. For the British public, this legislation has not merely an Irish dimension, but an international one.

The Bill provides the police with extraordinary powers to outwit, outmanoeuvre and uncover the terrorist whenever possible. Recently, careful policing probably resulted in saving the life of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Clearly, a jury at the Old Bailey thought that a group of people were setting out to assassinate him. That is a typical example of legislation being used to detain them and provide for forensic examination of their clothes and hands to produce the necessary evidence to convince the jury that they were guilty of conspiracy to assassinate the Secretary of State.

Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends were in the Grand hotel in Brighton when a bomb exploded that was designed to assassinate the entire Government. Again, the PTA was used to uncover a series of cells and terrorists who were actively trying to operate a bombing campaign in our seaside resorts. The Brighton explosion was an example of the campaign working in part.

[Mr. Hind]

We have seen the searches that have been carried out at airports. The finest example of that was provided by the El Al jet at Heathrow airport, where a middle eastern terrorist was happy to give a bomb to his pregnant girl friend, which he know would blow her and 300 other passengers to smithereens in a Boeing 747, irrespective of his feelings for her or his child. He was prepared to take that course for the simple reason that there was a political advantage to be gained. Extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary responses from the House, and I believe that the Bill is adequate to deal with such circumstances.

The powers of arrest and detention for seven days are important provisions, but I have no doubt that we shall re-examine them in the light of the comments of the European Court of Human Rights. All members of the Committee considered the provisions extremely carefully.

The relevant powers of checks at our ports include detention for 12 hours, examinations and strip searches. These are important provisions to ensure that terrorists who enter and leave the country are detained and necessarily brought to justice. Exclusion orders prevent the IRA from organising cells and continuing its bombing campaign againt the mainland population. I support exclusion orders without shame, in the knowledge that I am carrying out my duty in protecting my constituents. For confirmation of that it is necessary only to ask the relatives of the victims of bombing campaigns on the mainland whether they consider it necessary that there should be exclusion orders. Such orders are not made by Cabinet Ministers because they do not have information that individuals in Northern Ireland are involved in terrorism. They know, however, that the witnesses who could convict them will not come forward because they fear persecution and threats of violence to them and to their relatives.

We must satisfy ourselves that we can prevent terrorists from coming over to the mainland. It is not a satisfactory approach but, unfortunately, it is the only one that is available to us to deal with the problem. Again, it is an extraordinary measure to deal with an extraordinary problem. I hope that all my hon. and right hon. Friends will vote to secure the Bill's Third Reading.

For the first time, we have a Bill that will enable us to attack in their pocket the terrorist, his banker and all those who are involved in collecting and retaining money for the propagation of terrorism. If we attack the terrorist's pocket, he will not have the means to buy guns and bombs to perpetuate his campaign. In that way we shall restrict the activities of the IRA and like organisations and of international terrorism when we catch their representatives on the mainland.

This is probably the most important Bill with which we shall deal during this Session in seeking to ensure the safety of our fellow citizens. Let us vote for it against the background of the Battersea bomb factory and the tragedy at Lockerbie. I am sure that such happenings will remind us of the importance of what we are doing when the House divides. I am sure also that my right hon. and hon. Friends will proceed in the full knowledge and satisfaction that they are doing the right thing. They will feel that in their hearts when they think of those who died and their relatives, especially those at Lockerbie. I commend the Bill as a move forward in the fight against terrorism.

9.29 pm

Mr. Mallon: We are running out of time and many other hon. Members wish to speak, so I shall be brief.

I hang my two arguments on the debate about derogation under article 15 on the grounds either that we are at war or that there is an emergency threatening the life of the nation. Have we ever considered the effect on the morale and psyche of the people against whom the Bill is aimed of stating that they are waging war or creating an emergency that threatens the life of the nation?

It is a matter of concern to those of us who live in the north of Ireland and know those people for what they are that we are telling them that they are capable of waging a war against Britain or of creating an emergency that would threaten the life of the nation. It is not just any old war but one that has gone on for five times as long as the second world war. Is it any wonder that people are saying—this is part of Provisional IRA support—"Look at how the lads have kept it going for longer than Hitler, longer than the Kaiser, longer than Korea, or Vietnam, or Afghanistan or the Iran-Iraq war"? That is the type of morale booster that is given to the very people against whom the Bill is aimed. That is what they need.

The irony is that, despite everything, what the IRA is short of on the ground in the North of Ireland are street issues. This issue suits them down to the ground. They are telling the people of Northern Ireland on both sides of the political divide that they can go on for another 20 years —that would be eight times longer than Hitler kept the war going. How many times longer than Korea or Vietnam would that be? That is a massive booster for the morale of those engaged in violent activity for their own political ends.

Not only is derogation central to clause 14, but it is central to the search for peace in the north of Ireland. For that reason alone, it is a massive mistake.

My second argument is that the measure of any society is its ability to retain its high standards in justice and legal practices, in the police service, in the Army and in its dealings within that society so that not only does it punish the person who has transgressed but it protects the innocent person as well. By passing the Bill and other such legislation, we throw away those high standards. Instead, we work to the hidden agenda written by those who organise the paramilitaries. We are being led by the nose down a path where those high standards, which many people have fought to preserve, are being thrown out at the whim and according to the strategy of the people against whom the Bill is aimed.

Let us not forget that that is nothing new. Since partition in 1921, when the North of Ireland was formed there has never been a day when emergency legislation has not been in force. If, after so many years, we are still doing the same thing and still trying to solve the problem in the same ways—ways that have failed since the state was formed—it is time to ask the fundamental question: is there another way?

I believe that there is. If we continue in this way, and if we could transport ourselves to a Monday night 10 years from now in the House when matters have not improved, violence has continued and the war that the Goverment

have now determined is taking place is still taking place, we would ask what would happen then. What will the Government do then? How much further will they go down the rake's progress of trying to make legislation be what it was never intended to be? If we go further down that road, what steps shall we introduce then? The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) will advocate internment without trial, but that has been done and has failed, too.

Shall we reach the stage when the Provisional IRA and the men of violence bring the Government to the point where they have nowhere to go in terms of legislation, the Army or the police, or will the Government, or a Minister, shout "Stop!" before it is too late and think again about whether there is a way other than the one that has failed consistently since the state was formed? We have had the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, Diplock courts, internment, the supergrass system, the removal of the right to silence and the removal of the freedom of the press, and the open electoral system has been tampered with. Those are only a few of the actions that have been taken, so where do we go now?

I make a prediction—which is always dangerous in politics—that in 10 years' time this war will still be continuing, because the right weapon is not being used. The right weapon is not repression and legislation like the Bill because it is clear as a pikestaff to anybody who wants to see clearly rather than to indulge in the self-righteousness and attitudinising that we have seen from Conservative Members day after day and the posturing and indulging in squelchy sentimentality, however sincere, about what is happening in the North of Ireland, that the Government should take a cold, hard, clear look and ask themselves "Where do we go in 10 years' time?"

The Government have exhausted all the measures that can be used. The Under-Secretary shakes his head; no doubt he will tell us about further measures. They will probably include hanging, and there will probably be more mistakes. I beg hon. Members to think before they go any further down that path. Somebody will have to put the North of Ireland together again, and it will not be hon. Members but the people who have to live there—people of whatever political or religious persuasion. They will not achieve that on the basis of the Bill because the north of Ireland cannot be put together again on that basis. We must create a north of Ireland based on peace, justice and compassion. It must bind wounds rather than make them, it must integrate our society rather than alienate it and it must build a new society rather than more new prisons.

9.39 pm

Mr. Barry Porter: It appears that we are all against terrorism—so I am told. It appears that our ends and goals are all the same and that we all want to take a firm stance against terrorism. I am sorry to say that I have heard little from the Opposition tonight that leads me to understand what they mean by a firm stance. I apologise for having missed part of their contributions, but I was told that their first objection to the Bill was that it was ineffective. The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) said that 1,784 people had been killed in Northern Ireland since the Prevention of Terrorism (Emergency Provisions) Act 1984 came into force. That is clearly true. She went on to assert that the Bill had made the disease worse. What evidence is there for that, apart from a belief? She went on to say that the Bill and the Act were counter-productive. How can she assert that without evidence? Has it not entered her mind that the position could be—and in my judgment will be—worse?

Ms. Mowlam: The hon. Gentleman seems to have missed my point. He can assert what he wants, and I can assert what I want. He cannot disprove my statement. The legislation has been on the statute book for 14 or 15 years, and if it is not working, surely it is time to look at it afresh.

Mr. Porter: I cannot prove a negative any more than the hon. Lady can. I am asking her to consider that, on all the evidence available, it is certainly a possibility from her point of view, and a probability from mine, that without the powers that are available under the current legislation, the position could have been a good deal worse—

Ms. Mowlam: Prove it.

Mr. Porter: If the hon. Lady is willing to accept that as a possibility, can she and her hon. Friends take the risk of allowing the police and the security services only the ordinary powers available under the law in that extraordinary situation? I have no responsibility in this matter and with the greatest possible respect to the hon. Lady, neither has she, except in an alternative role. It is not a risk that I would wish to take.

When I think of the intelligence and information available to successive Secretaries of State and other Ministers, not one—from any party—has been willing to surrender the powers that they now have. That information is not available to me, and that intelligence is not available to the hon. Lady. However, perhaps she might think—as I think—that if people as intelligent, honest, decent and honourable as those who have held such positions in the past are not willing to take the risk, that she should advise her hon. Friends that they should not take that risk either.

The hon. Member for Redcar went on to say that the Bill is an unacceptable erosion of civil liberties. Certainly, the legislation would be an erosion of civil liberties in an ordinary and normal United Kingdom and in a normal and peaceful Ulster, but neither of those situations exists. There is murder and mayhem in Ulster and on the mainland. The erosion of civil liberties is a matter of judgment. It is there for those who care to look, but to me it is not unacceptable if it helps in any way to deal with the problem.

I repeat what I said in one of our earlier debates: by voting against Third Reading, the Labour party will give a message to the men of violence which is simply that the alternative Government of the United Kingdom have thrown in the towel and do not wish to take a "firm stance" against terrorism. I have not heard tonight that there is anything more to be done about terrorism or that there are any more methods to employ against terrorism. The Opposition have merely attacked the Government's stance.

In conclusion, as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) said, of course this is not the only way to deal with the problems of Northern Ireland, and of course political arrangements can be made and political persuasion used. Although he and I would probably disagree about the arrangements—the hon. Gentleman is entirely right to say that—not everything has yet been

[Mr. Porter]

tried. However, whatever those political activities may be, they must be paralleled by a clear determination on the part of the United Kingdom Government, backed—I hope—by every Member of the House, that terrorists must be deterred and defeated. If that takes the 10 years that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, so be it. In the meantime, he and others in Northern Ireland, with the proper backing of everybody who is interested in the Province and in the unity of this kingdom, should give any talks and negotiations their full backing. In the meantime, the terrorists—the minuscule minority within the Province—must be shown that the House is intent on their defeat.

9.44 pm

Mr. Maclennan: The Labour party's opposition to the Bill seems to be based upon the fallacy that, because it cannot of itself prevent terrorism, it is not necessary. Alas, every time the House has considered such measures since the original legislation was introduced by a Labour Government in 1974, it has come to the unpalatable conclusion that, although they constitute an erosion of normal civil liberties, they are necessary. The House will come to the same conclusion tonight, and it will do so on the best evidence available to it, which is not the speculation of individual hon. Members but the careful scrutiny of the provisions of the Bill by a man who has been slighted by Opposition Members. I refer to Lord Colville. He has looked closely at all the provisions of the Bill and their working. Although he has differed from the Government in certain respects, notably in regard to the continuance of exclusion, he has recommended that the measures be retained.

It is right that the legislation be put on a new footing. It is a reversion to an earlier arrangement that prevailed when the Labour Government were in office, that the Bill be subject to annual renewal. It has not been helpful that the Bill has been wrongly presented as a piece of permanent legislation. It is not permanent legislation. It is subject to positive renewal by a vote of the House. It must have continuing scrutiny. I am glad that Lord Colville has agreed to do in future what he has done in the past. The House will not accept the continuation of the measures for one day longer than they are seen to be necessary.

It is unfortunate that the Government have not been able to respond more promptly to the judgment of the European court in the Brogan case. As with the Labour Government, the present Government's position has been greatly strengthened by the fact that the measures had not been held to run counter to the provisions of the European convention on human rights to which we are a party. That has helped to buttress international understanding of the necessity for what we are doing.

It is possible to take the necessary step to provide judicial interposition to scrutinise the detention beyond two days of those who are held under the provisions of the Bill. It is the Home Secretary's intention to seek such a measure as quickly as may be. We shall look to him to be as good as his word.

I take some satisfaction from the fact that the Bill is capable of being amended in part by statutory instrument. If certain provisions which we shall agree tonight are no longer seen to be necessary, they may be dropped. It is right to look at all aspects of the Bill separately and in the round. We shall have carefully to consider each year the operation of the exclusion and detention provisions.

It cannot be said that the general background of terrorism has greatly improved in this country or in the rest of the world since we last debated these measures. Alas, the case for again implementing these exceptional measures is no less strong than it was the last time we considered them. The attitude of the Labour party is no more comprehensible against the background of continuing terrorism and the need for a response which cannot be provided by the provisions of our ordinary law.

That being so, I hope that the House will give the Home Secretary and the Government the support that they seek, for the greater the strength and resolution of the House in the face of these threats to our civil order and civil liberties, the greater the impact of a unified response to it.

9.50 pm

Mr. Norris: I shall be brief, because I should like to allow others to have their say.

I was singularly ineligible to take part in the earlier stages of the Bill, but I have welcomed the opportunity to engage in these deliberations at this late stage. I should like to place on record during a debate on legislation involving the Province of Northern Ireland the respect and affection in which the House held my predecessor in the constituency of Epping Forest, the late Sir John Biggs-Davison. He was that unique combination of Catholic and Unionist. He was a man of many contradictions, of firm principle and unshakeable integrity; he lived as a member of the late Airy Neave's shadow team in Northern Ireland under the constant shadow of terrorism and terrorist violence, and he faced it bravely and with his accustomed sincerity.

The new powers in the Bill significantly improve our ability to deal with terrorism in Northern Ireland, particularly the financial powers. Let no one underestimate them. The House has deliberated on the merit of attacking the drug pusher and drug runner where it really mattered—not just imprisoning those who were caught, but getting at the funding of that evil empire. The powers in this Bill will allow that power to be used against terrorists.

I am as concerned as the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) that a Bill of this sort should be for an indefinite period. It is not, as she asserts, a piece of indefinite legislation. She knows well that the Bill is subject to a regular annual review wholly or in part. *[Interruption.]* I have both preceded and followed the hon. Lady in this House and if she believes that the House will ever consider amending the Bill late on a Thursday night when there is no interest and everyone has gone home, as she described it, she severely under-estimates the House of Commons and the importance that it will attach to dealing with the crucial affair of the security of Northern Ireland. She said, "Let us not trade emotional stories about Northern Ireland." Many Conservative Members greatly regret that the Labour party's early clear commitment to the prevention of terrorism, as evidenced by its introduction of the temporary provisions Act and support for it in 1976, has been diluted into a rather emotional reaction to the reality of terrorism.

I commend the Bill to the House as providing the Government with the necessary powers to deal with these exceptional circumstances and this exceptional evil.

9.53 pm

Mr. Maginnis: I find little in the Bill to which I or my party would object. Living as we do in Northern Ireland at the coal face, we recognise the effect that the prevention of terrorism Act has had on reducing the ability of the terrorist to operate there.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) referred to 1,784 people who have died in the 15 years since the prevention of terrorism legislation was first introduced. I have not had an opportunity to check that figure, but I accept it. It means that on average more than 100 people have died at the hands of terrorists each year over the 15 years. However, the hon. Lady failed to point out that, before the introduction of the prevention of terrorism legislation, 1,100 people died in just three years. Therefore, I must assume that some good has come from the prevention of terrorism legislation over the past 15 years because the rate of deaths has been reduced by about one third.

It is important that I record the aspects of the Bill about which I am concerned. My first point must always bother someone living in Northern Ireland. It relates to the exclusion element in the Bill. We tend to see that element as a discarding of the threat from this part of the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland. It there is reasonable suspicion about someone entering Great Britain, the vast resources which can be concentrated on trying to detect that person's motivies should be utilised instead of simply shipping the problem back to Northern Ireland which has has to endure the brunt of terrorism for nearly 20 years.

I am also worried that there is a vague suggestion—and I hope that it is only a vague suggestion—that the Government may not continue to derogate from the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights. That would be a mistake. It is necessary to be able to detain suspect terrorists against whom there is reasonable suspicion for a period which will allow the police to carry out inquiries —for example, forensic inquiries—which are often necessary to ensure that prosecution can be pursued successfully through the courts.

The most disturbing feature of the Bill is that we have not looked carefully enough at schedule 1. I am sorry that we have not had a chance in Committee or on Report to debate it—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) spoke for quite a while. I hope that he will realise that I have less than two minutes to speak. Perhaps he will allow me to put my case.

In so far as we vaguely define the Irish Republican Army as one of the relevant organisations under schedule 1, we do the Bill a disservice. The Irish Republican Army refers to the Official IRA and the Provisional IRA. If we are serious about encouraging people to adopt a political position, we should have eliminated the Official IRA from the list in schedule 1.

For almost 15 years they have not been involved in terrorism, but they have formed themselves into a political party—one with which I disagree, but I am a democrat —called the Workers party. I believe that it is wrong that the Government should be entertaining them one day in Stormont castle and the next day proscribing them under schedule 1 to the Bill. I would ask the Minister, when the Bill becomes law, to consider de-proscribing that organisation and thus encouraging terrorists to move to use of the ballot paper only.

It being Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [23 January] and the resolution this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House divided: Ayes 235, Noes 134.

Division No. 61] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Maginnis, Ken
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis

Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wall, Pat
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

House of Commons Services

Mr. Speaker: I have selected amendments (a), (b), (e) and (1). I suggest that we have a general debate, and then I will call the hon. Members concerned to move their amendments at the end of it.

10.15 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move:

That the Second Report of Session 1987-88 from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) on Access to the Precincts of the House (House of Commons Paper No. 580) be approved.

Towards the end of 1987, the House passed a resolution which invited the Services Committee to consider control over access to the precincts of the House, and in particular to consider whether the numbers of Members' personal staff with such access should be reduced, bearing in mind the pressure on the capacity of the facilities of the House.

The catalyst for this resolution was the suspension, at the end of the previous summer recess, of Mr. Ronan Bennett, a research assistant employed by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). But the inquiry conducted by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, which has led to the report that we are debating tonight, was not directly concerned with that issue. As the House will be aware, the Sub-Committee has considered with great care and in great detail a wide range of proposals for controlling access to the House and has made a number of nicely judged recommendations.

I should like to thank the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and his Sub-Committee for their work. I fully support their report, which was unanimously agreed by the Services Committee, and I commend it to the House. If the right hon. Gentleman is lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, I know that he will wish to outline the detailed recommendations of the report and the reasons behind them. I shall be brief, therefore, particularly as I know that a number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in this short debate.

Broadly speaking, the report's recommendations can be divided into two categories: those that are merely advisory and recommend that the security authorities should consider possible courses of action; and those which would, if the report is approved tonight, mean tangible changes in practice in the near future.

The advisory recommendations in the report ask the security authorities to consider such points as the possible introduction of machine-readable passes, random physical screening of pass holders, requiring pass holders to wear passes, and the designation of the area around the Chamber as restricted to Members and House staff. Traditionally, Mr. Speaker, the security of the House is your responsibility, but the Committee felt that it might be profitable to study the suggestions that I have outlined. Whether or not they should be implemented is entirely a matter for you.

The other, more tangible recommendations in the report fall into four main categories. The first is those limiting the numbers of research assistants and the use of Table Office and Library facilities by research assistants and temporary secretaries. The second is those designed to limit the activities of commercial lobbyists. The third is those concerned with freezing the number of passes in circulation and making more effective the control of them, making sure that passes are returned promptly by those who no longer need them, and ensuring a regular change of design.

Finally, there are recommendations on arrangements for Members' staff, most notably that the number of Members' staff who may hold photo passes should be limited to three, with the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee able to recommend to the Services Committee any increase for individual Members where exceptional circumstances justify it. I should like briefly to comment on this recommendation, which I know some Members would find irksome.

Let me say at once that the Committee is not proposing a limit on the number of staff employed by a Member, merely on the number that can possess photo passes. If a Member has more than three staff in his or her employment, those without passes could still, of course, visit the House on a temporary day pass or accompanied by a photo pass holder. I would envisage that the right hon. Member for Salford, East, in his capacity as Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, would look sympathetically on the claims of those members with particular responsibilities, including Front-Bench spokesmen, some senior Members, and minority party leaders, for photo passes in excess of three.

If the House approves the report tonight, I envisage, in accordance with paragraph 60, that the recommendations concerning the number of photo pass holders would come into effect at the beginning of the coming financial year. This would leave a period of two months in which hon. Members should make any arrangements necessary, although, as I have explained, employees in excess of three would still be able to visit the House on the terms for those without photo passes.

The beginning of April would also seem to be a good time to introduce the other concrete recommendations, if approved, on research assistants and lobbyists. I am prepared, however, for a measure of flexibility if there are good arguments in favour of it. The ending of the agreements with intern-sponsoring organisations, for instance, might take place in the summer, once this academic year's crop of interns, who may already have made arrangements to come, have gone. I shall listen to hon. Members' views.

I do believe, however, that there should be no unavoidable delay in implementing the measures proposed by the Committee. There is general agreement in the House that there are too many photo passes in circulation and they are insufficiently controlled. There is, moreover, too much pressure on facilities primarily designed for Members' own use. The measures before us tonight offer a realistic package which achieves what I think is a happy medium between an over-relaxed and an over-rigorous approach. For different reasons, either approach would be to the detriment of hon. Members, and I urge the House to support the Committee's recommendations, which strike the right balance.

I shall say just a few words on the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw). I have long believed that, if we are to facilitate access to this House by Members of the European Parliament, it would be best to proceed with general agreement in all parts of the House. I am pleased to see

[Mr. John Wakeham]

that the amendment has indeed attracted such support. I believe that there really can be very little objection to an amendment which is so modest in scope. If I understand it correctly, it would, if approved, merely allow MEPs access to that part of the House to which members of the public also have access, except that their photo pass would entitle them to come in at St. Stephen's entrance without having to explain themselves to the police or undergoing a bag search and scan for explosives.

We are talking about giving these very limited rights of access to a very limited number of people—81. They already enjoy these rights, and more, in another place, and I do not believe that any useful purpose is served by opposing this modest concession to our Strasbourg colleagues. They will not, under the terms of this amendment, be entitled to use any of the hard-pressed facilities of the House, and there can be no objection to it. I shall support the amendment, together with the original motion.

I shall not be supporting the other amendments you have selected, Mr. Speaker. The Sub-Committee considered most carefully the restrictions on access to the Table Office by research assistants and on the number of Members' staff who may hold photo passes, and their recommendations were endorsed unanimously by the Services Committee. To reject them now would, especially in the case of the limit of three staff photo passes per Member, substantially alter the nature of the report and even frustrate a large part of its purpose.

As for the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) dealing with those who are refused a pass, I have nothing to add to what I said on the subject in the debate on 10 November 1987. Security is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, and you base your decisions on confidential advice from the appropriate authorities. I do not believe that it is possible to reveal details of confidential security advice without compromising that same security. I invite the House to reject this amendment.

10.23 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): I thank the Lord President for his comments and support for the role of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee in the preparation of the report, apart from his remarks about European Members to whom I shall refer later. I accept full responsibility for the contents of the report and stress that the Sub-Committee approved its proposals unanimously.

As the House is aware, the report has been compiled following instructions from the House that access to this place and the lack of facilities, as well as security, should be fully investigated. I stress that, with over 10,000 passes to the Palace of Westminster, we are reaching breaking point with our facilities and that makes security even more difficult.

For a number of years there has been a steady increase in the number of individuals who have acquired a more or less unlimited right of access to the Palace of Westminster and its outbuildings, and to the various facilities available in the House, while accommodation, library and refreshment service facilities have expanded at a much slower rate.

Only two months ago the House was debating a report produced a few days earlier by the New Building Sub-Committee chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). The report emphasised the appalling lack of accommodation available to Members and their staff, even after more than 20 years of development both inside the Palace of Westminster and in the outbuildings. According to the report:

"in round numbers, 500 backbenchers presently have access to only 150 single rooms."

Even in 1990, when the present new buildings are in use, only 85 further rooms will be available for Members.

Accommodation and facilities for Members' staff are at least as bad. Our report points out that the House is at present providing only about 400 desks for more than 1,300 secretaries and research assistants of Members. Although the number of desks will have increased by about half in 1990, the number of staff continues to increase.

There are constant complaints from hon. Members on both sides of the House and their staff about the overcrowding of refreshment facilities at all times of the day and night, about the preoccupation of Library staff in dealing with demands for basic information from relatively and sometimes totally inexperienced research assistants, about queues in the Post Office and about the difficulty of getting advice from the Table Office. At the same time Members, often the same Members, insist that services should be improved—that we provide other facilities such as swimming pools, crèches, shops and hairdressers, in the already overcrowded buildings.

Let me make it clear at once that I am one of those who regard the demand for better facilities as wholly legitimate. I regret and deplore the failure of the House and of successive Governments of both parties to make proper provision for accommodation and services for a Parliament facing the entirely proper demands of the latter part of the 20th century. The overriding priority must be the provision of infinitely better accommodation and other facilities for Members. The pace of development on the Bridge street site is still dreadfully slow, and the Government must realise that Members on both sides of the House are no longer prepared to tolerate such conditions.

The sooner that financial control of our new buildings programme is taken out of the hands of a Government agency and placed firmly in those of the House, the better. *[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) looks at the record he will see that I have been advocating such proposals for the last 20 years, but we must face the facts as they are now. Paragraph 42 of our report states categorically:

"Members' accommodation remains our absolute first priority, and pressure from Members' staff must be viewed in that light."

The same must be said equally of all facilities in the House. Members must have first priority in the Library, the Table Office and the Refreshment Department. If facilities are limited—and they are—we have to make our priorities clear. For this reason we have concluded, some of us very reluctantly, that a limit should be placed on the number of individual staff to whom Members may grant complete freedom of access to the House and its facilities.

Paragraph 54 of our report recommends that no hon. Member should normally be allowed to apply for photo passes for more than three members of his personal staff.

That does not prevent him from employing more staff; he can employ as many as he likes. We say that, given the pressures on facilities of all sorts, a limit must be imposed on those who can freely enter the building, use the Library and monopolise the photocopiers and telephones. So if additional members of staff enter the building they will need day passes or they will need to be accompanied. They cannot claim a right of free access to all the facilities.

The limit of three is not draconian. The latest available figures show that only 66 of the 650 Members hold passes for more than the proposed limit. Between them, they account for 360 of the passes issued to Members' staff—that is, for 25 per cent. of all staff employed in the Palace or outbuildings by hon. Members. A minority of hon. Members on both sides of the House now hold more than three and up to 12 passes each. That cannot continue——

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The Leader of the House said that in certain cases exceptions to the limit of three could be made—for instance, for Front Bench spokesmen and senior Members. Of the 66 Members who hold more than the proposed limit, how many will qualify for the exemptions proposed by my right hon. Friend and the Leader of the House and by how much, therefore, will the limit they are laying down be exceeded?

Mr. Orme: Only a small minority will qualify as exceptions. I will willingly show my hon. Friend the list of passes held now, from which he will see that leaders of parties, and so on, hold more. I shall come on to how we intend to deal with that.

Initially, these proposals will hit some hon. Members hard. Even with the limit that has already been proposed, an increase of almost 50 per cent. in the number of Members' staff is possible, and the strain of that would be intolerable. We must tell colleagues who need more staff with passes that we do not have the facilities to cope with them in this building or in the outbuildings. If every hon. Member exercised the right that some hon. Members have had, we should be walking on the tops of people's heads here.

The limit that we propose is a good deal higher than that preferred by many hon. Members. The right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) has frequently argued that Members should be restricted to only one pass holder. Although I do not think he would press that view, it illustrates the fact that some senior Members are far from convinced that it is necessary or desirable for Members to have more than the number of passes that we recommend.

Our proposal seems, on all the evidence, a sensible balance. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) pointed out, however, there may be exceptions. Our recommendations provide for the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee to consider individual requests for exemptions from the rule. We shall certainly consider them, but I warn that good arguments will have to be used. Every case will be judged on its merits, regardless of which hon. Member puts it.

I should add that the proposed——

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): Is my right hon. Friend not worried that the system that he proposes would produce, for the first time in the House, a prefect-first system? A minority would be able to present a special case. Those Members would be treated in one way and the rest of us would be treated in another. This is a place where, basically, hon. Members have had the same resources and the same freedoms. Is my right hon. Friend not leading us down a dangerous path?

Mr. Orme: We have a prefect-first system now, because a minority of hon. Members are taking advantage of the majority. If my hon. Friend studies the figures, he will understand that I am correct.

The proposed limit on Members' staff is only a part of a package that is designed at least to slow the rate of growth in the number of pass holders of all categories in the Palace. We propose in paragraphs 47 and 48 that the limits on the number of temporary overseas research assistants—inevitably, we are now calling them interns —which were imposed in 1985 should be rigorously enforced and that the loopholes should be closed.

These assistants are mainly American students who visit us each year. They impose a disproportionately heavy demand on services, especially those that are provided by the Library and the Refreshment Department. For that reason we endorse the recommendations of the Librarian that there should be a further and marginal tightening of controls on the use of Library facilities by temporary staff. I refer the House to paragraph 36 of the report. The limit on the overall number of Members' pass-holding staff may make colleagues think twice before accepting an intern replacement.

We propose what could be the most far-reaching restriction on the growth of pass holders in general. Many organisations, including Government Departments and the media, have been steadily increasing the number of their officials who carry passes to permit them access to this building. We note that about 2,200 civil servants held temporary passes to the building last year, even though many of them were individuals who needed only occasional access to Parliament. Their passes are called temporary, but in practice each one may be held for many years. That is completely unreasonable. The system certainly does not work in the opposite direction.

The media have slipped into the same practice. Most notorious is the BBC, which already holds more than 200 passes. What will happen when television comes into the Chamber, whether it is organised by the BBC or any other organisation? We must take that into account.

The trends to which I have referred must stop. In paragraph 59 we propose that the total number of passes held by any outside organisation should be frozen at the present level. If the motion is agreed, it will be possible for outside organisations to increase their allocation of passes only if the Sub-Committee approves. The allocations for new organisations, such as the new television organisations, will require the specific approval of the Sub-Committee. In that way, and for the first time, the right of unimpeded access will be policed and controlled by Members and not merely by officials.

If we are imposing controls on our own staff, the House will agree, I think, that we should have the power to impose similar control on other bodies. That should and would include Departments of the Executive and of the Government.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The right hon. Gentleman said that the BBC will continue to hold 200 passes. Cannot some effort be made to diminish the number?

Mr. Orme: As a start, we shall freeze the number, but then we shall examine the position in more detail. We do not say that that number must remain for ever. We shall want some justification from the organisations for having so many passes. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who is an authority on the media, will advise the Sub-Committee on the best way to organise the matter.

On the growth of covert lobbying in the House, I am sure that I carry with me hon. Members on both sides of the House. The matter has been examined in detail by the Select Committee on Members' Interests, and I hope that the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) will soon produce constructive proposals from his Committee. But there is too much evidence of abuse at present for us not to take whatever action is open to us now. My Committee has heard of frankly shocking examples of commercial lobbyists trying to infiltrate themselves into the building under many guises.

Hon. Members need look no further than appendix 7 on page 44 of the report to see the example of a lobbyist who, with refreshing naivety, tried to infiltrate himself into the House in the guise of a research assistant to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). I should have thought that that was the last hon. Member on whom to try that. The lobbyist's letter hints that the House of Commons is easy game for poachers from the world of public relations.

That practice must be stopped, and our recommendation in paragraph 52 will enable the Services Committee to recommend to Mr. Speaker the immediate withdrawal of a pass where the holder is clearly primarily engaged as a lobbyist. I hope that the House will endorse the proposal, and I should welcome information that will assist my Sub-Committee in carrying it out.

The latter part of the report deals with controls over the number of pass holders for the building. It is one thing to limit the number of pass holders, but quite another effectively to decide how the pass-holding system is maintained. There are two objectives. First, no individual should be issued with a pass giving unlimited access to the building unless there is reasonable certainty that he is suitable to hold such a potentially valuable document. Secondly, our procedures for checking passes must be adequate to ensure that only legitimate pass holders can move freely in the non-public areas of the Palace.

The checking of pass holders has already given rise to great controversy, and is the reason why the Services Committee inquired further into the matter and came up with the present proposals. It is clear that at least some checking is required before the right of access is granted to those who do not have that right by reason of being elected here. All permanent staff of the two Houses are fully checked before taking up their jobs, as are civil servants and the agents of public corporations working in the building. The same rules should apply to all.

I was surprised to discover that overseas staff employed by Members are often subject to no checking. Paragraph 11 of the report recommends that appropriate clearance always be obtained before a photo identity pass is issued to foreign nationals.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorking, West): Excluding the question of the overseas students being employed by Members of Parliament, would it not be proper for the parties to look carefully at the practice of employing overseas students? I understand that quite a number of them wandering round the building have been employed by parties.

Mr. Orme: When we examined that issue we found that it was controversial. We said that there must be some right of access, but that it must be properly controlled. In our opinion it had not been controlled. The intention now is to control it. The best way to deal with the issue—my hon. Friend the member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has tabled an amendment on the matter—is through the security authorities, so we did not examine the matter. Individual security is a matter for Mr. Speaker and, as the Leader of the House pointed out, we did not discuss that in detail.

The Sub-Committee looked closely at various possibilities that might help and has recommended that they should be seriously examined by the appropriate authorities and introduced if they think fit. Those possibilities concern only checking people coming in and not vetting. The proposals include the use of machine-readable passes, the introduction of mechanised barriers at the main entrances to the Palace and the underground car park, the occasional screening of pass holders, as well as the public entering the building, and the possible wearing of passes inside the building. I hope that those proposals will be considered seriously. Some of them are highly controversial, but there is no reason why we should not consider them. If we do not like them, we can reject them, but we should consider them.

The report is, in many ways, a compromise. It is designed to put a modest brake on the number of people with an unqualified right of entry to the Palace and its precincts and it suggests some ways in which the enforcement and policing of the pass system could be improved. It leaves some discretion to the Services Committee which may help to iron out the problems that will, inevitably, arise from its implementation. The report does not pretend to solve all the problems for all time. It is inevitable that the Committee and the House will have to come back to the issues before long, but I strongly urge all hon. Members to give the proposals a chance. It is the nearest that we have come to a comprehensive review.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Is it not a pity that some provision was not made in the report for former Members of Parliament? Is it not shameful that although many people can come and go in the House, people who have served honourably for many years do not have access even to the Strangers' Cafeteria? Private companies such as Marks and Spencer and ICI at least give their retired employees better recognition.

Mr. Orme: We have had representations on that, but we have not had time to discuss them. We have also not had time to discuss the question of Members of the European Parliament. As a result, until the matter comes before us we are not in a position to make recommendations, although I note what my hon. Friend has said. Again, the problem is one of pressure on the building and its facilities, rather than of any hon. Members being opposed to such suggestions.

The report does not pretend to solve all problems for all time, but it is the nearest we have come to a comprehensive review of access to the building and the attempts to deal with the problems of overcrowding that we now face. With any luck, some of the proposals may be relaxed in the

future when the accommodation available to the House is significantly improved. But for the time being, some restrictions must be imposed.

I want to comment briefly on the amendments. Amendment (a) seeks to remove our recommendation that the research assistants of hon. Members should not have access to the Table Office during the period of peak activity on weekday afternoons. I have no strong feeling on that, but I must point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North that the Table Office made the proposal and it was supported by the Sub-Committee not only because there have been complaints from other hon. Members of overcrowding in that busy office, but because we desired to stop the overcrowding during the times when hon. Members themselves most needed the advice of the Table Office.

The amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) is far more significant. Access by Members of the European Parliament was hotly debated in the Services Committee during the previous two Parliaments, but no applications have been made to my Sub-Committee since the general election of 1987. Frankly, I was surprised and amazed to hear the Leader of the House lend his support to what is proposed, because the case for and against providing facilities for MEPs should be properly considered in the Sub-Committee before being submitted to the House.

The amendment is an attempt to carry a decision on a matter of some importance on the coat tails of a quite different debate. I cannot support it. I advise the House that if we are concerned about facilities and overcrowding and if we grant 81 passes, that will be only the beginning. There will be pressure for the use of other facilities and for the staff of MEPs to enter. What special right do European Members of Parliament have for unfettered access to this building? It is completely wrong.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) does not ask for any facilities to be given to European Members of Parliament? Does he accept that my hon. Friend's amendment proposes much less than is offered by other national Parliaments in the European Community to their MEPs?

Mr. Orme: Other European Parliaments have facilities that are superior to ours. Has the hon. Gentleman not heard the saying about the thin end of the wedge? That is what we are talking about. This is not a personal matter about individual Members of the European Parliament; it is about our facilities in the House of Commons.

I turn finally to the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) which seeks to increase the limit on the number of an hon. Member's pass-holding staff from three as we propose to five. That runs a coach and horses through our main recommendation. We are concerned, for the time being at least, to limit staff to meet the accommodation and other facilities that are available. The amendment would allow a possible further 1,300 pass-holding staff and, if agreed, would undermine the main intentions of our report. I advise——

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of the staff that some of us employ are part-time? His figure of 1,000-plus is simply not relevant in the case of part-time staff because the full-time equivalent may amount only to three persons.

Mr. Orme: If they have permits to enter, that is all right. It is a matter for my hon. Friend. We are talking about permits that allow people, whether full-time or part-time, access to this House at any time of the day or night.

The report stands well without the proposed amendments. I ask the House to support our modest but important proposals, in the interests of those who work here—both Members and staff.

10.54 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I support the report and agree with much of what the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said, many of his remarks about the amendment are mistaken. Should the amendment be agreed, people will do no more than what they can do now, but they will be able to do it without going through the screening and questioning process that they now must undergo.

We joined the Common Market and confirmed that we meant to take a positive role. We confirmed our action by a referendum. Today, we are more than ever committed to playing our full part in the development of the Community. The Council of Ministers meets regularly. Our own Government are robust in not only seeking what is best for the Community but in safeguarding our national interests. It is equally important that hon. Members lose no opportunity to keep in touch with United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament with the same purposes in mind. It is to that end that I have tabled amendment (b).

When I was in the European Parliament, before direct elections, I was strongly urged to become a directly elected Member of the Parliament in 1979. In the end, I decided against it, first, because it would have meant my giving up my Scarborough constituency of which I am fond. Secondly, it became clear that the House was not prepared to offer a helping hand to encourage newly elected Members of the European Parliament to gain access to hon. Members and to their Committees. With an obvious denial of any gesture of welcome, I cannot blame any Member of the European Parliament who concludes that he would rather not come here at all. To say the least, I found our attitude discouraging and frustrating.

The present position is not only discourteous to United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament but harmful to our own interests, whether we are keen Europeans or have hesitations about the way in which the EEC is developing. It must be in our interests that our point of view is put forward in discussions with our colleagues in the European Parliament. Equally, we should seek to understand their point of view.

Many Back-Bench Committees have already welcomed visits by United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament, but their interest in coming to us is greatly lessened by the unwelcome restrictions that are placed upon their access to this place.

To say the least, my amendment is modest. However, it would give United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament an important right—the right of access to the Central Lobby, the Lower and Upper Waiting Halls, and the Committee Corridors. Such a right to come to meet us

[Sir Michael Shaw]

would show them that they are welcome, that they have direct political access to us, and that they are not expected to undergo the searches and questioning that now take place.

My amendment would remedy a disadvantage from which, at present, only our own Members of the European Parliament suffer in their national Parliament. I hope that the amendment will receive full support from hon. Members. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for his kind words about it. If it is agreed, my amendment will encourage closer relationships between ourselves and our European colleagues. It is in the interests not only of the Community as a whole but of this country within it.

10.59 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I shall be brief because many wish to speak.

I am disappointed in the report, its tenor and what it seeks to do. A report on access to Parliament should be better debated on a more important basis than the number of research assistants Members of Parliament can have.

The public are forced to wait outside, often in the rain, for many hours and then in Central Lobby often for a long time before Members can be found. If they succeed in getting a ticket for the Gallery, they cannot leave the Gallery other than for a short time, they cannot get refreshments on their own and there are no facilities for changing children or leaving them—*[Laughter.]* I do not know why Tory Members find that funny. Many of my constituents are appalled at how they are treated and the image that the House presents. They are better received and treated at most town halls than here.

Mr. Holland: Since these considerations do not occur to Tory Members, may I inform the House that today my six-year-old child was ill and could not go to school, so in the middle of the afternoon I was in a dilemma about whether I could attend a committee meeting in the House because I could not leave the child alone in the family room. If there were a creche, I could without question have known that I could attend.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention because it illustrates my point. He is talking about Members' children, whereas I am talking about how the public are treated. I wish that Tory Members would not find this so funny. Some Members are more concerned about keeping an excessive number of passes, possibly for commercial lobbying purposes, than about whether people in the House can do their work properly and the public can enter the place.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): It should be put on record that we are served by as courteous a group of people as exists anywhere. When the public come to this House, they are treated by the police, security staff and others with great courtesy and complete consideration, often under extreme provocation.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening to what I said. I was talking about the facilities, conditions and lengthy waiting periods for members of the public. I was not criticising the actions of the police or anybody in their treatment of the public. I am talking about the image that the building presents to the public.

Delegations from the Islington . Disablement Association and other groups have come here to see me and it is a humiliating disgrace that to get someone in a wheelchair to Central Lobby to lobby a Member, as is the inalienable right of everyone, he must be dragged all round the car park, put in lifts where wheelchairs will not go, and made to feel exceptional and different. If we in Parliament demand that the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 is put into operation in every local authority and that there should be access for the disabled to every public building, that should apply here in exactly the same way.

There are a large number of dining rooms on the ground floor. They are hired out at great cost for lunches and dinners provided that they are for the benefit of commercial lobbies and firms. There is nowhere that any member of the public can get any refreshment other than from one machine, which often does not work, in the Upper Waiting Hall, if they can find it, unless a Member is available to take them into the Strangers' Cafeteria for a cup of tea. Why can we not have Westminster Hall as a waiting area and provide proper refreshment facilities for the public there?

Anyone who cares to walk around the building and to have a look at staff working conditions would be appalled. It is a disgrace. During the recess I went into the Vote Office and was appalled to see paper stacked up to the ceiling. If I had been a shop steward for them, as I have been in the past in the public sector—*[Laughter.]* I fail to see what is so funny about a serious fire risk right underneath this Chamber. The working conditions are Dickensian, to put it mildly. We have low ceilings and a lack of emergency escape facilities because the building has Crown immunity and health and safety regulations do not apply here. However, we demand, quite rightly, that they are applied everywhere else. It is wrong that our staff are expected to work in these appalling conditions.

I want to raise also the question of creches and nursery facilities. In many workplaces—not necessarily only those run by progressive employers—nurseries are provided because employers understand that employees have children and that the nursery facilities provided by most local authorities are appalling. Therefore, employers have tried to make some facilities available to their staff. As there are 10,000 staff working in this building, ranging from catering staff to staff in your office, Mr. Speaker, there must be an enormous demand for creche and nursery facilities. However, we seem to have our priorities all wrong. We are more interested in dining rooms where private lobbying can take place than in facilities for the public who come here to see Parliament in operation. We are more concerned to continue the privileges of hon. Members rather than about the needs of staff employed by hon. Members and by the House.

I hope that those matters will be considered seriously. They may have been ignored by the second report of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) which we are considering today. I hope that the Select Committee will consider these points properly in future. It is an absolute scandal that Crown immunity denies workers in this building the same rights that they would receive anywhere else under a different employer.

Mr. Orme: I can assure my hon. Friend that his points are not ignored in the Select Committee's report, nor are they ignored in the new building report prepared by my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell). We are aware of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and we want to implement them as soon as possible. However, it is a matter of facilities and of getting on with that wretched building over the road.

Mr. Corbyn: That may be so. However, I have been a Member of the House for nearly six years—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] Thanks for that. I have heard for so long all this stuff about looking into the question of access for the disabled and into the provision of creches and nurseries. Why does this Parliament have to operate in terms of the last century? The conditions are appalling and they should be improved.

I have drafted several amendments which I hoped would encourage the House to consider these problems seriously. That may be a vain hope, but one lives in expectation. I will move my amendment later, as you instructed, Mr. Speaker.

My amendment (a) reads:

"Line 3, after 'be', insert, 'with the exception of the recommendation in paragraph 33 relating to access to the Table Office by research assistants,'."

I have tabled it for a simple reason. As I understand the proposal, research assistants will not be allowed into the Table Office after 2 pm. I understand—if I am wrong, I stand to be corrected—that the restriction would not apply to staff of Ministers or to the staff of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. It would apply only to the staff of Back Benchers. We will have a system of privilege for questions to be planted on Ministers' behalf or whatever else they want done and the same for the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen, but Back Benchers would be denied the right to have a research assistant table a question on their behalf. I do not mind what rules exist, but they should be absolutely the same for everyone.

My other amendments relate partly to my experience concerning the withdrawal of a pass from my former researcher, Dr. Ronan Bennett. If the House accepts the Select Committee report without question, I hope that hon. Members will consider very carefully what they are doing. Implicit in the recommendation on security is that an unnamed person giving unknown information about an application for a research assistant's pass can cause that pass to be refused without the applicant knowing what he is suspected of or guilty of and without the hon. Member knowing what is happening. If we believe in a system of justice, that system must be open and above board. We cannot allow a secret organisation to condemn someone out of hand without any power of redress or that person even knowing the charge against him.

Dr. Bennett was told by the House and the Murdoch press that he was unfit to receive a pass to enter the building. At no stage was he or I told anything about the nature of the suspicions or allegations against him. It has happened to me with one of my staff. Would any hon. Member like to have an application for a pass withdrawn and refused with no reason given? If it had happened to any Conservative Members, they would think more carefully—or at least I hope they would—about the points that I am making.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): The hon. Gentleman asked whether Conservative Members would like it to happen to them. I make it clear that, if a member of staff whom I wished to employ did not pass the security services' test, I should be grateful to them.

Mr. Corbyn: It is an unquestioning hon. Member who would accept such action without being given any reason.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): The intervention of the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) was interesting. The hon. Gentleman will recall that the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) identified six Conservative Members of Parliament in 1979 as being unsuitable for office. Would he apply his comments to them as well?

Mr. Corbyn: The House should not pass a report that takes power away from itself and hands it over to the unelected and the unaccountable. It is a serious issue, and I hope that, when we come to amendment (e), which you have agreed to call, Mr. Speaker, the House will recognise that what I am proposing in this amendment is that the reasons for refusal should be made known to the applicant and to the sponsoring hon. Member. That does not appear to be an unreasonable request.

I believe that this House has an awful lot of catching up to do. The conditions under which most hon. Members work are appalling. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who has been here since June 1987, received his desk only this week. *[Laughter.]* I do not find that funny. I find it disgraceful that, with all the privileges and special rooms in this place, hon. Members can be denied a desk. All of us should be concerned that, when elected to Parliament, we should have the physical conditions to do the job properly. As with every other building, there should be facilities for access of persons of disabilities. This House should be made welcoming rather than daunting to the public, and it should be seen as an open Parliament to which people can come, to watch, to listen and perhaps to understand something of what goes on here. Instead we are secretive, we set up barriers, and we seem more interested in privileges for ourselves than in facilities for the staff or the visiting public.

I hope that the Services Committee will reconsider all these issues and decide that it is time that this Parliament was brought into the second half of the 20th century and made the public place that it should be.

Mr. Speaker: I remind the House that this debate will end at 11.44 pm. I ask hon. Members to bear that in mind when making their speeches.

11.13 pm

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that he would be brief, but then went on somewhat. What he possesses in verbosity, he clearly lacks in a sense of humour, because he kept saying that he did not find the response of hon. Members funny. Of course, when he said that, hon. Members regarded his remarks as even more avant garde and over the top. What he did not realise was that the House is concerned about the congestion of our physical facilities and the need to have proper control.

All hon. Members will be grateful to the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) for the way in which he and his colleagues on the Sub-Committee presented the

[Mr. Hugh Dykes]

report. It has emphasised the need for control, especially over the issuing of passes. That is welcome. The proposals proceed from no limit—a situation which has developed in an evolutionary and unsatisfactory way—to a proper fixed limit, on which the House needs to agree. At present, the proposal, endorsed by the Leader of the House, is for a limit of three years.

I shall refer briefly to one or two other aspects of the report, which I regard as excellent and to which I shall be glad to give my wholehearted support, as, I imagine, will most hon. Members. In paragraph 7 on page vi, one sees that there are 72 different categories of photo-identity pass holders, which is excessive. Again, one commends the Sub-Committee's attempts to achieve a rational control over the entire panoply of passes.

I wonder about the five-year limit on validity of an individual pass for Members contained in paragraph 8. Perhaps that pass should be valid for longer. There are many excellent parts to the report and if previous speakers had not taken up so much time one could refer to them. I am particularly delighted to support the proposals for Members of the European Parliament, which were advanced with a characteristically courteous and gentlemanly approach by my hon. Friend for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw).

Apart from a couple of small details, that is the only area with which I take issue with the right hon. Member for Salford, East. I hope that I will not offend the right hon. Gentleman if I say that I thought that his attitude in this respect rather curmudgeonly. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough would agree that his proposal was a modest first step and to describe it as the thin end of the wedge is embarrassing to our distinguished colleagues of all parties who are hard-working Members of the European Parliament—although I am aware that this does not affect the alliance. We should be more positive about the proposal and I am glad that the Leader of the House demonstrated some enthusiam for it.

I and other hon. Members from all parties have tabled amendments dealing with a slight revision of the limit on the number of passes. Some hon. Members may consider that the maximum number of six passes, as opposed to three, is on the high side. In your wisdom, Mr. Speaker, you have selected the amendment that sets the limit at five —the other amendment proposed four passes—in a word, the middle of the range.

I understand that hon. Members from all parties wish to reassure themselves that they will no longer see strange people wandering around the Corridors and wonder who they are, and that they will not see such people on Corridors that were previously the preserve of Members of Parliament. They understand, however, that it is necessary to exercise a rational and durable control.

The physical restrictions that we intend to place on people are welcome. No access to the Table Office after 2 o'clock on Monday to Thursday is an excellent idea. The quid pro quo must be try to reach the right compromise figure for the number of passes to be issued for all staff members of any hon. Member. Some hon. Members have no such staff—presumably they have a secretary, but they may not have a research assistant. Some may have a part-time research assistant. Conservative Members rightly feel some resentment when it appears that Members of the smaller parties overdo it by issuing far too many passes to their assistants. We acknowledge that they have to cover many more portfolios than the Members of larger parties, but they overdo it and that causes resentment. That does not gainsay the need to try to get the balance right, which is a difficult judgment.

I plead with hon. Members to consider seriously amendment (l) which suggests five passes, I believe which is the right compromise. To opt for no limit affords the maximum discretion. Some hon. Members do not want to have research assistants with passes, but others do. We must consider the tapestry of differential requirements. Would it be right to go from no limit to the low figure of three, and, on page xiv, paragraph 54 (iii), build into that limit the dubious idea that the Sub-Committee should recommend to the Services Committee

"an increase in the limit in respect of an individual Member where they are satisfied that exceptional circumstances apply"?

I hope that the right hon. Member for Salford, East is not offended by that reference and I am sure that the Committee would honourably and faithfully try to ensure that it was satisfied about those circumstances. Nevertheless, I believe that such a principle is problematical and almost a reprehensible one to attempt to build into the limit. If that increase were limited to leaders of parties perhaps the House could support it, but would that happen?

More and more approaches would come from institutional and semi-institutional quarters on behalf of Members who have particular duties—many Members have duties on one kind or another. What about Chairmen of Select Committees or someone who for an operational requirement has three part-time research assistants and one and a half secretaries to cope with the work load? What about those who may be between appointing assistants whose passes may overlap, or long-distance Members who may need an extra person to stay here permanently? London Members might want people in a local office to come here frequently and have proper access to the House. In such cases, the limit of three passes would not be adequate.

It is not right for hon. Members to make the House excessively nervous by saying that, automatically, all hon. Members would go for the maximum limit that we would decide and that three times 650 would be a 50 per cent. increase on the existing figure. If we went to five, as is suggested in amendment (l), that does not mean that there would be 650 times five staff pass holders of one kind or another. Many hon. Members would continue with the existing number of passes. Equally, for all sorts of reasons other hon. Members would have to go above the limit and would be entitled to do that in the pursuance of their work. I know that the House wishes to exercise proper control and that is why the slightly higher compromise limit of four, five or six—in this case five, according to the terms of the middle-of-the-range amendment—should be seriously considered.

11.21 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I apologise on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) who is not here. As I have told the Leader of the House, he is on a constituency engagement and I am deputising for him.

My hon. Friends and I advocate a limit. The report was precipitated by a security matter and we accept that there should be security in the building. It is right that the House should ensure that people going about their business are strictly protected. For those reasons, we do not contest the ground that restrictions are needed on the huge number of passes that are presently given to nearly 10,000 people in many different categories to allow them to come and go in the House and in the other place.

So far there has been no breach of the rules by hon. Members or by others, and no limits have been applied. There can be no allegation of impropriety, because there has been none. The issue before the House is about the appropriate way to equip hon. Members, primarily, to do the job that they need to do in the House. There is a fundamental question related to the legislative part of the constitution rather than to the Executive sector. We have an excellent Library, but for those of us who have to shadow Departments and for many others with specific duties in the House, there is a need for adequate support to begin to take on the Executive. We need that support in order to do the job properly.

I support the proposal by the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and commend to the House the proposition that to move from no restriction to a tight first restriction will pose a problem. I remind the House that that is distinct from what we propose in the other categories. As the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, the other categories are to be frozen and not restricted. Members are to be restricted, while Ministers are not. I understand the concern of the right hon. Member for Salford, East that, if we all exercised the right to go to the limit, things would be impossible. The argument against that stands on the basis of the facts of the moment. Many Members have three or fewer pass holders, and only a few have more than the maximum. The hon. Member for Harrow, East and other hon. Members suggested a low maximum, and the likelihood of a coach and horses being driven through a proposal to restrict limits is invalidated by the experience of the House. People choose the number of passes to reflect their circumstances.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does the hon. Gentleman still have nine research assistants? That was the figure that he gave, to his credit, in his evidence to the Committee. Does he not agree that nine is a ridiculous number for any hon. Member to have?

Mr. Hughes: We proposed a maximum of six, and I have six at the moment. However, two are part-time, and are never here at the same time. All the people who work for me are paid from the Fees Office, and I use my salary to pay people. This is an important issue. If hon. Members choose to use their office costs allowance to employ three or four staff, they have the right to that flexibility, and not to have the number of staff on whom they choose to spend their money restricted by an arbitrary limit.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking) *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I will not give way again.

This should not be a party political issue. The majority of members of my party have three or fewer pass holders. I hope that we shall not impose restrictions on Members of Parliament when lobbyists and others still have access to the House.

The hon. Member for Harrow, East argued for the sensible balance, and I ask the House to support that and to realise that there are many occasions when flexibility, and hon. Member's right to flexibility, is appropriate. I can cite two further examples. One is when a hon. Member has a private Member's Bill. That will inevitably, for a short time, impose extra work. He may need to have somebody here permanently for that time, and may need to have a number of appropriate passes.

Mr. Cormack *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: No, I must continue.

Another factor is the hours that people can come in. It is not sufficient to say that they can have a day pass. The Member of Parliament may not be here to enable them to get in, or to sign the day pass. There may not be anybody in the office to authorise their arrival when they come. There are many practical reasons why hon. Members should give themselves the flexibility that the alternative proposal of a maximum of five would give.

Many Members of Parliament sponsor three pass holders—well over 100. Well over a quarter of Members of Parliament sponsor three or more pass holders. The evidence of the current practice of the House is that there needs to be flexibility for those who might want to increase the number by one, but find that the motion, if passed unamended, would not allow that. There should be a limit —there is no argument against that—but to restrict that limit to three would inhibit the performance of the duty that is, above all, the principal responsibility of Members of Parliament—to spend our money and meet our needs appropriately, within a properly secure system of allocating passes. I urge hon. Members on both sides of the House to support amendment (l).

11.27 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I hope that the House will do no such thing. Although the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) produced a soft-soapy argument for increasing the number to five or six, every hon. Member who exceeds the limit trespasses on the generosity of his colleagues. If the hon. Member thinks about it for a moment, he will see that that is so. We are not seeking to limit the number of research assistants who may be employed by the Democrats, individually or collectively. We are saying that there must be a limit on the number of people who come into the building. That is entirely different, and I deeply resent the hon. Gentleman's attempt to confuse the issue; it is not worthy of him.

There are a number of good reasons for us to pass the motion. It is a beginning. I agree strongly with the hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme). There is plenty of work to be done, but we must stop the rot at this point. The House is becoming liberty hall. There are people roaming around whom none of us know by sight and whom we cannot identify. The police do not know them. Passes are issued to newspaper delivery people who come to the House once a day to deliver two copies of a provincial paper to the Library. That is utterly ludicrous and there must be ways of better arranging our affairs——

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Onslow: —for security and practical purposes.

I see no objection to the extremely modest proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough, (Sir M.

[Mr. Onslow]

Shaw) that Members of the European Parliament should be put on the same footing as our own staff who have permanent passes. What is wrong with that? We are not suggesting that they be given elaborate facilities, creches, bathrooms or whatever else maybe in store in the new building. We are simply asking that they should be able to come in here without having to hang about for an interminable period at the entrance. As most of us know, they can already come in, by permission of the other place, through the House of Lords entrance and it demeans us that we do not accord them the same courtesy.

Mr. Dykes *rose*——

Mr. Onslow: I hope very much that we shall pass this motion with my hon. Friend's amendment and that the other amendments will be rejected.

11.30 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The real problem is the appalling conditions in which the House of Commons is expected to work. I can go back to 1950, when I had to wait for a locker. It was 14 years before I had a room, and that was because I was a Minister, and 29 years before I had a room as a Back Bencher. Conditions are appalling for both Members and the staff of the House. When people say that the Executive gets away with things that they should not, it is in part because this legislature—the House of Commons—has neglected to provide itself with facilities to develop. Schoolchildren come round the House in a morning, but it is a disgrace because, when we talk to them afterwards, they do not have the slightest idea what the House of Commons does; all they know is that Mr. Speaker wears a wig, or that the Mace was dropped in a certain place, or that something happened to King Charles I along the street; and, in the evening, the Harcourt corridor is full of lobbyists paying money to get their case into the House.

I oppose the report. I am sorry to disappoint my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), but it is a disgrace for the High Court of Parliament to say that Ronan Bennett was denied a pass, as a security risk, when he had not been tried. I met that man once after the case had come to light. He was convicted—no doubt you will correct me, Mr. Speaker, if I am wrong—and you thought it your duty to take the judgment of the Sergeant at Arms. I do not believe that any elected Member saw the security case. That judgment should not be endorsed by the House, because it could be applied in many ways.

The links with the public are the lifeblood of the House of Commons. I have always found it offensive that we talk about the Strangers' Gallery; it is the "Electors' Gallery." We still say and think in the House, "I spy Strangers"; it might be better to say, "I've seen an elector." It is the contact with the public that makes this place relevant.

We now have the absolute obsession with security. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East served in Northern Ireland, but he must know that security is not a new problem. There was Guy Fawkes. There was the murder of Spencer Percival, but it is incredible to hear hon. Members say that everyone should have a pass and be body-searched. The murders of Airey Neave and Spencer Percival did occur in this place, but are we really describing ourselves as if we were working at Windscale or in one of the high-security defence establishments? We make ourselves ridiculous by talking about that level of security.

We need a new look. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) rightly said that it is awful to see pensioners queueing in the cold when Westminster Hall is empty and only available for a special exhibition for some lobbyist who wants to get his case across to the House. When television comes, I hope that there will be open-circuit television so that they can watch the House while they wait. We should treat them as what they are —our employers.

The work of Members has expanded considerably. I suppose that it all began with the welfare state and the Liberal Government of 1910. My dad once told me that after the Lloyd George insurance Act—the National Insurance Act 1911—he was in the Members' Post Office and a Conservative Member came in, threw three letters on the table and said, "Look at that. That is a product of your Government." He also told me that, when women got the vote, the House stopped sniggering about women's issues.

With the expansion in case work, letters and surgeries, how can we keep any Government—Labour or Tory—under control unless we have the facilities? How can it be said that women are under-represented in Parliament when creches are not available? That does not apply only to women Members: as my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) pointed out, men too have responsibilities for their children. Librarians have such responsibilities. But we dismiss them, while letting out the Dining Rooms so that the Refreshment Department can make a profit.

The truth is that we are not a serious Parliament. If Members have not enough room in the House, we should give them grants so that they can have offices elsewhere. I do not work in an office here: I could not get a tenth of my papers into my little room. I got a window about 18 months ago, however.

Members must be given the funds to do their job. My only complaint about interns is that British youngsters are not allowed to come to Parliament. The Americans realise its importance, or at least they go back knowing something about it.

The report is another step towards the subordination of the legislature to the Executive—I say that to my right hon. Friend with deep respect. We are saying that we will let the security services decide who can come in. It is wrong for a Parliament to do that: the security services are employed by the Government of the day, and we know a little about them from recent legislation. We are saying that, because political work has expanded, we will restrict facilities instead of expanding them. But we need not wait for the new building. There are an awful lot of things that we could do. I have always thought that the House of Lords should be put to better use. After all, if we are to let MEPs in on the ground that they have been elected, what about keeping other people out on the ground that they have not been?

I shall vote for the amendment, although not for MEPs, who can come and see Members if they want. There is no reciprocal facility in the European Parliament—not that that matters, as I doubt whether many Members would wish to go there. I think that the amendments of my hon.

Friend the Member for Islington, North are amendments of substance, but that the report is inward-looking, restrictive and dangerous. I advise the House to reject it.

11.37 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): The Sub-Committee—consisting of members of the Government party, the Opposition and the Social and Liberal Democrats—has, in its unanimous report, done a workmanlike rather than a doctrinaire job for the House of Commons. I am very grateful to its Chairman and members for the care with which they took the evidence and produced the report.

Let me first refer to amendment (a). There are certain times which are crucial in the Table Office. If a Member has not succeeded in getting to the front of the queue to put down a question or motion by then, it is delayed by a day. If it is an amendment, it will become a starred amendment and will probably not be selected for that reason.

In general, research assistants have not the knowledge of procedure that Members have, and if they have unlimited access to the Table Office they are likely to take up far more of the two Clerks'—sometimes one Clerk's —time than a Member who, knowing far more about procedure, comes in to table a question or a motion. It is important that Members should not lose a crucial day when they wish to table an amendment or question because inexperienced research assistants want to engage the attention of the duty Clerks to find out whether what they want to do is in order.

It is well known that the Library has been grossly abused by visitors who want to use the services of the Library to enable them to write theses for their examinations. It is quite right that the Sub-Committee has drawn attention to that.

The Sub-Committee's report does not deal with an ideal solution in unlimited facilities. It is to do with priority in very limited facilities. It has done a workmanlike job in that context, and it will have my support. I am grateful to the Leader of the House for putting down a motion that we approve, rather than taking note of the report. I hope that the response of the House will encourage him to do the same for other reports of Committees of the House, which yet await decision by the House.

11.41 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I have a larger than usual number of research assistants, but it must be said that several of them are part-time and come in only once a fortnight or once a month. The decision on how many of them I need to do my job is mine, and no one else's. There are many different concepts of what our job is. Are we laymen, specialists, or constituency representatives? It is wrong to impose other Members' views of what the job is on me. I want to do this job and serve Great Grimsby in the way that I think appropriate. I need the staff that I think are appropriate to help me do that job——

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No.

Secondly, if the House in its wisdom does not provide the necessary resources and money to allow me to do the job in the way I think appropriate, I should be free to take help from outside, wherever it is available.

Mr. Jopling *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman knows that the hon. Member is not giving way.

Mr. Mitchell: If the facilities are strained, it is the responsibility of the House to improve them, not to cut down on their use. By excluding people from obtaining passes, my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) will not get the facilities improved. That will be used as an argument for not improving them. The argument that people are not excluded if they cannot use the the House's facilities is wrong; they will be effectively excluded, with the exception of those working for the wealthier Members with offices in other parts of town. For us, they will be excluded.

My final point is simple: the trend of the times is that the House is becoming more open, more specialised and more interesting to the public. That means more access for more people and more help to do our job. We cannot stand in the way of that progress. If we do, we shall make ourselves look stupid and be knocked over by it.

This is a petty, prejudicial motion; I hope that the House will oppose it.

11.43 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): With reference to amendment (b), I must say that co-operation and exchange of information between this Parliament and the European Parliament have become increasingly important in the light of the single European Act and our involvement in the Community.

Having welcomed these provisions in principle, I must add a reservation. This is a one-way arrangement. Access is to this House. The problem is how to gain access to the information that we need about what is happening in the European institutions—information that we need to be able effectively to exercise our judgment on behalf of our constituents. We should seriously consider improving the manner in which we get over to Europe from time to time.

It being one and a half hours after the motion was entered upon, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [27 January], to put forthwith the Questions on amendments selected by him which were then moved.*

Amendment proposed: (a), after 'be', insert

', with the exception of the recommendation in paragraph 33 relating to access to the Table Office by research assistants,'. —*[Mr. Corbyn.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 36, Noes 201.

Division No. 62] **[11.44 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Gordon, Mildred
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Hinchliffe, David
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Clay, Bob	Janner, Greville
Cohen, Harry	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Cousins, Jim	Kennedy, Charles
Dalyell, Tam	Maclennan, Robert
Duffy, A. E. P.	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Fisher, Mark	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Flynn, Paul	Nellist, Dave

Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Stuart Holland.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Fishburn, John Dudley
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Maginnis, Ken
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morgan, Rhodri
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: (b), at end add

'provided also that United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament may be issued with photo-identity passes allowing them access to the Central Lobby, the Lower and Upper Waiting Halls and the Committee Corridors.'—*[Sir Michael Shaw.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 168, Noes 62.

Division No. 63] **[11.56 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*

Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macdonald, Calum A.
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robertson, George
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Salmond, Alex
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Ashby, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fearn, Ronald
Foster, Derek
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gow, Ian
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Haynes, Frank
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Knapman, Roger
Lamond, James
Livsey, Richard
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Riddick, Graham
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse and
Mr. Bob Cryer.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment proposed: (e), at end add

'but that this House resolves, with respect to paragraphs 10 and 11 thereof, that any persons refused a pass shall have the opportunity to know the reasons for such refusal, and an opportunity to challenge any information, other than convictions, held on them by the police, and that the nature and source of the information against the applicant be made known to them and their sponsor.'—*[Mr. Corbyn.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 47, Noes 177.

Division No. 64] **[12.7 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lamond, James
Livsey, Richard
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Primarolo, Dawn
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Cohen and
Mr. Bob Clay.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Maginnis, Ken
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: (l), at end add

'with the exception that the maximum number of photo-identity passes for the Palace of Westminister for which a Member should be entitled to apply for individual members of his or her personal staff, as referred to at paragraph 54, should be five.'.—*[Mr. Dykes.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 56, Noes 175.

Division No. 65] **[12.18 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Ashby, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Boyes, Roland
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Dalyell, Tam
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Holland, Stuart
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Lawrence, Ivan
Livsey, Richard
Macdonald, Calum A.
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Riddick, Graham
Robertson, George
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Waller, Gary
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Coombs and
Mr. Matthew Taylor.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Baldry, Tony
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lamond, James
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Maginnis, Ken
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

MR. SPEAKER *then proceeded, pursuant to the order [27 January], to put forthwith the main Question, as amended:—*

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 25.

Division No. 86] **[12.29 am**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alexander, Richard
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lamond, James
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
George, Bruce
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Holland, Stuart
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Kennedy, Charles
Livsey, Richard
Maclennan, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Robertson, George
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry

Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, C. (Isl'ton & F'bury)
Welsh, Andrew (Angus E)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Matthew Taylor.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Second Report of Session 1987-88 from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) on Access to the Precincts of the House (House of Commons Paper No. 580) be approved, provided also that United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament may be issued with photo-identity passes allowing them access to the Central Lobby, the Lower and Upper Waiting Halls and the Committee Corridors.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may have been drawn to your attention that, when the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) was put to the vote, Tellers for the Government were counting, and it appeared to many hon. Members that the payroll vote was put into the Aye Lobby. As you know, that is contrary to the traditions of the House. When a Select Committee is reporting to the House in general terms, it is a matter for Members and the Government should not allow their influence, attitudes and ideas to be imposed on the House. It is clearly a case of the Executive taking away the rights of the House. I thought that I should draw that to your attention, although your room for manoeuvre on this issue is somewhat limited.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. He will know that the Government put in Tellers for all the amendments.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. To put it on the record, the Government put in Tellers only for the Ayes on the amendment to which my hon. Friend referred.

Litter

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

12.41 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): The word "Rubbish" is often uttered and muttered by hon. Members when they disagree with the remarks of other hon. Members. Unfortunately, discussion of the subject in a more literal sense does not take place often enough in the Chamber. The subject of litter is not taken seriously enough and it is about time that it was. It should be given a high priority. However, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who is to reply and who has taken a positive interest in this subject, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister can certainly be absolved from any criticism in this matter. The agenda has been set to clean up our towns and make them litter-free. We now have to look at practical ways of achieving that end.

The problem of litter is self-inflicted. By and large, people are responsible for creating the problem in the first place. Dropping litter is anti-social behaviour and it is certainly not the fault of children. In Basildon last year, we launched a campaign called, "I love Basildon". The object was to say that we were creating a fine town and wished to make sure that we kept it that way. It specifically dealt with the problems of litter, graffiti and vandalism. There was an excellent response to the launch from the general public and particularly from schoolchildren. A number of them embarked on projects researching the control and eradication of litter. They have also decided to help in a practical way by carefully controlling litter within school confines and then helping with clean-up schemes in their locality.

I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that only today I received two letters on this subject. The first said:

"We have saved an amount of milk bottle-tops to keep Basildon tidy. We do not know how many we have saved but we all hope it is over 200. We are still going to save them and we hope they will be useful to you. Yours sincerely, Mary, Karen, Jo-Anne and Emily".

Those children are in class 12 of Lee Chapel primary school at the Knares, Basildon.

The headmistress of Briscoe county junior school informs me that one of her classes will clear litter from a pond as their contribution to make Basildon beautiful. I certainly applaud that.

The reason why the "I love Basildon" campaign is so important is that, as my hon. Friend probably knows, we have the largest covered shopping centre in Europe—a good litter control model for the rest of the country to follow. I have said that I intend to appear all over the town at various times of the day and evening to see at first hand the job that is being done. If I am not satisfied that it is being done properly, I shall make sure that the agencies responsible for litter control respond positively.

I mentioned the positive response from young people because I am appalled by the poor example set by those who are supposed to be their elders and betters. How often we see people walking along the road, casually dropping litter in front of their children and allowing them to do the same. It is all too common to see people walking along eating food and then dropping the paper or packaging. Chucking drink cans into areas containing shrubs or plants is also a popular pastime. Another appalling

example is that of people driving along in their cars, winding down windows and throwing their rubbish on to the road, whence it is then blown into the countryside.

Those people are, of course, the first to complain when their rates are increased to cover rising refuse collection costs. The nerve of some of them, dumping large, unwanted objects on our highways and byways, is limitless. Cars, furniture, carpets and the like are often dumped anywhere by people who just cannot be bothered to take their rubbish to the municipal tip.

I am delighted to say that in Basildon the Commission for the New Towns is treating litter control as a high priority and supporting the joint estate management committee in its work. Skips are sited on each estate so that residents can dispose of all unwanted rubbish, and leaflets are being delivered informing them of dates, times and locations. The JEMs are being allocated money to use as they wish for estate improvements—extra litter bins, for example. A capital fund is also provided by the CNT so that JEMs can take on major projects to improve their estates—for instance, cleaning and landscaping areas that have become neglected and consequently attract extra litter. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the JEMs on their excellent work, and to emphasise that those who serve on them are volunteers.

All that is in stark contrast to what is being done in Basildon by those who should be responsible for keeping it clean and tidy. Basildon is supposed to be a hung council, with the Conservative chairman having the casting vote. In fact it is nothing of the sort: it is a Socialist council, and has been so in all the time that I have represented the town in Parliament. Recently a Liberal councillor declared himself an independent—independent, that is, to vote overtly with the Labour party while not actually joining it. That will not wash. It is rightly seen as a cynical ploy technically to avoid the Labour party's being seen to have a majority on the council, taking control and then having to accept the consequences of its irresponsible spending policies.

If it is not a Socialist council, the suggestion is that the officers are running the council—and that clearly cannot be the case in Basildon. How else can one explain the constant barrage of anti-Government propaganda being put out on the rates? The council is good at claiming credit for things in which it had no hand, but not at accepting responsibility for its actions. It is now unfairly criticising private enterprise for the lack of litter control in the town centre. I have met the management company and I am impressed with what it is trying to do. For instance, it is installing anti-vandal litter bins and employing high-suction cleaning equipment to try to sort out the litter problem.

I am asking all the fast food outlets in the town to sponsor litter bins, and the management company to play a looped tape welcoming shoppers to the town centre and asking them not to drop litter. I am also asking for similar action to be taken in another shopping centre, in Laindon.

In the battle against litter, I will accept no defeatist talk. There are those who question the use of litter bins, on the grounds that they are not used or emptied. They ask why we should plant young trees or shrubs, which will be vandalised. They ask why we should display signs showing the penalties for dogs fouling the footpaths, because the owners take no notice of them and the dogs seem unable to read them. If we adopt that sort of attitude, Parliament itself will become unnecessary and eventually anarchy will result. There is much that we can do, and the Government and the keep Britain tidy campaign are doing a great deal.

The hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) had hoped to be here tonight; unfortunately, they are in Strasbourg on Council of Europe business. The hon. Member for Wallsend, who last raised the subject a year ago, has campaigned vigorously to cut down litter in this country, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East.

I should be interested to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister thinks about the City of Westminster council campaign to tackle litter. A constituent has written to me to say that he thinks Basildon needs an enforcement patrol similar to the zone improvement patrol in Westminster. He says that he is a founder member of the team, and adds that with a combination of education, persuasion and, if all else fails, prosecution, the team has made a great impact on the city. After covering an area for two weeks, a great improvement has been noted, and I am informed that since the launch of the team in July 1988, more than 70 people have been taken to court and another 250 are awaiting court proceedings.

That experience encourages me to support fines for litter offences. My hon. Friend will know that many local authorities, including Bournemouth, are watching the implementation of the Westminster Act with great interest because they are poised to introduce private Bills seeking similar powers. But so many private Bills would clog our legislative process. Primary legislation is necessary to enable the authorities to implement their schemes.

I do not suggest that punishment is the whole answer. I lay even more stress on a public awareness and education campaign being launched. I hope that it will include television advertisements about beautiful litter-free Britain. We must also extol the virtues of recycling and tell people that there is money to be made out of rubbish. The Basildon Waste Paper Company is prepared to purchase rubbish. I am encouraging voluntary organisations in the constituency to take advantage of that offer to boost their funds. I know that the local scouts will do so. The cash incentive will lead to an overall improvement.

My hon. Friend the Minister may be interested to know that the Industry Council for Packaging and the Environment is extremely concerned about the litter problem and has made some useful observations that are worth airing. It says that it has been shown repeatedly that members of the public are often ready to add to existing piles of litter when they would be reluctant to be seen as the first offenders. In other words, the council believes that frequency of clean-up is essential.

The packaging council believes that if we are to tackle litter effectively, a properly organised litter collection by local authorities is paramount. Bins must be large enough and emptied sufficiently frequently so that they do not overflow. Domestic refuse must be collected on the appointed day so that rubbish bags are not left in the street to be overturned and the contents scattered by scavenging animals.

Clear lines of responsibility for cost-effective litter control should be established within local authorities, which would include a proper analysis of local sources of litter so that resources can be concentrated where they are most needed. The packaging council also supports a vigorous and continuous public education campaign.

[Mr. David Amess]

Packaging represents a statistically smaller proportion of litter than is usually realised; its visual effect is disproportionately large. Packs that are designed to stand out on supermarket shelves obviously stand out in hedgerows. The organisations to which I have referred would like to lend their support to Westminster city council's fixed penalty system.

I am proud to be British. I am proud of my country and I am certainly proud of the Government. Tomorrow, I am launching in my constituency a campaign that will be called Buy British in Basildon. I am sure that 1992 will provide splendid opportunities for us all. I want visitors to Britain to leave with a good impression of how clean and tidy we all are. We should all feel guilt and embarrassment when we drop litter. The solution to the problem lies with the British people, and I am confident that we can cure it.

12.57 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on raising an extremely important issue at this late hour. No one could rightly describe his remarks as rubbish. He has made an encouraging and informative contribution to our discussions on litter. Many of his remarks will be echoed as I reply to the debate. For example, he has shown a determined and optimistic approach. He believes that we must harness many different groups within society if we are to tackle the problem, including the business community and the voluntary sector. We must encourage a higher public profile and analyse carefully the sources of litter. We must take a rigorous and thorough approach to refuse collection generally.

The public debate in which we have all been participating about environmental problems in recent months has focused largely on the serious threat to our future on the planet that is posed by damage to the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and climatic change. Much of this was initiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her address to the Royal Society. It is hard to think, however, of an environmental subject that affects us more directly and more regularly than litter. It is an issue in which the ordinary citizen has an essential and central part to play.

Without the co-operation of ordinary people, no Government, no local council and no environmental pressure group will make any headway in the battle to clean up our streets, and it is an important one for many reasons. Dirty streets in our major cities create a dreadful impression on tourists from abroad. It is hard to return from a holiday in Britain with a positive view of Britain if one has been confronted throughout by piles of rubbish in every street. Shopkeepers, for example, have a direct interest in ensuring that the areas around their stores are kept clean. People can easily be put off shopping in an area that is covered with filth.

Perhaps most important of all, concentrations of rubbish in some of our bleakest inner-city council estates can play a large part in depressing the morale of those who have to live or work in that environment.

Like my hon. Friend, I take litter very seriously. We have a beautiful country in which we should be able to take pride. The countryside and the townscape are just as much a part of our heritage as are historic buildings and the royal parks and palaces. They deserve and need the same amount of protection from pollution and litter.

The evidence of our own eyes is sufficient to show that standards are certainly not improving, and may sometimes be falling. The Royal Fine Art Commission's report, "A New Look for London", graphically illustrates the disgraceful appearance of many parts of our capital city.

What we can and must do is to encourage a climate of opinion in which litter dropping is seen for what it is—offensive, boorish and selfish behaviour. That is why we must ensure that our children start life by understanding their responsibilities as future citizens of their country. I welcome the fact that schoolchildren in my hon. Friend's constituency have so enthusiastically joined his "I Love Basildon" campaign. The experience will remain with them throughout their lives, and I have no doubt that they will go on to set a good example to their parents. But it is not just a matter for teachers. We cannot expect children to behave well if their parents set bad examples. Schools must play an important part in the process, as they do in my hon. Friend's constituency.

That is why I am especially delighted that the Tidy Britain Group, with which we work closely and which is our agent in the litter campaign, has an education programme for use in schools. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science is gathering information from Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools on the severity of the litter problem there. I urge headmasters in every school to work with us in ensuring that their pupils understand the importance of showing respect for their environment. I was especially impressed by a recent example of that: the initiative of a headmaster in a Windsor school, who encouraged his pupils to tidy the premises at the end of each working day. There are many similar examples throughout the country.

I make it clear that I fully recognise the responsibilities of the Government to help to create a cleaner Britain. We intend to carry them out vigorously and effectively.

The Tidy Britain Group acts as the Government's agent in litter matters. It is a voluntary, non-profit making registered charity that was started more than 30 years ago and has developed professionalism and expertise in litter problems. As a sign of how much we value the group, the Government nearly doubled its funding for this year and will more then double it again next year. The group has set up 27 projects, with the assistance of additional grant, in which different approaches to litter problems are being undertaken and assessed. The projects fall under five broad headings: transport, commercial areas, local government, tourism and special events. Many of their lessons are similar to those learnt in Basildon.

The objective of the projects is to enlist the support of all sections of the community through the development of civic pride. The projects are at various stages of development. I am happy to report that there is widespread support for them not only in principle, but in practical, active commitment and in financial backing. Nearly £4 million has been pledged in cash and kind to support the projects, which is an extremely encouraging augury for the future. The important task is to complete the formal assessment of which experiments have worked well and which have not. We shall receive those reports in the next few months. The objective then will be to develop as soon as possible the most promising approaches. The Department will make available additional funding to the

group over the next financial year so that we can press ahead in drawing lessons capable of wider application and building on successful contracts.

Local authorities have a vital role to play. I was sorry to hear my hon. Friend's remarks about his local authority. They are, of course, litter authorities and there is power under the Litter Act 1983 to levy fines of up to £400. Many local authorities are already pursuing community environment programmes in co-operation with the Tidy Britain Group. Those programmes involve many sectors of the community in cleaning up their areas. Local publicity is used to help attain the objective of keeping them clean.

I should particularly like to comment on the approach, to which my hon. Friend referred, in the city of Westminster. As the House will know, it has been given the power to levy on-the-spot fines. Last Friday, I learned about it at first hand. I was greatly impressed by the commitment and determination with which it is clearing up our capital city. It is worth remembering that Westminster obtains excellent value for money. Its cost per tonne for litter collection is one of the lowest in London, comparing very favourably with neighbouring boroughs. We are monitoring the practical effects of the implementation of the Westminster scheme and we shall be looking at the results it has achieved at the end of May. We shall then consider the lessons that can be learnt and how matters should develop.

Another experiment involving local authorities is being undertaken by the Tidy Britain Group. Three counties and their district councils are drawing up, on a voluntary basis, countywide litter plans. We shall study the results of those projects closely to see whether the value of such plans justifies the effort and cost of drawing up and implementing them. We shall then be able to judge whether it would be right to implement section 4 of the Litter Act 1983, placing a duty on local authorities to draw up litter abatement plans.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on raising this vital matter. He has provided an opportunity for us to set out Government policy. We want to do everything we can to work within the existing legislative framework. We should like to build on the good will and support of local communities and local government. My hon. Friend's experience is not unique. If individuals are committed and enthusiastic and determined that their district or constituency will be cleared up, others follow. There is great concern and enthusiasm for constructive, committed and enthusiastic schemes such as those my hon. Friend has described. I can assure the House that the Government will not hesitate to come forward with further legislation should that be seen to be necessary.

In the short term, we hope and believe that the valuable experience gained by the Tidy Britain Group will give us a clear understanding of where we should best direct our efforts and resources in the future. We shall be looking at the results of using fixed penalties, which my hon. Friend described and which are being used in Westminster. It is worth noting that, although the maximum fine for dropping litter is £400, the average fine is only £32. One of the Tidy Britain Group's schemes is to study enforcement, talking to local magistrates and the police in various parts of the country about the importance of litter and considering whether it is possible to impose more severe fines.

It seems clear that success breeds success. People tend not to throw litter in clean areas. On the other hand, where a street is filthy, an extra bit of litter does not seem to matter. That is why my hon. Friend's remarks about the strategic placing of litter bins and about litter bins looking empty, attractive and available are important. There are 500 litter bins in Oxford street alone, such is Westminster's commitment to ensuring that litter is removed. When litter bins are available, they must be emptied. Nothing is more likely to attract litter than an overflowing, scruffy litter bin. These and other lessons about the effective and efficient management of refuse collection, raising enthusiasm and a determination to tackle the problem are matters to which we, the Tidy Britain Group and, clearly, my hon. Friend are committed.

We should not leave the responsibility for keeping streets clean to other people; they may be leaving it to us. We should all take responsibility for our environment, and we should urge our friends and neighbours to do the same. It is time for local communities to declare war against the litter louts and to shame them into reforming their ways. Many communities are making excellent progress. I went on a litter pick in Farnham park, in my constituency, a year or so ago. There are myriad examples of scouts, brownies, voluntary groups, chambers of commerce and Rotary clubs working together to co-operate, assist and play their part. If the Government, local authorities and local people work with a common will, we can and we will win the battle against litter and create a tidy Britain of which we can all be proud.

I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon, because many of us can follow his example. He referred to hon. Members who have also been long-standing campaigners in the Tidy Britain campaign. The Tidy Britain group has tried experiments in different areas and not only like those in Basildon, where my hon. Friend clearly faces difficulties with the largest shopping centre in Europe.

We are also looking at transport, commerce, local government, tourism and special events. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic has been particularly helpful in assisting the Tidy Britain group in some of its motorway service area projects. The group monitors its projects professionally, takes details of the project areas before the schemes start and assesses the value of the various contributions with an analytic approach to the methodologies used so that the best practice guidelines can be achieved and be generalised around the country.

There is no doubt that as we in Britain look to a future in which we can be proud of our country and of all that we have achieved, we want to take a pride in our physical surroundings. Litter is offensive, unnecessary and costly. We all have a part to play in ensuring that we get rid of this scourge once and for all.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 31 January 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL
Lords amendments agreed to.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (HULL) BILL
BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL
BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL
HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL
HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON)
WAVESCREEN BILL
INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL
ISLE OF WIGHT BILL
LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday.

NEW SOUTHGATE CEMETERY AND
CREMATORIUM LIMITED BILL
Read a Second time, and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

TYNE AND WEAR PASSENGER TRANSPORT BILL
Read a Second time, and committed.

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Global Environment

1. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what responsibility he has for United Kingdom participation in the United Nations environment programme-WBO intergovernmental panel on climate change, as the Minister responsible for basic and long-term strategic research into the global environment.

3. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to improve the co-ordination of United Kingdom research into the global environment.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): Extensive co-ordination of research in the broad area of the global environment already takes place, both domestically and internationally. The research councils are actively engaged and I understand that the Natural Environment Research Council is likely soon to join expert groups of the climate change panel under the United Nations environment programme, for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment takes lead responsibility.

Mr. Doran: International co-operation is obviously important, but will the Minister tell us what steps his Department takes to encourage co-operation between the various Departments that are responsible for the pollution that is so damaging to the atmosphere and what steps it is taking especially with the Department of Energy in encouraging the various projects necessary to reduce the levels of hydrocarbons that are burning in the power stations?

Mr. Jackson: The implications of the different policies for the environment being pursued in different branches of Government are taken seriously by the Government as a whole and by those Departments. It is not, of course, a matter for the Department of Education and Science in the first instance.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that the co-ordination between various branches of Government on the environment is seen by many as absolutely chaotic? Will the Minister agree to look seriously at the approach taken in the United States, which brings together the relevant agencies to ensure that there is a productive channelling of effort to tackle these problems?

Mr. Jackson: There are many ways in which one can organise research activities in an area as large and complex as that of the environment and environmental policy. One method will have advantages and disadvantages and another will have other strengths and weaknesses. We are dealing with large and complicated questions and one of the problems about having a single co-ordinating body, which might achieve the advantage of more focus, is that there is a disengagement of environmental research from other areas of research. All those matters are being

considered by the advisory committee on science and technology, and the Government look forward to receiving advice from that body in due course.

Dr. Bray: But within the Secretary of State's own responsibilities, is there not a case for a joint directorate involving the research councils directly concerned—the Natural Environment Research Council, the Science and Engineering Research Council, the Agricultural and Food Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council? Is the Minister aware that there seems to be strong support for such a move among all the research councils? Is he aware that the very importance of these activities and many unfortunate precedents enormously increase the scope for errors in the physical science, the politics and the policies that are actually implemented? Will he buck up his ideas?

Mr. Jackson: I am always happy to try to buck up my ideas in line with the hon. Gentleman's urgings. There is a case for almost any combination of organisational structure in these matters. The case is being examined by the research councils and by ACOST. We look forward to their advice, which we shall consider very seriously.

Teachers (London)

2. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he proposes to help the new borough education authorities in London to overcome the problems of shortages of qualified teachers in London.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): My right hon. Friend and I are aware of the need to ensure a sufficient supply of teachers in all local education authorities.

Mr. Boateng: Is the Minister aware that one of the main problems in recruiting teachers in inner and outer London —particularly in my own borough of Brent—is the high cost of housing in Greater London? What steps do she and her colleagues intend to take to encourage schemes such as the scheme in my constituency which involves hostels and to encourage equity-sharing to ensure that London gets the teachers it deserves?

Mrs. Rumbold: On the general point about teacher recruitment in London, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has invited the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions to advise him on measures to tackle the high-cost housing areas, such as inner and outer London, and to consider the London weighting issue when it reports to him. A number of interesting ideas are coming forward from local authorities that have put together packages to retain and recruit teachers in areas where there are problems with housing.

Mr. Harry Greenway: What steps does my hon. Friend's Department propose to take to overcome teacher shortages in the 1990s in key subjects, such as mathematics, physics and the others outlined in the Select Committee last week? Will she note that some local authorities in London are failing to recruit teachers through sheer ineptitude? In Ealing, 44 steps have to be gone through before a teacher can be recruited into a classroom, because the local authority is so obsessed with equal opportunities and similar procedures.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand my hon. Friend's frustration at the bureaucratic nonsense that some education authorities impose on schools trying to recruit teachers in shortage subjects. I sympathise with my hon. Friend, and I hope that my right hon. Friend's proposal for licensed teachers will go some way to alleviate the problems faced by the teaching profession in that regard. My hon. Friend will be aware of the measures that the Department already has up and running for recruitment in shortage subjects. We are offering bursaries to graduates who enter and remain in shortage subjects—physics, mathematics, CDT and, as announced by my right hon. Friend only last Friday, chemistry—in an attempt to address some of the difficulties.

Mr. Cohen: Is the Minister aware that in my borough of Waltham Forest primary school vacancies are running at 10 per cent. of the teacher establishment? Many worried school governors are asking what the Government propose to do about it. There is a crisis in London and the Government are held to blame for not training enough teachers, for the housing problem, which means that teachers cannot afford housing, and for demoralisation in the teaching force. When can parents in my borough expect their children to have teachers?

Mrs. Rumbold: The fault must lie more with Waltham Forest than in the recruitment of teachers. We have more student entries into primary teaching than we have had for a considerable number of years, so there cannot possibly be any shortage of primary school teachers, although Waltham Forest may well have difficulties in recruiting teachers because of its policies.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As a former education officer in an outer London borough who had responsibility for recruiting supply staff, may I suggest to my hon. Friend that the quickest way of recruiting more teachers in London and other areas where there are shortages is to allow the market to play a part, first, by introducing differential pay rates for London and other shortage areas as well as in shortage subjects?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who speaks from great experience. I notice the derision from Opposition Members whenever market forces are mentioned in this context. It is very much a matter of whether teachers fancy working in particular authorities because of the opprobium that attends those authorities or whether good teachers prefer to go to authorities which are more stable in their policies and their administration of education generally.

School Places

4. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to encourage local education authorities to reduce the number of surplus places in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to encourage local education authorities to reduce the number of surplus places in schools; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): Local education authorities are aware of the high cost of

underused capacity at schools with a substantial proportion of surplus places. It is, therefore, very much in their own financial interests to continue to come forward with proposals to rationalise their school provision where appropriate. The Government's public expenditure plans assume that authorities collectively will achieve the national targets for the removal of surplus places.

Mr. Barnes: What extra help will be made available to local education authorities to deal with surplus capacity when their plans have been frustrated by opting-out procedures exacerbating surplus capacity in local education? In Staveley in my constituency, Staveley Netherthorpe school has opted out, thereby creating problems for two other schools in the area.

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman may have misunderstood the raison d'être behind the Education Reform Act. The driving force behind decisions on which schools will remain open and which will close will increasingly be parental choice through open enrolment. As for the substantive part of his question, we shall consider each section 12 proposal on its merits. In parallel and together, we shall consider grant-maintained status applications on their merits.

Mrs. Taylor: Will the Minister confirm that it is still the Secretary of State's opinion that opting out should not be used as a lifeline by schools that face closure because of local authority proposals? Will he confirm that the majority of opting-out proposals so far have come from schools that face closure because of local authority reorganisation? How does that fit in with what he has just said about rationalisation and the proper use of resources?

Mr. Butcher: We have said that opting out which will not be used as a bolt hole for schools that are not viable. We have said that many times, and we shall consider each application on its merit. However, there is increasing evidence, and it has been confirmed yet again, that municipal Socialism is a creature which turns vicious whenever its hold on its captive subjects is threatened. We believe in democracy and parental choice. The hon. Lady should look at the behaviour of certain Labour councils when parents try to exercise that democratic process.

Mr. Pawsey: I note my hon. Friend's reply, but does he agree that surplus places take up scarce resources, spending money on empty desks rather than on children? Despite what he has heard from Opposition Members, does he agree that grant-maintained schools represent a cost-effective way of educating children? They are invariably oversubscribed and give parents a valuable yardstick against which they may judge schools in LEAs.

Mr. Butcher: This mini debate has shown yet again that the Labour party is about 15 years out of date. There are something like 620,000 primary places and some 800,000 secondary places surplus to capacity. That represents a cost in premises-related expenditure of something like £240 million a year. There is no incompatibility between grant-maintained schools and the need to tackle that problem.

Mrs. Peacock: Does my hon. Friend agree that not all schools applying to opt out are, as the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) suggests, those due for closure? Heckmondwike grammar school in my constituency is certainly not due for closure; it is due, if the Labour party gets its own way, to be changed considerably. However, the parents have decided that they do not wish to have those Labour party changes, so they will seek to opt out.

Mr. Butcher: I appreciate that my hon. Friend has had to live alongside some of the worst aspects of that municipal Socialism to which I referred earlier. It is our policy to enhance parental choice, whether through grant-maintained schools or otherwise. We shall safeguard the interests of parents who wish, in a fair and free manner to exercise that choice if they recognise that their school is excellent and worth retaining.

Mr. Straw: Is the Under-Secretary aware that he shows the same ignorance and ineptitude on this subject as he used to show at the Department of Trade and Industry? Is he aware that well over half the schools that have sought to opt out have been in Conservative-controlled areas? If, as he says, opting out is not a bolt hole for schools under threat of closure, why is the Secretary of State's front organisation, the Grant Maintained Schools Trust, actively encouraging any school under the threat of closure to seek to opt out? Do not he and the Secretary of State understand that their opting-out policy is completely paralysing any sensible rationalisation of school provision by local authorities? How can local authorities propose schools for closure when the effect of such a proposal may be that the Secretary of State says that that school shall remain open for ever and outside local education authority control so that the LEA then has to propose for closure schools that it would otherwise have kept open?

Mr. Butcher: We shall be entirely fair and open-minded on grant-maintained status applications, whether they come from Conservative or Labour-controlled LEAs. The hon. Gentleman obviously does not believe in his own arguments and that is why he has had to play the man and not the ball.

Mr. Batiste: When my hon. Friend is rightly encouraging LEAs to reduce surplus places, will he also make it clear to LEAs such as that in Leeds, which rules over a large and diverse area, that there is no reason for political dogma in imposing blanket solutions on diverse local communities, and, in particular, that the Government regard village schools as an important part of village life and rural communities?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend is saying what I have tried to confirm over the past few moments, which is that Conservative Members believe in pluralism while the Opposition believe in incorporatism.

Schools (Leicestershire)

5. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make additional resources available to schools in Leicestershire to pay for defects and repairs that are deemed necessary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Government's expenditure plans for 1989-90 provide for local authorities as a whole to spend £114 million, or approaching 30 per cent., more in cash on repairing and maintaining their school building stock than was actually spent in 1986-87. That is an increase of 9 per cent. in real terms. The Government distribute rate

support grant to local authorities on the basis of those expenditure plans. However, it is for each authority to decide how to spend the resources available to it.

Mr. Vaz: Is the Minister aware that during the Christmas recess I conducted a survey of the 29 schools in my constituency and 24 of them were found to be in a state of serious disrepair? One was a fire hazard and three were in a dangerous condition. They have had to wait a total of 175 years for decoration and repair. Yesterday, the director of education informed me that it will cost £1 million to effect the repairs needed in my constituency alone. Does the Minister agree that it is a mark of a civilised society to give our children the best possible environment in which to learn and grow? In view of the information that I have kindly given him today, will he reconsider his answer and allocate more resources to the county council?

Mr. Butcher: Leicestershire spends just below the national average on repairs and maintenance per capita in the primary sector and just above the national average per capita in the secondary sector. Overall, we have increased in real terms the allocations for repairs and maintenance, and, indeed, capital expenditure, but it is for LEAs to exercise their choice and mix the money that they receive in grant from the centre with capital receipts to tackle just the problems that the hon. Gentleman describes.

Mr. Ashby: Is the Minister aware that St. Clare's Roman Catholic school in Coalville in my constituency is an excellent school but that it is bursting at the seams? It requires not maintenance but an extension to provide further excellent education for the Roman Catholics in my constituency. Will my hon. Friend see that that money is available for that school?

Mr. Butcher: I am sure that my hon. Friend will not expect me to make a decision on that school at this moment. If he wishes to make more detailed representations to me, I shall be glad to entertain him and, if need be, a delegation.

Inner London Education Authority

6. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to monitor the impact of the transfer of education responsibilities from the Inner London education authority to inner London boroughs.

Mrs. Rumbold: As a matter of course, the Government evaluate the effectiveness of the policies they introduce. The performance of the inner London councils as LEAs will be monitored through the collection of data on educational and financial performance, and through inspection by HMI.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that many people in inner London are concerned about what will happen when education is transferred to the boroughs? Is she further aware that the long-term predictions by her Department show that education spending in inner London will fall by 30 per cent. in real terms in the first five years of transfer to the boroughs? Will she reconsider those figures and enable proper expenditure on education to take place in inner London to take account of the problems of deprivation, the higher costs of providing education in the area and, for example, the fact that 50 per cent. of the children in my borough fall within the special needs category? Those needs must be met by central Government. They cannot be met out of local resources.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman should remember that ILEA has overspent, and spent inefficiently, on London's education for years. The authority's abolition provides a new framework within which the boroughs can move to provide more efficient services. That certainly can be done and many outer London boroughs already manage it. The inner London boroughs will have the support of the safety net arrangements for four years from April 1990 and, following that, the new needs assessment will take into account the factors that the hon. Gentleman raised.

Mr. John Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that the commissars of the people's republic of Islington have said that when they are responsible for education in the area, it will be based on numeracy and literacy? Does she agree that if ILEA had adopted a similar approach, the case for abolition would have been much less strong? Will she also agree that the record of the London borough of Barnet —where a pupil is three times as likely to leave with two A-levels as in the ILEA—shows that the London boroughs are more than capable of looking after the children's education?

Mrs. Rumbold: The short answer to those questions is yes.

Mr. Fatchett: Does the Minister recall the words used by the Secretary of State when he praised the London boroughs for their efforts to deal with the administrative chaos that was likely to arise as a result of his proposals to abolish ILEA? Those words of praise having been given, will the Minister now guarantee that the London boroughs will be given the necessary resources to provide good-quality education? Or do the words she used in her main answer mean that she is determined to carry out a financial vendetta against the children of inner London and starve them and the boroughs of the resources that they desperately need to have good education and good opportunities?

Mrs. Rumbold: There is absolutely no question of a vendetta against the children in the new inner London education authorities. From the draft development plans that are coming to the Department now and the discussions that are being held with the inner London boroughs, it is clear that the interests of the children are being taken care of. There will be safety netting with the introduction of education as one of the responsibilities of those boroughs and as that is phased out, a key determinant in the boroughs' financial position will be the new needs assessment.

School Governors

7. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to review the effectiveness of legislation concerning the appointment of school governors.

Mrs. Rumbold: The reform of governing bodies is a key element in our strategy for raising standards in schools. Our legislation has ensured that governing bodies are now much better balanced and more effective.

Mr. Shepherd: Does my hon. Friend agree that the purpose of the legislation was, among other things, to achieve a broad spectrum of representation on boards of governors? Is she aware, however, that the outcome appears to be a substantial preponderance of teaching profession representatives, who are also parents of pupils at the schools? In the light of the activities of the National Union of Teachers in encouraging its members to become governors wherever possible, does she agree that this could lead to a conflict of interests? Will she therefore keep the matter under close review and take whatever immediate action may be appropriate if it becomes apparent that the interests of pupils are not paramount?

Mrs. Rumbold: Governors, especially parent governors, should be chosen for the values that they bring to the governing body as consumers, not because they have vested interests either politically or professionally in the management of schools. It remains for the parents at each school to decide which candidates to elect, having studied the curriculum vitae of those coming forward.

Perhaps it would help my hon. Friend to know that we are making arrangements for a sample survey of schools to collect information about the number of candidates who have offered themselves for election as teacher and parent governors, the turn-out for elections, the number of candidates from different sectors such as the ethnic minorities, and the balance between the sexes. The survey will also look at the background of parent governors, especially to assist us in ascertaining the business representation of the co-opted governors. That will give us information about the occupational background of all governors.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Minister aware of the dire consequences of her Department's failure to legislate to prevent local authorities from appointing single party state slates of school governors? Has she seen the letter from two parent governors of Charlotte Sharman primary and nursery school, in my constituency, who have been unable to take in a governing body meeting with a quorum since its constitution in September because of the failure to attend of the three ILEA Labour members and the Southwark Labour member? Although opposition members have been willing to attend, and be nominated and co-opted, the two authorites in question have insisted that only their own people should be put forward to sit on school boards. Will there be legislation to deal with this, or shall we be able to amend the Housing and Local Government Bill to be introduced tomorrow?

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have at times made our views very plain about the placing of political one-party governors on school boards. We deplore this activity in local authorities of whatever political control where it is blatant as the hon. Gentleman suggests. We would much prefer the system that has always prevailed, whereby authorities allocate ward-by-ward representation on governing bodies. Where there is a balance on the local authority of, say, Labour and Conservative, or SLD representatives the ward schools will have some representatives from those elected for those wards. I hope that that kind of best practice will continue.

Higher Education

9. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the likely balance between arts subjects and other subjects for study in higher education during the next 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: The balance of subjects will be determined largely by institutions and students. We believe that there should be a further shift towards science, engineering and vocational courses to provide the balance of skills that the economy needs. But this is entirely consistent with retaining high levels of scholarships in all the arts, humanities and social sciences.

Mr. Thurnham: Would my hon. Friend encourage students who are nervous about top-up loans to choose to study useful subjects that are in demand so they can be confident about getting good jobs and have no trouble repaying their debts to society?

Mr. Jackson: I would urge students to consider very carefully the courses that they undertake in the light of what they think is right for them and their future employment prospects. I certainly believe that the top-up loan proposals, which the Government have made and will introduce in due course, will help to encourage a greater sense of economic realism among students, which would be a desirable development.

Mr. Rowlands: In trying to achieve his objective, will the hon. Gentleman attempt not to reduce the choice of arts subjects in schools? In particular, will he take note of and clarify the role of the Training Commission, which is still trying to impose a school curriculum in advance of the national curriculum agreed by the Secretary of State?

Mr. Jackson: This is not a matter particularly for me, but I do not recognise the picture that the hon. Gentleman paints of an attempt to squeeze out arts subjects. That is not happening.

Mr. Rhodes James: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend's emphasis on the need for a balance of subjects in the national interest. Does that mean that he and our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will reject the extraordinary proposals of the University Grants Committee to close the outstanding veterinary schools in Glasgow and in Cambridge?

Mr. Jackson: As a result of the review committee, a proposal has been made to the University Grants Committee. The UGC, and the Universities Funding Council after 1 April, will have to consider it. It is a matter for them to consider in the first instance.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Further to his previous reply, what estimate has the Minister made of the effects of the top-up loan proposals on the balance of subjects? In particular, does he agree that medical students, by virtue of the length and nature of their courses, would be especially badly hit and could face outstanding debts of some £19,000 at the end of their courses? What study has he made of that and why does not the loans White Paper refer to medical students?

Mr. Jackson: On behalf of the Treasury Bench I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his august responsibilities. Of course, the Government have considered the impact of top-up loans on student choice of subjects. The conclusion that we have reached is that the consequences are unpredictable. Certainly the scare stories that the hon. Gentleman may be about to launch bear no relation to the position in other countries that have loans schemes for their students on a scale considerably more demanding than the proposals that we are making.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Will it not be essential in the next decade for management education to be extended so that as many young women and men as possible go out into the world without feeling ignorant about the way in which business works?

Mr. Jackson: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government strongly support the development of management education and are very pleased at the progress being made. We hope that it will be faster.

Teachers

10. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to increase the supply of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I have outlined my proposals for future teacher supply in a memorandum provided to the Select Committee on which the hon. Member sits. I also announced last Friday radical changes in teacher training to make entry into the teaching profession more flexible.

Mr. Griffiths: The reason for the question is that the memorandum supplied to the Select Committee was pathetically inadequate. In a speech to the Society of Education Officers the Secretary of State said that he intended to keep in touch with teachers who leave the profession. As seven out of 10 do so within the first five years, how does the Secretary of State propose to keep in touch with them? Would not the best way of keeping them be to give them a salary and a status commensurate with the job that they do instead of rubbishing them as has been done for the past 10 years?

Mr. Baker: About half the teachers who take up appointments each year—roughly 16,000—are former teachers returning to the profession. I was urging local authorities to keep in touch with teachers who leave—mainly women leaving to have families—so that they may attract them back. That is an important way of increasing the number of teachers. The hon. Gentleman will know that in the speech that I made on Friday I mentioned two other important initiatives. One is the concept of licensed teachers, to encourage mature people in their 30s and 40s to come into teaching. The other is a new method whereby a student, after graduating in another subject, would go straight into a school and be trained as a teacher on the job.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: In considering the supply of teachers will my right hon. Friend also pay attention to the movement of teachers from one authority to another? In particular, will he give thought to the significance of the fact that many teachers move from inner London and from Brent to work in areas such as Gravesham? Will he bear in mind that although property prices are similar we do not have the benefit of inner London or any form of London weighting?

Mr. Baker: The problem of housing costs in the employment of teachers has already been raised at Question Time, and as my hon. Friend the Minister of State said I have asked the interim advisory committee for its advice. Many authorities are now putting together separate and individual packages, often involving housing support, to attract teachers.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Secretary of State realise that many young people who would make excellent teachers will not have the opportunity to go to college if the student loan system comes in? Does he appreciate that in Wales the proposal is entirely unacceptable, and will he give an assurance that if students and educationists appear to be reacting against the scheme it will be abandoned?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman should be aware of the proposal that I made last Friday, that someone who has graduated in another subject should in future be allowed to be employed by a local education authority immediately after his graduation without having to spend another year in college. I believe that that will be very attractive to many students—they will be trained as teachers on the job and will receive salaries while they are training.

Mr. Haselhurst: Has my right hon. Friend considered whether it will be possible to develop a viable scheme to harness the talents of people recently retired from industry to supplement the regular teaching force, particularly in the shortage subjects?

Mr. Baker: The licensed teacher approach is intended to encourage people in their 30s and 40s who want a career change. It has been pioneered by several local authorities, and later this year we shall regularise it with new regulations. It provides an important input into teaching.

Mr. Straw: Has the Secretary of State no idea of the scale of the teaching crisis over which he presides? Does he realise that three in 10 newly qualified teachers fail to go into teaching the next year, four in 10 new teachers leave the profession within five years and the measures that he announced last Friday are wholly inadequate to the task? Is he aware that good teachers will continue to leave in droves for better-paid jobs outside unless their pay is raised and their conditions improved, and the Secretary of State starts to provide leadership to raise the morale of the profession instead of continually undermining it?

Mr. Baker: The year before last there was an increase of 3,000 in teacher training; last year there was an increase of 1,000. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can have read the evidence that I submitted to the Select Committee, or my speech last Friday. I am not complacent, but, unlike the hon. Gentleman, I am not defeatist either.

Schools (Opting-out)

11. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the present procedure for the balloting of parents on schools opting out of the control of local authorities.

Mr. Baker: The Education Reform Act 1988 provides a framework for such ballots, and the Electoral Reform Society conducts them on behalf of the governing bodies. Secret postal ballots have been held among parents at 21 schools.

Mr. King: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential that a ballot to decide whether a school is to opt out should be free from all outside influences? Has the case involving the Small Heath school in Birmingham been brought to his notice? All kinds of shenanigans have been taking place, orchestrated largely by the local authority, one of whose chairmen has branded the head teacher a racist, and the local authority has spent £5,000 on presenting in newspapers the case for not opting out. Is it not time for a strict code for ballots of this nature?

Mr. Baker: I am of course aware of the case of Small Heath school—two attempts in the courts to hold up the ballot have failed—and I deplore the campaigns of misinformation about grant-maintained school policy. I think that those involved in them will be the losers, because parents will be able to sort out fact from fiction. We shall look carefully at the procedures as I want to ensure that they are conducted in an open way that is fair to all parties.

Mr. Denis Howell: Is the Secretary of State aware that the shenanigans to which his hon. Friend referred, and the mis-statements that he has just made about Mr. Justice Popplewell refusing to stop the ballot, are totally misleading? Last Friday in the High Court the judge granted an expedited judicial review of the case in view of the disgraceful fact that the head teacher had taken the children out of classes 40 minutes early, told them to go home and tell their parents to vote "yes" and distributed leaflets to which the parents objected. The judge clearly agreed that nothing could be more contemptible than to use school children as part of an election campaign.

Mr. Baker: It is no good attacking the principle of grant-maintained schools, because it is on the statute book and it is a popular policy. Many parents in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency—his electors and supporters—find it popular. They are fans of that policy. The right hon. Gentleman is behaving like Brian Clough and attacking the fans.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

12. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to introduce a new system for the negotiation of teachers' pay and conditions.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government hope to introduce new permanent machinery in time for the 1990 settlement.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend will be aware that the vast majority in the teaching profession have reacted well to these radical reforms and are working the system. Will he give hope to teachers of good will who wish negotiating rights to be restored and say when he hopes to announce progress?

Mr. Baker: I have set out the Government's proposals for a teachers' negotiating group and I have met the unions and the TUC. I expect to meet them again after Easter to conduct further discussions. A wide range of views has so far been expressed and it may be difficult to reach agreement and unanimity on the matter.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Prime Minister explain how Trident can possibly be a credible deterrent when the Prime Minister will not have control and command of the launching of the weapon, which will be left to the discretion of individual submarine commanders? Does she agree that it would have been better not to spend £9 billion updating Trident but to provide an effective command and control system for Polaris?

The Prime Minister: A nuclear deterrent has kept the peace for 40 years. History has shown that conventional weapons could not and did not keep the peace. We should be most rash to discard a weapon that has kept the peace until something better is found, and I see no such prospect at present.

Sir Marcus Fox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that statements made by Mr. Viraj Mendis since he returned to his real homeland confirm how right the Home Secretary was to deport him? Does that not mean that many Opposition Members have egg on their faces?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary was absolutely right. He allowed every chance for an appeal and then took what has turned out to be precisely the right action.

Mr. Maginnis: Is the Prime Minister aware of the serious concern in Northern Ireland relating to the conviction for murder of four members of the Ulster Defence Regiment? Is she further aware that it has come to light that significant evidence was not taken into account during the trial and appeal? Will the Prime Minister study the article in last Sunday's *Sunday Telegraph* and seek the advice of her Law Officers on the matter?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue that matter he knows that the right channels are my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Q2. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marland: Does my right hon. Friend agree that traditionally it has always been agreed that a certain confidentiality needs to be maintained in the workings of Government? Will she take this opportunity roundly to

condemn the grossly irresponsible behaviour of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in receiving stolen documents and thereby aiding and abetting a criminal offence?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I believe that it is absolutely vital that confidentiality should be maintained. In view of what my hon. Friend has said, I should point out that when the Labour party was last in power that was the view taken by the then Labour Prime Minister, and he was supported by the then Leader of the Opposition. It appears that the Labour party is so bankrupt of argument that it has appointed an official receiver.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister confirm that the last Member of Parliament responsible for a major leak was given a knighthood and made a European Commissioner?

The Prime Minister: I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the question was about receiving—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given a chance to reply.

The Prime Minister: —documents that can only have been stolen. We on this side of the House resent deeply the strictures on my distinguished right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Colvin *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to settle down.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to congratulate the people of Gibraltar on the progress that they have made towards economic self-sufficiency? Will she confirm that the decision to redeploy some of our troops elsewhere in no way weakens our guarantee to the people of Gibraltar that the colony will remain British so long as the people there desire it?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The reduction of our forces in Gibraltar does not affect at all our commitment to Gibraltar, which is enshrined in the preamble to the 1969 constitution, which says that we will not alter the status of Gibraltar without the consent of the people of Gibraltar.

Q3. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livsey: Will the right hon. Lady accept yesterday's verdict by the House of Lords, when it passed an amendment enabling shareholders to block the funding of political parties? Will she prevent members of her party from defeating that amendment in this House? In view of the syphoning off of company funds through British United Industrialists, will she ensure that that amendment stays in place?

The Prime Minister: We shall naturally consider the views expressed. I refer the hon. Gentleman to those of my right hon. Friend Lord Boyd-Carpenter, who I believe had it absolutely right.

Mr. Dykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the whole House should welcome the visit in April of President Gorbachev, which underscores yet again the importance of the British role in delicate negotiations? Notwithstanding the Warsaw Pact's attempts to exaggerate the western statistics and to understate its own, the pace of world disarmament and arms reduction talks continues without hesitation.

The Prime Minister: Yes, we are glad that the visit has been reinstated after it had to be postponed for reasons which we fully understood. We hope that disarmament talks will continue. With regard to recent statements, I believe that it is far better for disarmament talks to take place at the negotiating table rather than through speeches, when it is very difficult to agree precisely what the figures are, bearing in mind that for 15 years in Vienna we were not able to get precise figures.

Q4. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Reid: This afternoon every potential patient in Britain, including children, will have a price tag put on their heads. Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to state unequivocally that there is only one appropriate treatment for a chronically sick child—the best available treatment, not the cheapest?

The Prime Minister: It is purely because we believe that that matters very much indeed that we have increased the resources available for the entire Health Service from £8 billion to £24 billion and increased the pay of a nursing sister from what it would have been under Labour or if we had increased it by inflation, from just £7,000 to nearly £13,000 a year.

Mr. Adley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when the Department of Transport is assessing the true cost to the nation of investment in road versus rail, all the costs should be taken into account? Would she agree with me that, for example, the amount of time that the police force spends on administering the law and dealing with endless problems in the courts and in administration is a major cost to the taxpayer? Will she therefore instruct the Department of Transport that from now on these and other appropriate costs must be taken into account when the various comparative costs are assessed?

The Prime Minister: Obviously, I agree that all relevant costs should be taken into account, but very many more people and goods go by road than go by rail. My hon. Friend may wish that many more would go by rail, and indeed we are trying to improve the rail service so that that is so. But I accept that all relevant costs should be taken into account, although we may not agree on precisely what the relevant costs are.

Q5. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Grant: Is the Prime Minister aware that the United Nations secretary-general has been compelled by the five permanent members of the Security Council, including Britain, to propose a reduction in the number of United Nations troops in Namibia from 7,500 to 4,650 during the transition to independence? Has she heard the views of

President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, who has stated that the five permanent members of the Security Council have been fiddling with the moralities of resolution 435? As she will shortly be visiting Zimbabwe and as South Africa continues to support armed bandits and assassination gangs, will she review Britain's position in this matter and insist that the original numbers of troops be maintained?

The Prime Minister: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would wish to uphold a decision of the five permanent members of the Security Council. We shall honour it. The agreement was an excellent one and was obtained by the co-operation of those five members plus the co-operation of South Africa and Angola. I believe that we should do everything in our power to see that it is fulfilled. As far as this country is concerned, we pay our full subscription to United Nations peace-maintaining forces everywhere.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in recent Israeli raids on Palestinian camps in the Lebanon dogs with explosives tied to their bodies were used and that those dogs and their explosive charges were set off, resulting in the death of the dogs and of many Palestinians? Will she make representations to the Israeli Government deploring this practice?

The Prime Minister: I am not responsible in any way for what happened there. I have heard of no such incidents as those to which my hon. Friend refers. The first thing to do is to find the facts.

Dr. Owen: Is the Prime Minister aware that it is because she cannot bring herself to use the National Health Service that she does not understand the NHS and that the National Health Service is not safe in her hands because there is no place in her heart for it? Will she stop poisoning the moral and ethical basis of the National Health Service and the whole sense of vocation that doctors and nurses in that service have?

The Prime Minister: I could have expected that the right hon. Gentleman might take a totally different view, one taken by many people far to the left of him—*[Interruption.]*—who believe that those who can afford to pay for themselves should not take beds from others.

Mr. Cash: Irrespective of the fate of the Protection of Privacy Bill last Friday, is my right hon. Friend aware that this matter commands a great deal of public concern not only in this House but in the country at large, that it is a matter that the press itself must put right, and that if it does not do so the House will have to do so?

The Prime Minister: I believe that last Friday's Bill was very well debated, and I have not the slightest shadow of doubt that a similar measure will be debated either this coming Friday or the Friday after that. I am sure that the observations that were made will have been noted in the relevant quarters.

Q6. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Prime Minister take time out of her busy day to examine her shoes and, in so doing, will she reflect on the current state of the British footwear industry, which in the last 10 years of her reign has shown a dramatic increase in imports, resulting in many British firms being closed and employees being put on the dole, including Percival's in Leicester? Bearing in mind that there is a penetration rate of 75 per cent. in terms of imports of ladies footwear, will she confirm that she supports the British footwear industry and is wearing shoes manufactured in Britain? Will she also outline her plans for protecting the industry against unfair competition?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the footwear industry is doing far better than it was a few years ago, because its designs are very much better, its prices are highly competitive, and right now, if the hon. Gentleman could see, I am wearing shoes from Marks and Spencer.

NHS Review

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I would, with permission, like to make a statement about the National Health Service review. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a statement for which the House has been waiting.

Mr. Clarke: Britain enjoys high and rising levels of health care and, at its best, our Health Service is as good as any in the world. I believe that the principles underlying the National Health Service still hold good today and will continue to guide it into the next century. The NHS is —and must remain—open to all, regardless of income, and financed mainly out of general taxation. If those principles remain unchanged, the Health Service itself, and the society in which it operates, are changing for the better.

We need constantly to improve and strengthen the NHS so that it can provide ever better care to those who rely on it. At the moment there are wide variations in performance across the country. We want to maintain the best of the Health Service, and bring the rest of it up to that very high standard. That is why the Government set out upon a fundamental review of the NHS last year. We have today published our conclusions in the White Paper entitled "Working for Patients". They build on and evolve from the improvements that the Government have already made to the service in the last 10 years. They reflect a change of pace rather than any fundamental change of direction.

All our proposals share a common purpose—to make the Health Service a place where patients come first and where decisions are increasingly taken at a local level by those most directly involved in delivering and managing care.

The main proposals apply to all the United Kingdom, but there are separate chapters in the White Paper devoted to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland explaining how they will be applied in those countries. Implementation of the proposals will have to follow a process of discussion with many people in the service. We will be issuing in the course of the next week or two eight detailed— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) must resume his seat. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you able to tell us what documents are being distributed to Conservative Members and why they are not being made available to Members on this side of the House?

Mr. Speaker: I know nothing of documents, other than the one which has just been handed to me.

Mr. Clarke: If I may help the House, I think that my right hon. and hon. Friends are reading documents that were placed in the Vote Office as I rose to make my statement. My right hon. and hon. Friends prefer to look at those sources for their information, not at information that comes to them in plain brown sealed envelopes. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. No documents are available in the Vote Office. If Conservative Members have such documents, they have been given to them by Government sources. We have not got them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can now help the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). It appears that those documents are available in the Vote Office, because some hon. Members are now coming into the Chamber with them.

Mr. Roberts: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. They are not the documents that Conservative Members have.

Mr. Clarke: I hope that the House will allow me to return to the proposals, instead of being obsessed with documents that accompany what we say.

In order to help the process of discussion with the many interested parties whom I have just described, we shall be issuing in the course of the next week or two eight further detailed working papers as the basis for those discussions.

Before I turn to the key proposals on management and the use of resources contained in the White Paper, I want to describe the kind of hospital service that I believe every patient has a right to expect. All hospitals should provide individual appointment times that can be relied upon. They should offer attractive waiting areas, with proper facilities for patients and children. They should be able to provide proper counselling to those who need it and give clear and sensitive explanations of what is going on. In addition, patients should be able to pay for a number of optional extras, such as wider choice of meals, a bedside telephone, a television, or a single room. The best hospitals already provide this, and I want to see the whole service treating patients properly as people.

We will also ensure that patients are freer to choose and change their GP; and we shall give more encouragement to those GPs who, by offering the kind of service that people want, succeed in attracting more patients. To achieve that, we are proposing to increase the proportion of GPs' pay which comes from the number of patients on their lists, from 46 per cent. to at least 60 per cent.

People look to their general practitioners to prescribe the medicines they need, and GPs must have the necessary flexibility to do so. But at present, drug costs in some places are nearly twice as high per head of population as in others, even where the incidence of illness is much the same. The drugs bill is the largest single element of all spending on the family practitioner services. At £1·9 billion in 1987-88, it was more than the cost of the doctors who wrote the prescriptions. In each of the last five years, spending has risen by an average of 4 per cent. over and above the rate of inflation.

Unnecessarily expensive prescribing is wasteful and takes up resources that should be used in other ways. Over-prescribing is not in the best interests of patients. We shall therefore introduce a new budgeting scheme whereby GP practices will receive indicative budgets for their prescribing costs. The scheme will be operated in a way that ensures downward pressure on the cost of prescribing without inhibiting the ability of doctors to provide necessary medicines for their patients.

At present, because of the way that hospitals are funded, GPs are not always able to offer their patients a full choice as to where they will be treated. We want to

change this by giving GPs in large practices the opportunity to hold their own NHS budgets. They will be able to use these to purchase as they judge best certain types of hospital services for their patients. They will, in other words, be able to provide the hospitals they choose for their patients with the NHS funds required to finance the services the hospitals perform. These GP practice budgets will cover in-patients, out-patients and day care treatments, such as hip replacements and cataract removals. They will also cover prescribing costs and diagnostic tests, such as X-rays and pathology tests.

Large practices will be free to decide whether to join the scheme. It will, at first, only be open to practices with at least 11,000 patients—that is, twice the national average. Over 1,000 United Kingdom practices could join, covering about one in four of the population. All those practices could have their own NHS budgets of about £500,000 a year. Giving GPs the resources to finance services for their own patients will provide a real incentive to hospitals to improve the service they offer to those GPs. It will also enable GPs to provide a better service to patients by referring them, for example, to where waiting lists are shortest. I am quite sure that GPs will want to judge the quality of service at least as much as the cost of service when they decide where to refer their patients. We have important proposals on the quality of medical service to which I shall turn in due course.

But it will not just be through GP practice budgets that money will follow the patient to where work is done best. The principle will in future apply throughout the Health Service as a whole. As part of this new way of getting resources to hospitals, the present elaborate system which we all know as the RAWP system will come to an end. Over the past 12 years it has made an important contribution by helping to equalise the resources available to each region, but that task has now very largely been achieved. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh yes.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Not in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's district. It is losing £8 million this year. The Secretary of State is changing the rules.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to hon. Gentlemen who are making comments from a sedentary position that they do not improve their chances of being called to ask questions later.

Mr. Clarke: Over the past 12 years, the RAWP system has made the contribution that I have described, but we are now in a position to replace it with an altogether more simple and fair system based on population numbers weighted for age and health, and the relative costs of providing services. The new method will be much quicker to compensate those regions which treat large numbers of patients from elsewhere in the country. We will move to a system that finances regions and districts on exactly the same system, with a 3 per cent. addition for the Thames regions because of the inescapable extra problems of providing health care in the capital.

In future, the money required to treat patients will be able to cross administrative boundaries much more freely, so that those hospitals that best meet patients' needs get the funds to do so. All NHS hospitals will be able to offer their services to different health authorities and the private sector. All district health authorities will be able to provide finance for health services to whatever hospitals they choose, in other districts or in their own. As a result, we shall not in future have the frustrating situation that occasionally arises now, whereby a good, efficient hospital that attracts more patients runs out of money and has to slow down its work or close wards. This new system will start in 1990 for regional health authorities and 1991 for districts.

But improving the hospital service is not just a matter of changing the way in which hospitals receive their funds. We also want to change the way in which they are run and managed. We want all hospitals to have more responsibility for their own affairs, so that they can make the most of local commitment, energy and skills, and can get on with what they are best at, which is providing care.

Management can be strengthened throughout the whole Health Service. The better the management the better the care it can deliver. Financial accountability and value for money will be improved by transferring audit of the health authorities and other NHS bodies to the independent Audit Commission. The role of the National Audit Office will not be affected by this change. On management matters, it is nonsense that the Ministers of any Government should be directly involved in the detail of the day-to-day running of the whole NHS. We shall therefore set up a new NHS management executive, chaired by the new chief executive, Mr. Duncan Nichol, and responsible for all its operational decisions. It will be accountable to an NHS policy board chaired by the Secretary of State for Health who will determine policy and strategy for the Service.

The prime responsibility of health authorities will be to ensure that the population for which they are answerable has access to a full range of high quality, good value services. Their job will be to judge the quality of services, to choose the best mix of services for their resident population and to finance those services. They will no longer provide and run all their local services, which will be increasingly the role of the hospital and unit managers themselves. Authorities will need to be organised as more effective decision making and managerial bodies. We shall therefore be changing their composition to make them smaller and to include executive as well as non-executive members. The non-executive members will be appointed on the basis of the personal skills and expertise they can bring to the authority and not as representatives of interest groups.

Although there will no doubt continue to be people who will combine being members of local health authorities with being local councillors, local authorities will lose their present right to appoint direct their own members to health authorities. At the same time, we shall also be strengthening the management of family practitioner committees along similar lines. We shall also make the FPCs accountable for the first time to regional health authorities to improve the links between planning for the hospital, community and family practitioner services.

We must devolve responsibility across the whole Health Service, but I believe that we can also go one stage further. The next logical step in the process of extending local responsibility is to allow individual hospitals to become self-governing. Let me make it absolutely clear that they will still be as much within the NHS as they are now. They will be no freer to leave the NHS than they are now. They will be no freer to leave the NHS than any unit has been throughout its 40-year history. They will, however, have

[Mr. Clarke]

far more freedom to take their own decisions on the matters that affect them most, without detailed supervision by district, region and my Department. To be known as NHS hospital trusts, they will be free to negotiate with their own staff on rates of pay and, within limits, to borrow money. They will be able to offer agreed services for agreed resources throughout the NHS and, indeed, in the private sector, too. There will of course be safeguards to ensure that essential local services continue to be delivered locally. I believe that this new development will give patients more choice, produce a better quality service, build on the sense of pride in local hospitals, and encourage other hospitals to do even better in order to compete. I expect the first NHS hospital trusts to be set up in April 1991.

In all these reforms we intend to concentrate on the quality of care just as much as the quantity and cost. I admire the progress that the medical profession is making in devising systems that doctors call "medical audit" to assess clinical performance and outcomes. We intend to work with the profession to ensure that good systems of medical audit are put in place in every hospital and GP practice as soon as is practicable. What matters for all patients is that high standards of medical performance are maintained, and where possible improved, and such systems should secure that.

I turn finally to the matter of perhaps greatest public concern—waiting times. All the measures that I have so far outlined by making resources flow more directly to those parts of the service that deliver the best care, will help to cut the length of time that people sometimes have to wait for elective surgery. The waiting list initiative will continue, but we shall also introduce a number of other initiatives designed to have a more direct and immediate impact. First, we intend all GP practices to have the basic information systems they need to know where treatment is available quickest. Secondly, we shall introduce a new tax relief to make it easier for people aged 60 and over to make private provision for their health care. This will reduce the pressure on the NHS from the very age group most likely to require elective surgery, freeing resources for those who need it most.

Thirdly, we shall manage consultants' contracts more effectively so that the very best use is made of their time and expertise. We shall also reform the consultants' distinction award system to ensure that commitment to the service and involvement with the management of the NHS are included among the criteria for distinction awards. Fourthly, we shall increase the number of consultants by 100 over the next three years, over and above the increase in the number of consultants already planned. These additional consultants will be appointed in those specialties and in those districts in which waiting times are most worrying. Finance will be made available to cover the costs of the new appointments, and the supporting services for their work load. This will help us keep up the attack not only on waiting times, but on long hours worked by junior doctors.

Taken together, these proposals add up to the most formidable programme of reform in the history of the NHS. They are the latest step in our drive to build a stronger, more modern, more efficient Health Service. An NHS that is run better will be an NHS that can care better. The proposals will, of course, mean change, but change of the kind we need if we are to have a service that is fit for the future. I trust that all those who—like me—truly believe in a Health Service that offers high quality care to all our people will lend their support to these reforms, and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): The Government set out on their review last winter, not, as the Secretary of State claimed, because they wanted to maintain the best in the NHS, but because the NHS was in a cash crisis. The rest of us thought that the crisis was that the NHS had too little cash. It is now evident that the authors of the White Paper always thought that the cash crisis was that the NHS cost too much. It is the prescription for a Health Service run by accountants for civil servants, written by people who will always put a healthy balance sheet before healthy patients.

Will the Secretary of State tell the House how many more bureaucrats the NHS will need to make this package work? Will he tell us how much time doctors will have to take off patient care to file their financial returns? Will he tell us how much more the monitoring, the pricing and the bargaining over every treatment will add to the cost of administration, and whether a single closed ward will reopen as a result of the White Paper?

The Secretary of State assures us that it has never entered his head to privatise the NHS. Will he confirm that his White Paper proposes that medical services will now go the way of ancillary services and be put out to competitive tendering? If he wants to reassure the House, will he tell us which medical lines he is not prepared to privatise?

The Secretary of State assures us that those hospitals that opt out of their local health authorities somehow will not have opted out of the Health Service. Will he confirm that they will trade on their own account, that they will charge for every treatment, that they will retain their profits and that in every important respect they will be identical to the private hospitals with which they are to compete. Is he aware that the nation will not be taken in again by the Government's trick of sizing up public assets for private sale under the pretence of greater economic efficiency?

The White Paper's only feeble pretence at consultation is that a proposal to opt out will be given "adequate publicity locally". I assure the Secretary of State that we will save him that trouble. We will ensure that every proposal to opt out is fully exposed for what it is—a staging post to opt in to the private sector. To enable us to get started now, does the Secretary of State have the courage to name those hospitals that he expects to opt out first in two years' time?

The Secretary of State claimed that his proposals for private practice give GPs more freedom. Is not the truth that they limit the freedom of GPs to decide what treatment their patients need and replace it with the freedom to decide what treatment they can afford? Under his scheme, every patient has a price tag. Does not the Secretary of State realise that, for the first time, GPs will have an incentive to turn away those patients with a high price tag? The elderly, the disabled and the chronically sick will now be told, "Sorry, but you do not fit the business logic of this practice."

The Secretary of State was good enough to tell us that he believed that some GPs prescribe too much. Will he be good enough to tell the House which patients, in his medical opinion, get too many prescriptions and which

patients will get fewer prescriptions under his scheme? He had the brass neck to claim that the White Paper will increase patients' choice. Why does he not admit that his scheme means that patients will go not to the hospitals that they want to go to, but to the hospitals where their GP has the cheapest bargain? That is not money following the patients; it is patients following the money.

The Secretary of State has confirmed that the Prime Minister has had her way, and there is to be a subsidy out of taxation for private medicine. Will he confirm that in the whole White Paper that fatuous irrelevance is the only proposal for help for the medical care of the elderly? Does that not speak volumes for the Government's priorities? There is to be no relief for hard-pressed geriatric wards, but a new subsidy for private hospitals.

Why did not the Secretary of State take this opportunity to respond to the Griffiths report on community care which he has had for almost a year? Is it to be ignored again because the private sector cannot turn a fast buck out of the community care of the handicapped and the elderly?

The White Paper is the product of a review behind closed doors by closed minds. Junior ministers, we read, were consulted over dinner at No. 10. Junior doctors were not consulted. Nurses were not consulted. Patients were not consulted. The result is a series of proposals that will be as unworkable as they will be unpopular.

Now the nation has a chance to join in the debate. In that debate, we shall take every opportunity to hammer home the fact that the White Paper proves that the change that the NHS needs more than any other is a change of Government.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman started with some extraordinary comments about the amount of cash that was accompanying the review and seemed to imply that there was none. He talked about the time that has elapsed since the review was first announced. During that time, over £2,000 million has been added to NHS budgets in the public spending round and nearly £1,000 million has been added to finance the nurses' regrading exercise. Next year we are contemplating spending a total of £20,000 million.

The Labour party has no proposals for health at the moment, except some half-baked proposal for an inspectorate put forward in one of its documents. If its policy remains that nothing needs to be changed but that somehow it would add more money to what we put in, I shall regard such an approach to health care as pathetic and quite inadequate to meet the demands facing the service, which needs money and new ideas, both of which it is getting from the Government.

The hon. Gentleman treats in a most derisive way what he refers to as the accountancy and financing aspects, about which he asked me various questions. Again, I find that astonishing. If the hon. Gentleman shares my belief that there is no reason why the public service should not be run with the same efficiency and consumer consciousness as the private sector—*[Interruption.]*—he cannot dismiss the value of modern management disciplines, financial accountability and consumer consciousness that we are seeking to build into the Health Service. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has been asked a series of questions. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) stands very little chance of being called to put a question if he continues to behave as he is doing.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Livingston asked about what he describes as the proposal for hospitals to opt out of district health authority care. I repeat that there is no question, and there never has been, of those hospitals leaving the NHS. The only person who has ever suggested that is the hon. Gentleman, when he purported to be describing documents which at that stage he would not read out to the public to whom he was talking. That ridiculous argument can be set aside.

I have described self-governing hospitals as being free of the constraints of detailed control from district and regional authorities and central Government which hospitals are presently under. The hon. Gentleman obviously prefers a service in which everybody is answerable to a bureaucratic district health authority, and he does not like proposals to give greater freedom to those with responsibility for care nearer to the patient.

The hon. Gentleman talks about practice budgets which we will offer—again a detail that he left out before today—to those large general practices which want to take them because they see their attractions to themselves and their patients.

It is ludicrous to describe this as inhibiting the ability of the GP and the GP's patients to have choice in the service. The reverse will be the case. At present, if a GP tries to send his or her patients to a hospital to which they have not previously been committed, the effect is to pose a financial problem for the hospital because no funds come with the patients. We are providing for NHS money to move with the patients, with the patients' choice, and to be available to those general practices which have the ability to manage it.

Doctors seeking to increase their number of patients will, contrary to the hon. Gentleman's assertion, have just as much, if not more, regard for the quality of care which a hospital might provide to the patients and not just to the costs. Indeed, what we are suggesting gives greater incentives to enhance quality.

On prescription costs, the hon. Gentleman has the temerity to attack what we are proposing to exercise downward pressure on prescription costs. I have read some of the Labour party's published documents, including the party's so-called green paper—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I am answering the question. I am using the hon. Gentleman's own words to answer his criticism of what we are saying about prescribing costs. The hon. Gentleman said in that green paper:

> "It is not immediately apparent that the current high level of drug consumption is a considered measure of the need for medical treatment. Inappropriate prescription does not merely result in ineffective expense but, more seriously, can adversely affect patient care."

I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said. Why does he not make proposals to deal with it and why does he attack the proposals that we have announced today dealing with the self-same problem?

The tax relief proposals will assist many elderly patients who pay for private practice throughout their lives and find the costs increase when they reach the stage of their lives when they most need elective surgery. In so far as we support those people who provide for their own elective surgery, it will reduce the pressure on the rest of the service

[Mr. Clarke]

and help other elderly patients who will be able to get quicker waiting times and more access to the services of the NHS.

We look forward to the debate. We will be consulting. We have a policy which will be followed up by working papers and detailed discussions in the next few months with everybody interested in the subject to work up the implementation of these proposals. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make a better contribution to that debate than he and his party have made so far—*[Interruption.]* The trouble with the hon. Gentleman is that, even when he gets accurate leaks, he does not bother to read them and he does not bother to interpret them correctly or understand them. He now has the real White Paper and will find that we are miles ahead of him and his party in suggesting improvements for a stronger NHS for the future.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Anyone who has listened properly to my right hon. and learned Friend's comments this afternoon will be well aware that the National Health Service has a strong future and that the prime objective of the review is to improve patient services. So let us get away from the claptrap of the Opposition and talk about facts.

I invite my right hon. and learned Friend to comment further on the phrase "the money will follow the patients", as some doctors may feel that unless the money precedes the patients, the treatment may not be there to fund it and the effect on waiting lists will not be seen. Will he assure us that the present monumental waste and extravagance of the way in which alleged misdemeanours by hospital consultants are dealt with will be ended by the proposals in the review?

Mr. Clarke: As my hon. Friend says, these proposals look to the future of the NHS, whereas the Labour party is accustomed to looking to the past of the Service. Our proposals are marked, above all else, by our concern to concentrate our efforts on patient care and introduce changes that benefit patients.

I talk about money following the patient, and my hon. Friend's correction is good. One is talking about the time when the right mix of services is being planned by a district health authority for the patients in that district; then it will make provision in advance for the necessary finance to provide the services, as will the GPs operating their own practice budgets.

What I mean by the phrase is that judgments will first be made about the quality of the service that can be provided in different places, about the satisfaction that patients will get from it, about the waiting times that they may encounter before their treatment, and then the budgets will ensure that the money goes to those parts of the service where the treatment is given best.

That is not the case at present. Some hospitals find that if they work too hard they run out of money. Hospitals that do not work hard or efficiently are quite well provided with finance because the formula gives them all that they require and they appear to be free of problems. That is not in the interests of the patients, and we want to encourage good performance.

As for the disciplining of those few consultants who get into difficulties with their authorities in the management of their contracts, we shall be strengthening the management of consultants' contracts and district health authorities will be acting as the agents for the regional health authorities in drawing up new job descriptions for consultants about the work they do.

We have a long-standing problem about the discipline of recalcitrant consultants. I am glad to say that we have reached some agreement with the representatives of the profession and, following a recent working party report, we intend to introduce proposals which will have some simpler local methods of dealing with minor problems and will speed up the present appalling process whereby serious disciplinary matters are handled in the service.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Does the Secretary of State accept that in the long run the most significant statement he has made this afternoon concerns the tax funding of private health care for pensioners? Is he aware that, now that that principle has been established, it will be ever more difficult to prevent the concession being extended to other groups, and that once that stampede is on it will become impossible for him to maintain a line about the necessary funding for a common health service? Is that not why—for all those reasons—he opposed that reform right up to last Thursday's Cabinet meeting?

When considering reactions to his proposals, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that, while it is important to listen to doctors, nurses and ancillary workers, the views of the customers—the patients—are crucial? If he accepts that form of political consumerism, will he monitor his proposed reforms and report to the House on whether the customer services have improved or have been cut as a result of today's package?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman makes a curious choice. As I am aware of his interest in the NHS and his openness at least to new ideas and methods which might improve the flow of services to patients, I take it as a welcome sign that he asked not a solitary question about the NHS parts of the proposals and queried only the tax relief to the private sector.

I do not see the analogy between our tax relief proposal and other claims for tax relief with which over the years we have all become familiar. The Government have rejected the case for general tax relief for contributions to private health care. But the situation of those over the age of 60 is plainly different from that of analogous claims that are made elsewhere. People who have been insured throughout their lives find that the premiums rise steadily at the very time when they want to make most demands on the service for which they have been paying. It is also a clear example where the tax relief to those who will continue, out of their own pockets, to contribute towards their care will be of obvious and direct benefit to every patient in the NHS by relieving the pressures on elective surgery.

I do not believe that this proposal, once implemented, will ever be repealed by the Labour party—or I look forward to seeing how it will ever argue for the withdrawal of this help for elderly people paying for their private health care.

To answer the hon. Gentleman's question about the monitoring of the reforms, we shall begin by having detailed discussions on their implementation. There are huge details to discuss—on matters such as GP practice budgets, self-governing hospitals and drug budgets. But in

all that we do we shall, of course, listen particularly to the views of the public and the patients. In dealing with the big management and financial issues, we shall not forget—the point I made at the outset—the interests of patients who do not want to be kept hanging around waiting, who want to know what is going on and who want a patient and friendly service from the hospital. They and their GPs will have greater ability to choose that between various hospitals as a result of what we are proposing today.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that his proposals to decentralise decision-making within the hospital service will be dependent on two factors? The first is an increase in the quality of medical audit and of real costing, and the second is a major improvement in the quality of middle and senior managers.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is perceptive, and what he says is undoubtedly the case. This will require a huge improvement in the financial information that is available within the service. It is astonishing that a service that consumes £26 billion is at present so devoid of basic information about the use of resources, about comparative costs and so on. That will be acquired.

It will also need the people necessary to carry it out and have the ability to make proper use of these systems; and by "people" I mean the consultants and medical staff, who must be just as involved and have just as leading a role in organising all this properly as their management colleagues with whom they will work.

Mr. Archie Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Extra resources are of course needed in the NHS, but is the Secretary of State aware that these proposals could inflict potentially great damage on the fundamental principles of the NHS in future? Does he not accept that leaving health care to the vagaries of competition in the free market is a very unsafe way to proceed when delivering health care? In relation to primary health care, how is he going to protect the income of rural general practitioners' services? In particular, what incentives will GPs have to look after the elderly and infirm?

With regard to hospitals, is the principle of RAWP being abandoned? Some of the discrepancies between regions have disappeared, but there are still major discrepancies between health districts up and down the country. Can the Secretary of State also say whether the patients' travel costs, which he calls administrative boundaries, will be refunded?

Returning to the question raised by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) about tax relief for the elderly, is he aware that the *Daily Telegraph* of 16 January, so far from saying that no precedents are being established, said that the same scheme could apply in logic to the cost of private schooling? What does the Secretary of State say to that?

Mr. Clarke: First, I urge the hon. Gentleman to study closely what I accept is an extremely detailed and complicated document, with a great sweeping reform. I think that then he will see that the principles of the Service are in no way threatened, as he clams, and that there is no prospect of any patient dropping through the system without essential care or essential medicine, or anything else.

I agree that we shall have to look at the problems that might otherwise be caused for rural general practitioners if we increased the percentage of remuneration that comes from capitation. The document therefore also canvasses our other proposal, to vary the level of the so-called basic practice allowance in different parts of the country. A higher basic practice allowance will, in my opinion, be required in scattered rural areas such as that represented by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), and in the constituencies of many other right hon. and hon. Members.

With regard to the treatment of the elderly and infirm, no doubt the hon. Gentleman has in mind the prospect of some large practices going in for a practice budget. It has been suggested, I see, that somehow they will have some incentive not to take on the elderly or infirm patients. Like many other things that I have heard discussed in the past few days, we had thought of that over the past few months, and we have long ago covered the problem.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Answer the question.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) will have to study this reform, and the working papers that are coming forward. I will answer the question now. In putting together a general practice budget, one must have regard to the number of patients, the age of the patients, their comparative sickness, and any other features that affect the practice. If one has a high proportion of elderly patients, one gets paid more for elderly patients than for younger patients. Any practice that refuses to take elderly patients, for some eccentric reason, will simply find that it is not paid so much per head as if it is taking only younger patients. It is quite easy to put together a budget-negotiating process that makes it clear that there is no financial advantage for any GP to select his patients in that way.

I have described the abolition of the RAWP system, but the hon. Gentleman the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire again is quite right in saying that there are still considerable discrepancies, some of them between the English regions and some between the districts. We will therefore be moving towards the system that I have described, over a period of two years for regions and rather longer for districts. There will still be, within an ever-growing total, some further redistribution from the Thames regions to the provinces, before we get to the position that I have described in today's statement.

As between the districts, there will still need to be some movement towards a common, fair and level basis, but we shall phase that in steadily to avoid any sudden movements of funds between districts. We believe that now is the time to get rid of RAWP. We shall certainly ensure that none of the discrepancies of the past that were caused by RAWP, and the gaps between targets and sudden movements of funds are brought back again by our new system.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I wish to congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the dramatic programme of reform that he has outlined to the House this afternoon. I share his objective, as I am sure does the whole House, that we should get a better quality Health Service and better value for money.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend give me two assurances this afternoon—first, that the opting-out

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

proposals for a number of hospitals will not make it more difficult to plan a comprehensive health care service in areas up and down the country? Secondly—the Secretary of State will be probed fully about this when he comes before the Select Committee—could he go further into detail about how practice budgets will accurately reflect the various breakdowns in the lists of patients, especially the elderly, the mentally ill and the disabled, and where demographic changes occur over time?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is a fair man, that now he is prepared to contemplate and look more closely at the details of the full proposals, in the light of his first comments upon them. I think they are both very valid.

I have certainly heard the points he has been making, and we anticipated them. The opting out of hospitals must not disrupt essential services in the area. One condition of self-governing status must be that the region requires that hospital to continue to provide local emergency and other services that must be provided locally. If there are to be changes in the patterns of service, some notice must be given to the districts and regions so that planning can take account of them. All that will be contained in the working documents available to the Select Committee and others.

Similarly, with practice budgets, I tried in a comparatively potted way, by my standards, to give a brief discription a few moments ago of how we were tackling them. We obviously need to ensure that, in putting together the right budget for a general practitioner or group of GPs, we accurately reflect the likely different needs and demands of patients of different ages and conditions.

I heard what my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said this morning on the radio. I should have liked to reply to him then, but no doubt in the Select Committee and in discussions afterwards I shall be able to reassure him on that point.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): One of the major weaknesses in the Government's review, as it appears to people from outside, and no doubt one of the major causes of the many defects in the plans put before us today, arises from the absence of any consultation, or what could properly be called by that name, by the Government of the people who work in the Service. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now tell us whether he is proposing to have any genuine consultations with people working in the Service: with the nurses, the unions, the British Medical Association, and the presidents of the royal colleges? Are they to be consulted at all, in a way that enables them to make a radical alteration to the proposals that the Secretary of State brings forward, or are the Government proposing to continue with the same method that the Prime Minister used, of slamming the door in the face of the presidents of the royal colleges and not caring what the people who work in the Service have to say?

Mr. Clarke: The National Health Service has a rather poor track record in communicating with its own staff and the people who work in it. For that reason, immediately after this statement we are having an exercise that will communicate with all our staff throughout the Service, and we shall discuss with them the implications for them and their patients of what I am proposing. *[Interruption.]*

The reaction to that, as we can hear, is that any attempt to communicate in that way, rather than through the agency of the trade unions, is bitterly attacked by the Opposition, who are consulting before they have a policy. I accept that that is the principle of the listening party.

I have been looking at Labour's consultation documents and I see that it is not putting forward a solitary idea. All it has come up with so far, rather than putting forward new ideas, is a half-baked idea of an inspectorate, which is the kind of thing one would expect the Labour party to come up with.

The Labour party's idea of consultation on health policy, as we all know, is to ring up NUPE, reversing the charges, and ask what they should be expected to say. We propose to run the Health Service in an altogether more constructive fashion.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the fact that, in answering any attack on this scheme, he must emphasise the caring nature of any Government who will spend an extra £3,300 million on the Health Service in this period?

Will my right hon. and learned Friend answer two questions for me? Will the amount of money that will be available to the large practices, allow them to use funds for the support of cottage hospitals in the country, to build up some of them in areas where they provide a major service for people?

Secondly, will my right hon. and learned Friend perhaps think again to overcome the appointment of consultants by means of a contract for life? The concept that any person today can from the moment he gets his first appointment believe that he holds the appointment for ever seems inequitable and wrong. For a consultant, surely, a four-year contract to begin with, then to be renewed, is something everyone would support.

Mr. Clarke: If a well-run general practice makes savings on its practice budget, for example, by making use of a new formulary and tightening up prescribing costs, it will be able to plough back those savings into local services. We will not claw savings back from successful practices. That would permit them, for example, to put the funds into cottage hospitals supported by local GPs as part of local general practice.

On consultants' contracts, we are not changing the basic nature of the contract, which is not quite as my hon. Friend described: a consultant is in theory open to dismissal at three months' notice. At the moment, that is subject to a right of appeal to the Secretary of State. As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), we are reconsidering the position because of the ineffectiveness of that right of appeal and the length of time it has taken in the past. We think that we have reached agreement with the profession about it.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, which has clarified some points which did not come across in the official leaks. For example, until today I was not aware that Northern Ireland was included in the review. Will there be a discussion with people in Northern Ireland akin to what is planned for England and Wales and, to a lesser extent, Scotland? The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland paid a fleeting visit to the Chamber earlier, but there is no one from Northern Ireland here now to answer such questions.

Will the National Health Service management executive and the National Health Service policy board include representatives from Northern Ireland, or are they technically for England and Wales? The Minister said that efficient hospitals would not have to close wards because there was not enough money. Is that an open-ended commitment to general practitioners throughout the land to provide them with sufficient funds to treat their patients properly?

Mr. Clarke: I understand the hon. Member not fully appreciating the scope of the review before today, because he had to rely on the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to be the interpreter of most of the documents which were available. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has been closely involved in all this. The review will apply to Northern Ireland, but in a way which reflects the local service. One whole chapter, chapter 12, is about Northern Ireland and explains exactly what will happen. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will have discussions within Northern Ireland with all interested parties.

The policy board and the management executive relate to my responsibilities, which are for the English Health Service and for England only. The position in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is different in a number of important ways. My respective right hon. Friends will be responsible entirely for the way in which the principles of the policy are put into practice in their countries.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his imaginative proposals, which are centred not on the clinicians or on the administrators but on the patients, are warmly welcomed on this side of the House, as they will be throughout the country? It must make sense that patients, GPs and administrators can choose where treatment is to take place on the basis of quality and cost. That can be done only if it is possible to compare costing in the Health Service with that in the private sector. At present, that is not practicable in many areas, because the information is not there. What steps is my right hon. and learned Friend taking to enable comparisons to be made?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with all the points which my hon. Friend has made. It is important that, when people are making a choice based on a combination of quality and cost, they should have the best information. The information should be properly comparable between one hospital and another within the Health Service and between the NHS hospital and the private sector provision. That would make it possible for a district health authority or a general practitioner to look to the private sector for part of the service and equally possible for the private sector to look to the NHS. The artificial divisions, and the daft political argument that has gone on about the respective merits of the public and private sectors, should be put behind us, and we should all work to the best effect for patient care.

We will have to develop systems for costing. That will include examining methods of reflecting various capital costs between one and the other, as well as the revenue costs incurred in particular services. This will involve a major management effort over the next couple of years before the system can get running.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): If the National Health Service is to be as good as the Minister says, why is he encouraging older people to take out private medical insurance? Surely they are wasting their money. If the NHS is not to be as good as he says, what will happen to the millions of people who cannot afford private medical insurance? Can he tell us also why he has misled the House of Commons about the future of the Health Service? Does he recognise that great institutions in Britain are driven by their objectives and that the noble objective of the National Health Service is the best possible treatment, which is to be replaced by the cheapest possible treatment? That is an act of political vandalism for which he will never be forgiven.

Mr. Clarke: As the right hon. Gentleman puts it, we may be encouraging elderly people to go for private care, but they do not need encouragement from the Government. It is an inevitable consequence of rising living standards that an ever-increasing proportion of the population want to consider making insurance provision for their own health care. I cannot for the life of me see why we should stand in their way. If we encourage it for those over the age of 60 it will benefit millions of other elderly people by reducing the pressure on elective surgery in the Health Service, thus reducing waiting lists and waiting times. That is the basis on which we are proceeding.

I accept entirely what the right hon. Gentleman described as the noble objective of the National Health Service. The growing silence and absence of people on the Opposition Benches is because they realise that they have been misled by their official spokesman into believing that that objective was under attack. No doubt most of the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends have gone to the Library to look through the document to try to discover how the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) felt able to base his attack on the document by raising all over again his ridiculous hare that we were trying to privatise the service.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the provision of 100 new consultants must have an effect on waiting lists? Will he also confirm that these consultants will be given the necessary back-up staff they require?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Over three years, there will be 100 extra consultants, with the necessary support care they require. The problem is not with the people. There are a little over 100 who will be qualified for appointment in that time. We need the actual men and women to be consultants. Then we need the operating theatre time, the beds, the nursing staff and so on. Finance will be available to provide the back-up which will enable the extra work to be done. The consultants will be appointed in key specialties such as general surgery and general medicine where waiting times are worst. The extra consultants will also have some impact on the problem of junior doctors' hours. It is not every junior doctor who works the long hours which we all know to be excessive. Junior doctors' hours tend to be worse in general surgery, general medicine and obstetrics.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The statement is nonsense in Wales, where we do not have regional health authorities. We should have had our own statement. Can the Secretary of State clarify the position in large, scattered areas, where virtually no medical practice comes up to the

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

11,000 threshold? They will miss out on the opportunities. Likewise, in valley communities, will this not lead to an amalgamation of practices and a lessening of choice for patients? As there are virtually no private beds in Wales, is it not appalling that paragraph 11.9 of the White Paper should give priority to an increase in private provision, which is deeply detestable to the thousands of doctors, nurses, paramedicals and auxiliaries who work in Wales and who have given a lifetime of service to the NHS? Can the Secretary of State give an assurance that any hospitals currently under threat of closure will have the threat removed until the full implications of the statement have worked through?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was also closely involved. There is a chapter on Wales, which the hon. Gentleman will have seen. Wales is of a size similar to an English region. That gives my right hon. Friend and the Welsh the advantage of having the centre of the service much closer to practical provision on the ground. The Welsh have been spared some of the remoteness which I hope we shall now overcome in England by devolving so much responsibility to lower levels of management nearer to the patient. I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman wants to be sure that GP budgets are introduced in Wales. Any question of reducing the threshold for Welsh general practice will have to be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's revolutionary proposals for patients, within an evolutionary framework. But will he confirm that, when the GPs' budgeting scheme comes into force—including the scheme for prescriptions—no surgeries will close and no patients will be deterred from treatment or turned away because of a lack of resources?

Mr. Clarke: I can give an absolute assurance to that effect. As will be clear to my hon. Friend, now that he has the documents, the system will be very flexible. Those who start overspending can indeed be called to account, but there is no question of stopping the service.

For the past few days, my hon. Friend and I have had to put up with critics projecting the absurd vision of practices closing down in the middle of February until the next financial year, people being turned away from medical treatment and so forth. Anyone who wants to know what will happen should study our proposals with care. Those who have tried to find criticisms of them have been on a wild goose chase.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The Secretary of State has already told us about the massive extension of medical auditing, accountancy and financial costs that his proposals will entail. Has he costed the proposals? If so, will he tell us what the cost will be, and whether he will make additional finance available to the Health Service or intends to meet the cost of his reforms from existing expenditure?

Mr. Clarke: "Medical audit" is a phrase that I do not like when it is applied to a system of quality control devised by the medical profession. Clinicians will consult each other about the outcome or success of procedures, comparing notes and advising each other on how to raise the standard. That is separate from financial auditing. We have always had financial auditing in the Health Service, and we are now strengthening that by giving it to the Audit Commission and making it independent from the Health Departments. I am sure that the whole House wants good financial auditing and value-for-money studies in the Health Service, in the interests of taxpayers and patients.

We made provision for some of the implementation costs in this year's public spending round. Provision has already been made in regional budgets for the introduction of financial management systems and so on, which, despite the attacks on them by Opposition Members, are desirable in themselves. If we were not reviewing the Health Service, we should still want Health Service management to take advantage of the best modern management techniques and to improve management information. It is shell-backed in the extreme for the Opposition to oppose advances in a great public service.

I can give the right hon. Gentleman an assurance that the cost of the proposals will not be met at the expense of plans for patient provision. There will be some cost up front, although eventually the savings made by cutting out waste will outweigh that and will benefit the service generally.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Having removed the difficulty of doctors using different areas, can my right hon. and learned Friend envisage a system in which the number of vacant beds is made available to doctors, so that, instead of having to ring round and ask hospital after hospital whether there is a vacancy, they will know immediately?

When will the self-governing hospitals come in? Is it possible to advance the date if a hospital wants to become independent before then?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's first point. It is an excellent idea. I envisage that, as soon as possible, the microcomputer that every GP will have on his desk will provide, among other things, instant access to information about waiting lists within a wide area of his practice, so that he can advise patients about the shortest waiting times. In future, when he refers his patients, the hospital will pay for the extra patients, whereas in the past he would rather pay the hospital to keep it quiet, because it might receive patients for which no financial provision had been made.

We shall put the first self-governing hospitals into operation as quickly as we can, but for all the reasons that have been enumerated, including those mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), it will take a year or two before the first hospitals are capable of managing the process of self-government and making a success of it.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Will there be separate Scottish legislation to give effect to the document? Secondly, is the Secretary of State aware that he has now put the final nail into the lid of the coffin of the Tory party north of the border? It is transparently clear that the intention of the lady in Downing street is to fracture the national character of our Health Service and commercialise it, as a prelude to privatising it. We have never believed her claim that the National Health Service was safe in her private-patient hands. Is the Secretary of State aware that the fundamental gulf between the Scottish people and the English Tory party that governs us at

present is that we do not consider the concept of market forces compatible with the medical ethic of providing care at the point of human need?

Mr. Clarke: We will probably not begin drafting legislation for any country until the summer, when the process of discussion will have advanced considerably. I am certainly not contemplating legislation in the present session of Parliament. When we draft the legislation we shall no doubt decide whether to have separate Bills for England, Scotland and the other countries or to have a single Bill for all of them.

I am rather vague about Scottish questions, because although the document contains a chapter dealing with them, the system of governing the Health Service in Scotland is completely devolved. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is clearly best placed to answer questions about Scotland, and has already offered a debate in the Scottish Grand Committee.

I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman should think that opinion in Scotland will be so different from that in England. It would be absurd if we had a modern, more patient-conscious and efficient Health Service in England while the Scots preserved the Health Service as it was 40 years ago, with some modest changes. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend does not intend that, and that he will ensure that the Scottish Health Service, in a Scottish fashion, is made stronger, better and more responsive to patient needs.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement. May I remind him, however, of his comment that the better the management, the better would be the care? Many of us may be disappointed if he limits the management of consultants' contracts to giving district health authorities some sort of vague agency rights. Those of us with experience of managing the service at district level will look to him to ensure that consultants' contracts are held at that level by those who have to manage the consultants. Will he assure us that his effective management of consultants will include that provision?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has considerable experience of a district health authority himself, and I know that his views are shared by many people in such authorities. I ask him, however, to look closely at our proposals. Although the contract will be held with the region—it would be disruptive to change that for the sake of change—management of the contract will be devolved to the district, as the region's agent. In particular, the new provision for an up-to-date job description, to be reviewed each year, will close the gulf that sometimes now exists between local management and consultant.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The Secretary of State failed to answer the point about lack of consultation. Will he now tell us plainly why the review had to take place behind closed doors? Could the reason have been a fear that evidence given publicly by those in the profession would get in the way of imposing this kind of change? Will the Secretary of State admit his determination to impose cash limits on general practice? Can he not imagine the shudder that will go through people when they realise that their treatment will be subject to the state of the practice budget?

Mr. Clarke: I hear what the hon. Lady says about consultation, but it seems to me that it is the duty of Government—and of a political party, come to that—to have a policy on how they propose to improve a great public service. Of course, having produced our policy, we are also producing a large amount of back-up material on which we will have the widest possible discussion with everyone interested, and we are starting discussions with our own staff straight away.

We are engaging in much closer discussion with those who really work in the Service than I think has been tried by anyone before. The Labour Party's idea of consultation is to take a blank sheet of paper with no policy on it and to hold a series of silly meetings at which it asks whether anyone has a good idea. That is no way to form a policy.

I have already tried to explain—successfully to most people—that there is no prospect of patients' access to care being determined by the state of GPs' budgets. In the extreme case of a practice that has consistently overspent by more than 5 per cent. for two years in succession, its budget will be taken away and it will be brought back into the general service. That will be a matter between the practice and the regional health authority. The patient will not notice any difference, except that, if the budget is operated properly, he will find that his GP can offer better choice and service, and hospitals will have an added incentive to provide better service.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does not the clear and unambiguous support for the principle of a free Health Service available to all, outlined in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's foreword to the White Paper, constitute the most significant commitment to the National Health Service since it was formed 40 years ago? Is it not also right that the success of any service should be measured by the satisfaction of its customers and that, in putting patients first and creating a more coherent, responsive and effective National Health Service, the Government are right to say that we are working for the patient?

Mr. Clarke: The Labour party has been acting in this way for years. I am sure we all remember the 1983 election, which was largely fought by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) claiming that he had a secret document that said that the Government were about to privatise the Health Service. All that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has done is to take that old gimmick out of its box, give it a whirl again and claim that it was possible to rerun the story on the strength of the leaked information he had received. We have not only repeatedly committed ourselves to the National Health Service—as we do today—but we have demonstrated that commitment by putting in more resources to enable the Service to treat 1·5 million more patients now than when the Government came to office. We have made it a better and more effective service for patients, and we propose to continue doing so.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Will the Secretary of State accept that, for the first time since the formation of the National Health Service, general practitioners will have financial incentives to limit how they treat their patients? There will be a restriction on prescribing and an incentive to refer fewer patients to hospital. Most importantly, there will be a strong disincentive for doctors to take on to their lists high-risk, high-cost patients such as

[Mrs. Rosie Barnes]

the elderly, the chronically sick and the mentally ill. There is already evidence that, in the United States, where there are budget restrictions, such patients find it hard to persuade a GP to take them on. What would be acceptable grounds for budget practice GPs refusing patients? What right of appeal would the patients have, and to whom would those GPs be accountable if they refused?

Mr. Clarke: I do not understand why we should not offer incentives to GPs to make cost savings in their practices. At present there are wide discrepancies in costs between similar practices. Prescribing costs vary between different practices by as much as four times; the number of patients referred to hospital can vary by 20 times. If savings are made by GPs, they will not be clawed back by the Treasury but will be ploughed back into the practice to develop patient care in any way that the GP wants—for instance, in the form of new chairs for the waiting room or the support for a community hospital that my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) mentioned.

I thought that I had dealt several times with the argument that there will be incentives to take low-risk patients. That might be so if we paid the same rate for every patient, but we do not. By paying more for high-risk patients we have eliminated the risk—which I understand the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) fears—that there might be a disincentive to take high-risk patients. We always do our best to ensure that no such perverse incentives are built into health care systems.

When the hon. Member for Greenwich studies the report, she will find that much of what it recommends is astonishingly near to what the leader of her party, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), advocated two or three years ago as an internal market in the Service. We have refined that idea to a much greater extent than anybody else and produced a good system, whereby cash follows patients. Immediately, the Social Democrats disown their interest in the internal market, saying that it is a commercial system and dreaming up all sorts of fanciful risks that they say will lie behind it.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): The fact that the NHS is treating more patients with more doctors and resources proves the Government's commitment to the NHS, not the Opposition's stolen lies. What will the proposals mean for rural areas such as Shropshire, which has a population of less than half a million but covers a land mass in excess of 25 per cent. of the west midlands? We should also like to opt out of the dead hand of regional control.

Mr. Clarke: I am familiar with the problems of Shropshire, not least because they are often pressed upon me by my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway)—*[Interruption.]* I think that my hon. Friend will acknowledge—even if the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is not instantly familiar with Shropshire—that the background to the problems in Shropshire is that we are opening, at considerable expense, a new district general hospital in Telford. Shropshire will have two district general hospitals, and would have had 20 small ones as well, had the service not been rationalised.

I know that my hon. Friend disapproves of how the region, and to some extent the district, have gone about rationalisation. Therefore, I am sure that he will welcome any proposals that give more local responsibility for such matters. Shropshire will want to take advantage of them as quickly as possible.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): The Secretary of State's own GP will undoubtedly receive a large premium for looking after him after these these reforms are introduced, because he clearly has only a tenuous grasp of reality. The proposal is born of the eccentric mind of someone in the Adam Smith Institute who has no concept of what it is like to run a health service, as opposed to talking and thinking about one.

I wish to put three specific points to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Speaker: Order. One question, please.

Dr. Moonie: The three points are all part of the same question about how the service will be administered.

The Secretary of State mentioned the patients' dependency as a factor for calculating costs. Is he aware that there is no way of measuring costs on an individual basis? He mentioned patient administration systems in hospitals. Is he aware that, as yet, no such system is fully effective? How long will it be until such a system is fully effective and capable of general introduction? Where shall we find computer staff to run it? The Health Service is already short of such staff.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman talks about the need for clarity about how to measure different aspects and needs of patient care. As he knows, our English system of RAWP and the similar system in Scotland, SHARE, depend on a complicated formula that attempts to distribute resources on the basis of population, numbers, age and morbidity. It is easier——

Dr. Moonie: Reliable data do not exist—ask your officials.

Mr. Clarke: That is how it works. We shall discuss details afterwards. I am more familiar with RAWP than the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). Any distribution of funds involves such calculations. We must make the best calculations using modern methods. We have been developing patient administration systems and resource management information systems as rapidly as possible. They are required in the Health Service and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome their introduction. We have an ambitious timetable to introduce the necessary systems to implement the reforms. We shall need computer staff to do so, and I welcome the hon. Gentleman's recognition that the modern administration of a good large system is a good step—even if, at present, that is not remotely comprehended by his right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): If greater efficiency and better value for money are the watchwords of the White Paper, as they seem to be from my initial reading of it, is it not true that the health authorities appear to have escaped leniently? Does not my right hon. Friend agree that there is a case for the abolition of regional health authorities and for the absorption of some of their residual activities into the Department of Health? That would strengthen and exercise greater control over district health authorities. Is it not a fact that, rather than approaching it in that way, the White Paper appears to be strengthening the power of the regions?

Mr. Clarke: I would not take the powers of the regions back into the centre on any account. If we had to deal directly with 190 districts and 90 family practitioner committees—without any regional authorities—it would be impossible to have any effective contact. We shall get the regional health authorities to concentrate on their real job, which is distributing funds locally, monitoring performance and laying out policy objectives. We shall stop the amount of detailed decision and supervision at regional level, which is no longer suitable for the Service.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): As some general practitioners refuse to give reasons for removing people from their list, how will the Secretary of State prevent a general practitioner from removing a patient from his list when the high risk has become high cost? If family doctors are trying to work within a budget, and even make savings, how can patients be sure that the doctors will do their best to arrange for the treatment needed by a patient, even if it means that the budget will be exceeded? Does not this development strike at the very heart of the relationship between doctors and patients?

Mr. Clarke: The doctor will be paid for a high-risk patient. Therefore, the financial incentive which the hon. Gentleman believes to exist simply will not exist. With regard to the patient's satisfaction with his or her treatment and service, we propose to make it easier for the patient to choose for him or herself. If patients become dissatisfied with the service they are receiving from one doctor, we shall ensure that it will be easy to transfer from one doctor to another. That will give a greater incentive to general practitioners to ensure that the quality of the service and the way in which it is provided are the best possible for the patients in their care.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Further to the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), I welcome the confirmation that cottage hospitals, which in Norfolk do so much for the care of the elderly, will still have a role to play. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, increasingly, their future will be in the private sector, but with beds set aside for NHS patients?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that many cottage hospitals have an extremely important future. The last one I visited was Bealeys. It is an extremely small, well-run, GP hospital, which has a secure future in Bury. I know that there are many cottage hospitals in Norfolk, too.

The cottage hospitals will, of course, be able to continue as they are now. They will be given, anyway, greater responsibility for their affairs, because of the general devolving of responsibility about which we are talking. It is conceivable that some will find that self-governing status is suitable for them. Some hospitals are run by the GPs as independent hospitals. It is that variety of provision which is best. People in Norfolk know best how to provide for Norfolk. The combination of NHS and private care provided in Norfolk in their small hospitals will make it much easier for people in Norfolk to decide on their care.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Minister agree, from his constituency and family experience, that people, especially the elderly, value district general hospitals and expect to go there—not further afield—when they are ill? Will not the right hon. and learned Gentleman's scheme encourage wider movement? Why should people from Newham have to go to Newmarket, people from Grantham to Gainsborough, or people from Finchley to Fulham? Is not such criss-cross market movement, even perhaps by motorway, completely incompatible with the wishes and the deep desires of the patients? How does he square that with the signed statement by the Prime Minister that the patient's needs will always be paramount? Does not that incongruity suggest that neither patients nor the Health Service are safe in her hands?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that patients look increasingly to local provision, which is why we have had such a massive system of capital expenditure to improve local hospital provision throughout the country, and it is much less concentrated than it was. When confronted with the choice of either speedy treatment 30 miles down the road or a long wait for treatment in their local hospital, it will be for the patient and his or her GP to decide whether the inconvenience of travel is worth the speedier treatment. It would be perverse to deny patients that opportunity to choose. We are proposing that the patient should make the choice.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell us about extra resources for patients who have come out of hospital—for instance, stroke patients—and need physiotherapy if they are to recover the faculties and functions they lost? My right hon. Friend will recall that Devon Members discussed this matter with him a couple of weeks ago. As there is less provision to keep patients in hospital long term—that seems to be a medical trend—the need for follow-up medical services and services ancillary to medicine simply are not being met at the moment. How does the very imaginative scheme that he has announced today compete with that admitted problem?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly, the services of the kind mentioned by my hon. Friend are every bit as important for the local community as services in the acute sectors of the hospital. I should make it clear that, when we talk about self-governing hospitals, what we are talking about in practice is the hospital together with the associated community health services, which we are used to seeing provided alongside hospital services, such as district midwifery and health visitor services, physiotherapists and other people providing service. We shall have to deal with the problem of stroke patients and others in Devon in our response to the Griffiths report on care in the community. We shall have to ensure that we are able to make the best and most sensible use of the resources available to carry on strengthening our community services.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have an obligation to protect the subsequent business. I appreciate the importance of this statement. I will allow it to continue for a further five minutes. We shall then have had an hour and a half, which is a long time for a statement, but then we must move on.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The Secretary of State began his speech by bemoaning the increasing cost of drugs to the National Health Service. Why does he not insist upon generic substitution for drugs

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

in the Health Service, or even—better still—tackle the problem at source by taking the private monopoly drug companies into public ownership?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that general practioners should prescribe generic drugs when the remedy is as effective as a more expensive and branded alternative. We have been encouraging that. The last time that I was involved in an attempt to move in that direction, with a selected list, the Labour party made the foolish mistake of opposing it bitterly as a wicked attack on a doctor's freedom of choice. Having seen some of the hon. Gentleman's documents, I believe that his party is at least moving in the right direction on that subject. We shall not force generic substitution. We are constructing a system which will give every encouragement to general practitioners to make a sensible clinical judgment and go for the less expensive remedy when it is every bit as effective medically as the expensive alternative. We are tackling that all over again, and I look forward to the support of the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that his proposals will be welcomed by everyone who has the future of the NHS at heart? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree, too, that the fact that patients will be given more choice and power will provide the best possible spur to greater efficiency, effectiveness and consumer acceptability? Does he agree that the only person to whom his proposals must have come as a bitter disappointment is the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) whose statements over the past few days have been shown to be so absurd that he no longer possesses any shred of credibility?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. I entirely endorse what he said. These proposals are for the benefit of the patient and every management or financial change of whatever complexity has underlying it the desire to ensure that the resources go to where they can best be used for patient care. The Labour party has no answer or equivalent to that. As my hon. Friend has said, I hope that the silly games that the Labour party has been playing in the past few days will be exposed for what they are.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Minister confirm that his proposals will mean the end of national pay bargaining, and that one of the reasons for him meeting in secret was that he did not want to alert the staff to that fact? Is he aware of the disgust at the decision to kick out the only elected members of district health authorities, which is just one more example of the authoritarianism of this Government?

Mr. Clarke: I have long been advocating a much more flexible pay system for the National Health Service.

Mrs. Mahon: We know that.

Mr. Clarke: We have introduced more flexibility for some staff. We have asked the review body to consider allowing us to experiment with more local variations in the remuneration of nurses where there are local difficulties in recruiting them.

Of course, we keep our present structure of pay bargaining, but I make no apology for saying that I think our proposals will encourage more flexibility, and the self-governing hospitals in particular will take full advantage of it.

We are altering the nature of the district health authorities. It is nonsense that, at the moment, local government has the right to directly nominate representatives on the Health Service. Many of them do very valuable work but, at the other extreme, there are some who are merely there to bring local politics into the decision-making process of the Health Service. In some cases they have been exceedingly disruptive and people working in the Health Service—doctors and others—have to sit and listen to discussions of subjects which are only dimly related to the day-to-day problems with which they are dealing with in the hospitals.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): In giving a strong welcome to these proposals, but questioning whether they go far enough, can I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to acknowledge that restructuring the system, replacing one allocation system by another or introducing budgetary independence does not in itself create net additional resources with which to satisfy the increasing demand for medical services of all kinds? Will he therefore keep an open mind about extending the tax relief that has been introduced for elderly people—which I very much welcome—not ruling out the possibility in the course of time of basic charges for hospital services?

Mr. Clarke: Plainly, we are injecting resources into the health system at the moment because we are reflecting rising demands for health care. Our proposals are not a substitute for more resources but are accompanying the extra resources which the Government are putting in from the taxpayer in order to make better use of the service. That is the way forward.

I do not agree with my hon. Friend on the general case for tax relief, largely for reasons which lie outside my direct province. I do not believe that the tax policy of the Government is to give tax relief for desirable forms of expenditure compared with others. We prefer a level of taxation which is low and gives the maximum individual choice to the taxpayer. However, the position of the retired, who often have contributed during their lifetime to health care, is different and it is defensible to say that to encourage, in the public interest, those people to continue in, or come into, private insurance is beneficial in effect for the general public.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to those hon. Gentlemen and hon. Ladies who have not been called that I shall do my best to ensure that they are given some precedence when we subsequently debate this matter.

Points of Order

5.2 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier, in response to queries from a number of my hon. Friends the Secretary of State said that hon. Members on the Government Benches had in their possession certain documents which could be obtained from the Vote Office. I am not suggesting that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was attempting to mislead the House, but what he said was not true. The White Paper was available in the Vote Office, but the abbreviated version distributed on the Government Benches—the idiot's guide to the White Paper—was not available either in the Vote Office or in the Library. Even the DHSS press office was unable to say when it would become available, although it believed that it was intended to be made available at the Secretary of State's press conference.

I should be grateful, therefore, Mr. Speaker, if you would inquire into how the custom and practice of the House came to be breached in this way, so that pamphlets printed at public expense were distributed on the Tory Benches but not on the Opposition Benches, and make sure that this does not happen again.

Mr. Speaker: It is not my responsibility, but the Secretary of State will have heard what has been said. I hope that it will always be the practice for the same documents to be equally available to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you also, if you are going to undertake such an inquiry, inquire why the document that was available to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was not also made available to the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is equally a matter for others, not for me.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Could I draw to your attention the fact that every Privy Councillor you called this afternoon and every spokesman for the minority parties immediately walked out once they had asked their questions? This showed their concern about this matter. The rest of us stayed for an hour and a half. Can you bear this in mind when you give them some sort of preference in the future?

Mr. Speaker: I also have to bear in mind those hon. Members who seek to make interventions from a sedentary position during a statement.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you suggesting in that statement to the House that those of us who may have intervened from a sedentary position will be penalised when you select on the next occasion on which these matters are debated? If so, a very important precedent is being set today. I have sat for two and a half hours in this Chamber waiting to be called. I understand that there are pressures on you, Mr. Speaker, but I hope that you would not penalise me for perhaps saying a word or two across the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Speaker: Twice during the course of the statement, when there was a great deal of noise while the Secretary of State was speaking, I warned those who were intervening from sedentary positions that they could not expect any precedence in being called subsequently to ask a question.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is pretty—*[Interruption.]* Hold on a bit; you may get reprimanded. It is pretty clear, Mr. Speaker, that you did not quite establish which hon. Members were making the noise, because the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), an ex-Minister, whom I would not describe as a lager lout, at his age, was swearing, I believe at the leader of the provos, and after about five minutes he was called. So you obviously did not carry out what you threatened to carry out. If you cannot carry it out for him, you cannot carry it out for us.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the whole House will agree that, when we have a statement by a Minister for which we have all been waiting for a long time, it should be heard in silence and listened to with attention and not amid shouts from a sedentary position. It is not good parliamentary manners.

BILLS PRESENTED

Channel Tunnel Act 1987 (Amendment)

Mr. Robert Adley, supported by Mr. Robert Hicks, Dr. John Marek, Sir Gerard Vaughan, Mr. John Home Robertson, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Nicholas Baker, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Peter Rost, Mrs. Rosie Barnes and Mr. Andrew Rowe, presented a Bill to repeal section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 17 February and to be printed. [Bill 57.]

Resale of Tickets

Mr. Menzies Campbell, supported by Mr. David Alton, presented a Bill to prevent the unofficial resale at unreasonably high prices of tickets to events to which the public are admitted: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 3 March and to be printed. [Bill 54.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Board) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Armed Forces Housing and Tax

5.6 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish a house purchase savings scheme for the armed forces enjoying the same tax relief as houses for owner occupiers and the same treatment under the Building Societies Act 1987.

My Bill seeks to tackle an injustice that has affected the armed forces for a generation. The present Government have a good record on armed forces pay. Indeed, they have applied in full the recommendations of the pay review body in every year since they were elected. But the core of the Thatcher revolution, the heart of the new prosperity, is the ownership of a home. In the country as a whole, approximately 64 per cent. of the population live in owner-occupied accommodation. Within the armed forces, among other ranks fewer than a quarter own houses, and even among officers the figure is below the national average. Moreover, those who do own houses have very severe problems in so doing, as I shall explain in a moment.

Let us consider the position of a sergeant major, or even a major, who retires after many years of service with the bulk of his earning capability behind him and without even the first toehold on the property ladder. A number of such people have ended up commuting the bulk of their public service pensions to buy the most modest little dwellings. Some have simply ended up homeless, and I have had a number of them in my surgeries.

A sergeant whom I know, who has served 21 years in the Army, including 11 tours on active service in Ulster, said:

"I have seen a corporal opposite me with eighteen years service and a sergeant with twenty-two years service round the corner evicted by bailiffs. I have three children at school. I do not understand why I should be joining the back of a queue behind delinquents and squatters for a council house after serving my country for over twenty years."

Had he not joined the Army, that man would almost certainly have been an owner-occupier rather than applying for a council tenancy. I have been approached by any number of former and serving Army officers—most of them worried about the men who have served under them rather than about their own position.

The way in which the Ministry of Defence has tried to tackle this difficulty has been to encourage service men to buy their own houses while they are serving. This has achieved much progress in the Navy and Air Force because most of their personnel serve in this country, but unfortunately in the Army just over half the trained strength serve outside mainland Britain. The problems of buying a house in Ulster are every bit as serious as in Germany or elsewhere abroad. The result is that for the soldier, unlike his civilian counterpart or his counterpart in the other two services, buying a house does not mean buying a home—it means becoming an absentee landlord.

Is it really fair to ask a young family to take on the burden of renting their quarters, paying the mortgage on a house of their own and trying desperately to get a tenant to balance the books? Even if they get a tenant, and no scheme can guarantee that, they have to pay tax on the rent from the tenant, but they get no tax relief on the rent that they pay for their quarters and they also have to pay agents' fees. The result, of course, is that the soldier rapidly decides that the best way to escape all the problems that arise, with or without tenants, is to leave the Army, and a growing proportion of soldiers are doing so. Premature voluntary release from the Army is now up 73 per cent. on what was already an unsatisfactory figure five years ago.

The sad thing is that it is going up fastest among the minority who have bought houses. Their wives simply get desperate. For example, Canterbury's own regiment—the Queen's Regiment—has three battalions, one in Germany, one in Leicester, and one in Tidworth. How on earth is a corporal in Germany or Ulster expected to make mortgage payments in one place and pay rent in another? His wife almost certainly cannot get a job as there are no jobs for wives in BAOR. What is happening in the Queen's Regiment, as in so many others, is that, as soon as a couple have managed to buy a house, the pressure is on the soldier to leave the Army.

The way the problem is tackled by every other employer I know who sends people abroad—including the Civil Service, clerks and drivers in the Foreign Office, teachers sent abroad, as well as the whole of the private sector—is that anyone who goes abroad lives free. As that would be unrealistically expensive for the Army, I am asking for a much more modest scheme which would cost the taxpayer very little. I am asking for a housing savings scheme to be established which would attract the same tax benefits that the rest of us get as owner-occupiers but without forcing the soldier to buy and then let a house. The particular scheme that I have put to the Minister—there is no time for me to go into details now—involves allowing the soldier effectively to buy a quarter, but not that physical building—he buys at a fixed national average price on an index, and when he moves out has to sell back at the new index price.

I have been through the scheme in detail with two building societies. They tell me that the index already exists in outline and that in principle they would be willing to lend against this form of security. The scheme would not cost the taxpayer a penny beyond the amount already available from the taxpayer if the man goes out and buys a house, but it has the enormous advantage that he is not under any pressure to leave the Army when tenant-related problems arise.

I do not wish to push the details of any one particular scheme too hard, but if we are to keep a modern Army together, with the lean recruiting years of the 1990s coming, and if we want to keep the best people in the armed forces, it is essential to introduce a scheme which allows service men to accumulate capital while serving so that they can own a house at the end of their service, with the same tax advantages as their civilian counterparts but without having a house hundreds of miles away that they have to try desperately to let. This is a very grave problem, and one which must be tackled soon. It is a grave injustice and also a foolish injustice because it is driving many of the best people out of the Army.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Julian Brazier, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Sir William Clark, Sir Jim Spicer, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Antony Buck, Sir Charles Morrison, Mr. John Heddle, Mr. David Evans, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Ian Taylor and Mr. Jacques Arnold.

Armed Forces Housing and Tax

Mr. Julian Brazier accordingly presented a Bill to establish a house purchase savings scheme for the armed forces enjoying the same tax relief as houses of owner occupiers and the same treatment under the Building

Societies Act 1987; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Wednesday 1 February and to be printed. [Bill 56.]

Orders of the Day

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

5.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I should tell the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and his hon. Friends.

Mr. King: It is a key objective of the Government, not merely to prevent discrimination but, much more importantly, to encourage and achieve genuine equality of opportunity in employment. The principal objective of this Bill is a moral one. It is to ensure that a person's opportunity to obtain employment and all its benefits is determined not by which part of the Northern Ireland community he or she comes from, but according to ability, and ability alone. That is a fundamental right of every human being. It is a major political objective of this Government to ensure that it is delivered in Northern Ireland.

Behind that moral principle lies a stark economic fact: that the male Catholic population in Northern Ireland today has an overall rate of unemployment some two and a half times that of the male Protestant population. It is beyond question that there are substantial and continuing differences in the relative rates of unemployment and employment between the two sections of the community —despite the 1976 Act, despite the hard work of the Fair Employment Agency over 13 years, and despite the efforts of many employers and of successive Governments to attract investment to those areas of greatest economic depression and those areas most severely affected by the troubles.

Nor is it right to think of this only as a Catholic grievance; discrimination against Protestants clearly exists as well, and is equally unacceptable.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Everybody would deplore discrimination, but to what extent is existing discrimination possibly dependent on the fact that outsiders would not wish to invest in those areas where they might feel IRA activity would render their investment less successful? Also, to what extent is the existing differential in levels derived from the fact that there is intimidation, particularly by the IRA, against people taking up employment opportunities?

Mr. King: I will say a word about the different causes, but my hon. Friend is right to say that those are two of the elements that contribute to this problem. I have never ceased to remind this House and everybody in Northern Ireland of the damage to employment prospects that terrorism certainly does.

It would be wrong for me or for anyone to pretend there is a simple explanation for these problems. There is no doubt that to some extent higher Catholic unemployment has been caused by discrimination. I have drawn attention to discrimination against Protestants at times as well. To

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some extent it is caused by terrorism, by geographical differences, by where people live—my hon. Friend drew attention to that as well—or by differences in education, family size or the skills traditionally associated with one community or another.

But rather than get bogged down in what could be a very long argument about the relative significance of each of these problems, I simply want to say two things. First, the Government recognise that the problem is a complex one, and therefore calls for a variety of different responses. Secondly, we are not willing to accept the problem as though it is in some way inevitable. In a part of the United Kingdom which has a rate of unemployment higher than that of any other region, it is essential that any inequalities are tackled vigorously; that those jobs that are coming are fairly distributed, and everyone has the fullest opportunity to be fairly considered for jobs for which they are suited; and that Northern Ireland should be seen nationally and internationlly as a place to invest where employment practices are fair.

We do not want the improved perceptions of Northern Ireland as an expanding region with a good supply of well-motivated and highly skilled workers to be tarnished by an image of unfairness in employment. It is not in anyone's interest—for unemployed Protestants, any more than for unemployed Catholics—that that situation should be allowed to continue.

This Bill marks a further stage in our determination to meet this challenge. We can go right back to the work of Sir William van Straubenzee, a former colleague on this side of the House, in 1973 which led to the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976. Much has been achieved since that time, but it is also clear that we need to reinforce our efforts if we are to get the improvement that we need. More recently, in 1985, we set in hand a major review of the situation, and the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights undertook a comprehensive review itself starting in 1985. In 1987, we issued to all employers a guide to effective practice, and in 1988 we established a fair employment support scheme giving free consultancy and financial assistance to introduce better practices. Indeed, many employers are already adopting the practices set out in this Bill.

I referred to the work of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. The recommendations contained in its excellent report have formed the basis for the central provisions of this Bill. The Government strongly endorse many of the views of the standing advisory commission, which have been of major importance in formulating future Government policy on fair employment in Northern Ireland.

I said at the outset, and I have always said, that there is no question of Protestants being dismissed so that Catholics can take their jobs. I have also said that the Government reject absolutely the proposal that there should be a proportion of jobs reserved for Catholics and another for Protestants. To make appointments on the basis of religion, with whatever motives, would be not only morally wrong but grossly unfair to those individuals who were affected by it. It would also be directly against the economic interests of Northern Ireland employers. One of the main principles underlying the Bill is that religion should be irrelevant to anyone's chances of obtaining employment.

This is one of the lessons we have learnt. Another which has emerged from the past 10 years' experience of the existing fair employment legislation is that simply to prevent or to avoid direct and deliberate discrimination is not in itself enough to ensure equality of opportunity between Catholics and Protestants. Disadvantage arises often from unconscious discrimination as well as from deliberate sectarian prejudice.

Established patterns of employment tend to perpetuate themselves, particularly in a divided society. This can very easily lead to the virtual exclusion of either Catholics or Protestants from a particular work force. Without any deliberate or malign reason, one section of the community may find itself effectively excluded from consideration when vacancies are being filled. One of the main aims of the Bill is therefore to ensure that, where necessary—and it very often will be necessary—employers take positive steps to open up their employment opportunities to applicants from all sections of the community. Equality of opportunity is not something that will happen of its own accord; it must be planned for and worked for, like other business objectives, and that is what a main part of this Bill is about.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The Secretary of State keeps talking about Catholics and Protestants. Should he not be taking about perceived Catholics and perceived Protestants and on the basis of which primary schools they attended? Does he not recall that there was a famous case in Northern Ireland when an individual complained on religious grounds, because he was a Free Presbyterian, of discrimination perpetrated against her by another Protestant denomination? Will the Secretary of State confirm that the freedom of each Protestant denomination to complain when it believes that it is being discriminated against by another Protestant denomination will be included in the Bill?

Mr. King: Of course it will be open to people to raise complaints about discrimination on the basis of religion. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has raised that point in an entirely constructive way to help to tackle the evil of discrimination, wherever it may arise, and not in any sense to suggest that this measure is not a sensible way in which to proceed. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. It has helped to make that point very clearly.

What this Bill seeks to do is to improve the recruitment and employment policies of Northern Ireland employers. The Bill places a number of new duties on employers and provides new ways in which employers can obtain the information and the advice which they will need in order to discharge their obligations as effectively as possible.

Part I of the Bill deals with the new institutional arrangements. In place of the Fair Employment Agency, the Fair Employment Commission will be established with considerably enhanced powers and a substantial increase in funding and staffing. Its powers will be to investigate and give directives for changes, if necessary, and to investigate patterns and practices of employment. The commission will have significant powers, but they are very much intended as back-up powers. I emphasise that the Bill's first aim is to promote a constructive working relationship between the commission and employers. The

commission will be responsible for drawing up the new code of practice, with detailed guidance for employers on how to improve their employment practices and to help them in that way. In advance of the new code, we shall make available before the Committee stage a preliminary draft of the revised guide to effective practice, which will serve in the interim period, in advance of the new code being available, as the first code.

The commission will seek to help employers to find workable solutions to their problems, and will be keen to encourage voluntary undertakings, in suitable circumstances, to achieve those objectives.

In addition to the commission, the Bill establishes a new fair employment tribunal, which will operate on the model of industrial tribunals. It will deal with individual complaints of religious discrimination, such as the one to which the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) referred, as well as with others that might more commonly occur. It will also deal with the enforcement of directives of the commission, or it will hear appeals against directives.

In this way, a new body will be established which will cover both the responsibility for determining individual cases and appeals and enforcement. It will be exclusively concerned with fair employment issues and thus will build up considerable experience and expertise in such matters. Another very important point that many people have recognised and appreciated, and one that is very different from the present situation, is that this body will be quite separate from the body that is conducting the investigations, giving advice and trying to help employers to meet their commitments and obligations. That will be the task of the Fair Employment Commission.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend able to tell the House that the Bill's proposals have been broadly welcomed by employers in Northern Ireland, whether they be Roman Catholic or Protestant?

Mr. King: There is a general recognition among industries and employers of the need for fair employment to be established in Northern Ireland. Many employers have spoken to me and have given warm general support for the objectives. But I am also aware that there are employers who are concerned about the specific application of individual aspects. Those matters will be discussed in Committee because there are concerns about the ways in which details will apply. I have found that the employers to whom I have spoken support the need for firm legislation and are determined—as people determined to work for the good of the Province—that Northern Ireland shall be recognised as a place where fair employment practices operate. However, there may be concern about details and those are matters that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will seek to discuss in Committee.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, and I apologise if he is about to come to this matter. He has implied that the commission will have a great deal of power and will be able to direct companies as to what they should do with regard to fair employment practices. Could he tell the House what these powers are and in what areas the commission will be able to give direction? Could my right hon. Friend be specific?

Mr. King: I may be able to help my hon. Friend because I am coming to the point about the duties of employers, when the matter will become clear. Part II deals with the new duties of employers. It deals with the duty to register, to monitor and periodically to review their practices to see if they need affirmative action. It provides duties and powers for the commission to assist employers and to assess how they are doing. It also provides for Government grants and public sector contracts to be withheld from defaulting employers.

There have been a number of misconceptions about monitoring. Monitoring is concerned with the overall pattern of a work force, not with the religious affiliation of any particular individual. There have been suggestions that monitoring will reinforce or introduce sectarian divisions. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), that is one of the employers' concerns. We do not believe that that is the case. It is certainly not the experience of those employers in Northern Ireland, both in the public and the private sectors and in the Civil Service, who are already operating monitoring programmes. Monitoring is a statistical exercise and any information about identifiable individuals is subject to very important statutory safeguards.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the Secretary of State agree that, when monitoring takes place, it is important that there should be a reliable degree of accuracy and that, where up to 8 per cent. of employees cannot be identified, there is an unreasonable degree of accuracy? Steps should be taken to correct that.

Mr. King: I am not quite clear about the point that the hon. Gentleman is making, but it is no doubt one that he can make in his own speech later or pursue in Committee.

In addition to the monitoring of employees that I have described, the Bill also provides that all public sector employers and private sector employers with more than 250 employees will also be required to monitor applications for employment, to cover applications to join the existing work force. The second important obligation on registered employers is to review their employment practices, to assess whether fair participation is being achieved and to consider what affirmative action may be needed.

The Bill does not attempt to define fair participation or to prescribe any particular levels or proportion of participation for which all employers should aim. What is fair must depend on the circumstances of the individual company. It must take account of where it is, the size and nature of the catchment area from which employees are drawn, the type of work involved and the availability of suitably qualified applicants.

In essence, what the employer must ask himself is whether, given all the factors and circumstances, the composition of the work force is broadly in line with what may reasonably be expected, or not. Does the composition of the recruits reflect the mix of Protestant and Catholic employees that might be expected, given the catchment area and the balance of population, or not? If it does not, what plan of action and affirmative action is needed to achieve fair participation?

Those questions require the local knowledge of the employer. There can be no absolutely right level of mix; it will vary from work force to work force and from place to place. There is no precise mathematical formula to

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recognise whether a broad pattern is roughly right, or markedly out of line. That is something that a fair employer should be well able to assess.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. King: I shall finish this point first.

Employers can call on the commission to advise on how the review should be carried out. The employer will also have the code of practice, which will guide him on the sort of changes that may be required in his employment practices.

I make no secret of the fact that that is not an easy or precise exercise. I have sought to explain to the House that there are different situations, as anybody who studies these matters knows well. Anybody who has studied the report produced by the Ford Motor Co. at Dunmurry, which analysed the complexities of the issues involved, knows how difficult are some of the issues that must be assessed. But anybody who studies the matter also knows how easily one can tell the difference between those who are genuinely trying and those who are making no attempt at all.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): My right hon. Friend says that the measure builds on the principles of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976. Will he tell the House how many proceedings have been brought under that Act and how often the authorities, acting under the Act, have made specific proposals for changes in the law? Are we simply going through a charade to try to ensure that we receive the MacBride money?

Mr. King: I did not say that the Bill builds on the principles of the 1976 legislation, but rather that it develops the approach to fair employment and tackling discrimination. The Bill carries it further. I would need to check the exact number, but not many proceedings have been brought under the 1976 Act. One of the criticisms that could be made of it would be that it was based on a voluntary approach and involved a declaration of intent. There was a lack of monitoring of that intent and people were able to certify themselves as equal opportunity employers. There was little monitoring to discover whether that intent was being carried through into practice.

We considered moving from the declaration of intent to a declaration of practice, which would be closely observed. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) may have been with us all the way through a succession of consultation documents and White Papers on the matter, and nobody can say that the issue has not been the subject of exhaustive discussion. We decided not to follow that practice but to lay duties on employers first to register if they employ more than 10 people—for the first two years, the relevant number will be 25 people. Once employers register, they will have to monitor the composition of the work force and they will have to submit an annual return. They will also have to review their performance and assess their progress every three years.

Mr. Budgen: How many proceedings have been brought?

Mr. King: That structure——

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend answer the question?

Mr. King: That is the structure that we have set up. It is a different structure. I have explained to my hon. Friend why there were very few actions and prosecutions——

Mr. Budgen: How many?

Mr. King: I shall find out the exact number, but I know that there were very few. The system did not work.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. King: I do not intend to be heckled by my hon. Friend. I have tried to give him an honest answer and to explain the background to the problem and why there were very few prosecutions or actions. I explained in my opening remarks that the situation was virtually unchanged since the introduction of the 1976 Act and following the assessment of the standing advisory commission, commissioned by the Government in 1985, the need for more effective action was identified. That is precisely why the Bill has been introduced.

What happens if the outcome of an employer's monitoring and review shows that there is a need for affirmative action? Such action is defined in the Bill as the adoption of practices designed to secure fair participation in employment by Catholics or Protestants and the abandonment of practices which may restrict or discourage fair participation. There have been many calls for that definition to be made more precise. At present, however, it can cover a whole range of different approaches, and we do not wish to exclude options that might be relevant in given circumstances by being more precise. It might depend on——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. King: My hon. Friend always seeks to intervene 10 seconds before I come to the point.

Affirmative action might involve widening the catchment area, removing obstacles that stop some people applying, the setting of goals and timetables of the ending of haphazard recruiting arrangements. It might involve the setting up of special training facilities. It might, indeed, involve the ending of displays of provocative flags and emblems at work or widening the range of schools contacted. The code of practice may include these and other actions.

I read the article by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) in *The Irish Times* this morning. He sought to find all sorts of problems and difficulties in the Bill and to pretend that the arrangements would somehow be more restrictive. He tried to make out that the Bill would make more difficult the lives of employers who genuinely sought to operate in a constructive manner. I found the whole article incredible. I profoundly believe that the Bill will lead to greater possibilities, and to more, rather than less, affirmative action.

The hon. Gentleman even referred to Short Brothers plc. I do not know whether he sought to imply that Shorts would not be able to respond positively to any undertakings that it has given, but I find it extremely mischievous of him even to have introduced such a suggestion into his article. I do not believe that it is true. I believe that the Bill will help constructive co-operation between the Fair Employment Commission and employers

who sincerely wish to address the problem of inequality. It is mischievous and damaging to Northern Ireland to suggest otherwise.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Does the Secretary of State accept that affirmative action in employment legislation is not the only affirmative action that is necessary to create fair employment? The best fair employment legislation in the world will not create another job in Strabane. Does he accept that figures produced in the House show that the two constituencies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland with the highest unemployment are my own constituency of Foyle and Belfast, West? Some of us do not think that that is a coincidence and believe that it is the result of action taken by previous Governments of Northern Ireland to starve those areas of investment. If we are to have fair employment, we need affirmative action that will encourage inward investment into areas that have previously been starved, in addition to good fair employment legislation.

Mr. King: I want to address the problem of all areas of high unemployment. Some of the most substantial investment has gone into the Du Pont operation, for instance. I know of the considerable expansion of Desmonds and of the other investments that have been made. I am also conscious that Foyle has quite unacceptably high unemployment. I am also very conscious of the problems of trying to improve employment opportunities in west Belfast, given that some of the activities that take place there are singularly unattractive to potential investors but, as I think the hon. Gentleman will concede, that is not to say that we have not been trying. The whole House welcomed the news of the investment in the old De Lorean plant. I leave it to others to determine whether that is in east Lisburn or west Belfast, but there is no doubt that that can contribute significantly to employment opportunities for many in west Belfast.

I accept the assertion that the creation of jobs must go hand in hand with the legislation if it is to succeed. The Bill will simply not work if we are merely transferring jobs from one community to another, and it must be accompanied by a general improvement in the employment situation.

Mr. Cash: Does my right hon. Friend realise that, although he has been subjected to some carping remarks, some Conservative Members wish to congratulate him on introducing a measure that will genuinely help the people of Northern Ireland in a manner that goes way beyond what many hon. Members have suggested, because the difficulty of obtaining employment on a fair basis lies at the root of many of the present troubles?

Mr. King: I profoundly agree with my hon. Friend. Of all the measures with which I have been associated, measures to establish fair employment and equality of opportunity in employment in Northern Ireland are some of the most important.

Part II of the Bill deals with the withholding of Government grants and public sector contracts from employers who are in breach of any of their major statutory obligations. Disqualification will be determined by the commission, if an employer has been convicted of failure to register or to submit monitoring returns or of falure to comply with an order or the tribunal. This will be a very powerful sanction, over and above any other penalties for which the employer may be liable.

Public sector bodies will be precluded from accepting tenders from disqualified employers and will require any subcontractors not to be disqualified. Northern Ireland Departments will be authorised to withhold financial assistance from employers who have been disqualified by the Commission. That will apply not just to grants but possibly to loans or investment. Those are tough sanctions, but it would be wrong for any employer who deliberately ignores his obligations to receive any such support from Government or public funds.

I have sought to deal with the main elements of this important Bill. We believe that it will have a real effect in improving employment practices in the Province.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The Secretary of State sounds as if he is beginning to wrap up. Before he resumes his seat, perhaps I can extract some more information from him. I imagine that every right hon. and hon. Member desires fair employment in Northern Ireland: it is not the concern of any individual section of the community. Every section of the community at one time or another has suffered through unfair employment.

The Secretary of State has said that certain encouragement would be given to ensure that a proper balance would be kept in accordance with the balance in the community. I am the chairman of the board of a leisure centre which employs about 140 people in an area which has a very small Roman Catholic community. Roman Catholic employment in that leisure centre is vastly higher than the percentage of Roman Catholics in the community. Those people were appointed because they were the most capable people for the job. They got their jobs on merit, because of their ability. Is there any suggestion that I should redress the balance by making jobs more available to Protestants to reflect the balance of the community?

Mr. King: If the hon. Gentleman reflects on his intervention, he will find the answer. As I said earlier, there has to be good sense in these matters. We cannot talk with absolute precision or lay down a mathematical formula about what should happen. He may have heard me say that a genuine constructive approach is needed. If that is shown, we are halfway there.

We hope that prospects for jobs will continue to improve as they have in the present year, and that that, and the effect of the legislation, at last will produce real and significant change in the differentials of employment and unemployment. The Bill is very timely. If the United Kingdom economy continues to grow, Northern Ireland probably has the best ever opportunity for a fundamental change in its employment prospects. That is the ideal condition in which to achieve a change in balance. We shall keep the operation of the measures under regular review with the help of the commission, and we shall undertake a major review after five years.

Of course I am aware of the criticisms of the Bill, on the one hand from those who believe it goes too far and will open up problems and cause ill feeling between employees wnen none previously existed, and on the other hand that it does not go far enough and has been too lenient with employers.

[Mr. King]

To the first I say that it is essential for both communities in Northern Ireland that we are and are seen to be a place where there is fairness and equality of opportunity in employment. That is not the case at present, and it cannot be ignored. As for the "not enough" brigade, led by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, they seem to want reverse discrimination, quotas on employers, and the abandonment of the merit principle. That approach has been overwhelmingly rejected not just by employers, but by trade unions, and by the vast majority of people in both communities.

I believe that the Bill has the right approach. It is a powerful measure that can make a real improvement to the whole life of Northern Ireland. It demonstrates without question our determination to promote real equality of opportunity for all the people in Northern Ireland, and I commend it to the House.

5.53 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which: weakens existing policies in pursuance of fair employment; fails, in the case of political and religious discrimination, to meet the minimum requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and the Race Relations Act 1976 by forbidding outreach schemes and training programmes designed to achieve equality in employment; does not cover those working less than 16 hours per week, thus excluding thousands of workers, many of whom are female; weakens the existing remedies available to individuals in obtaining redress against discrimination; fails to impose a positive duty upon public and private sector employers to pursue equality in employment; is equivocal over the issues of contract compliance and grant distribution to employers who refuse to adopt fair employment practices and procedures; fails to meet the minimum requirements for fair employment adumbrated by the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and which ignores the key recommendations of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, particularly with respect to the question of goals and timetables for the eradiction of discrimination in employment."

I listened to part of the peroration of the Secretary of State about the great period of expansion that will take place in Northern Ireland. I hope that the 400 people working at Harland and Wolff who received notice today agree with him, despite the fact that steel cutting is no longer to take place at Harland and Wolff.

Twenty-three years ago today, I took my seat in the House. The same day I joined the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster and enrolled in the Campaign for Social Justice. I mention that to show that I have been concerned with discrimination and inequality in Northern Ireland before and since it became a fashionable issue. From the early days of the civil rights movement, a number of Labour Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme), recognised that discrimination in employment was a major grievance which had to be remedied. Otherwise, we knew, the pent-up frustration and anger would lead to an outbreak of discontent. At that time, the Government of the day, unfortunately one formed by the Labour party, did not listen. The outbreak occurred and we are living with the consequences of the inadequacies of successive Governments.

In 1975 a working party chaired by our former colleague Sir William van Straubenzee produced a report which, had it been acted upon, would have achieved real progress. Instead we enacted a watered-down version, the Fair Employment Act 1976. The lack of progress by that Act in reducing the extent of inequality of employment in Northern Ireland has been fully established by the Policy Studies Institute. As the Secretary of State pointed out, the extent of the problem which has to be tackled has been demonstrated by the ratio of Catholic and Protestant male unemployment of 2·5:1, an appalling figure when we consider that the 1976 Act has been in operation for 13 years.

Mr. Beggs: The figure of 2·5 is often quoted, but I am unaware that there has been a properly researched investigation to prove it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will refrain from using that statistic until he can justify it.

Mr. McNamara: I suggest that for the rest of the debate the hon. Gentleman should usefully employ his time by going to the Library and reading the PSI reports. Those reports were funded by the Government—not a Labour Government, a Catholic Government or a Protestant Government. A non-sectarian Government produced that report and those figures. That is the problem.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): It is a liquorice allsorts Government.

Mr. McNamara: It may well be, but the Government are selling it off to foreigners.

The PSI research discovered that the Fair Employment Act had little effect on employers' practices. The vast majority of employers interviewed for the PSI study believed that the Act had made little if any impact upon their practices and procedures. Job discrimination was still thought to be justifiable by a considerable number of employers. Informal recruitment and appointment procedures contributed to continuing levels of discrimination. Investigation by the Fair Employment Agency did not often result in the setting up of affirmative action programmes by those employers investigated. Nor did investigations appear to have made any impact beyond that of the individual organisation investigated. Very few establishments were formally monitoring the religious composition of the work force. Very few establishments were carrying out any equal opportunity measures.

On the basis of the PSI reports, and the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights report, I had been looking forward to welcoming the Government's Bill as a significant step towards the resolution of that historic and well-founded grievance. In May 1988 I cautiously welcomed the publication of the White Paper on fair employment. I welcomed a number of the aspects of the White Paper as representing substantial progress: the introduction of contract compliance, the requirement to monitor, the prohibition of indirect discrimination, and, although I recognise there is controversy over this matter, the transfer of individual complaints to a specialist division of the industrial tribunals.

To that extent, I recognise that the White Paper is a significant advance on previous legislation. However, I welcomed it cautiously. I made it clear at the time that

whether the Government would be successful in reducing substantially the current inequalities between the two communities in terms of employment depended on the detail of the legislation that emerged. In particular, I stressed that the bench mark against which the Bill would be judged would be the report of the Secretary of State's Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights published in September 1987.

The SACHR report was the result of a remarkable concensus among the commission's members, who included the head of the Northern Ireland CBI, the secretary of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the ombudsman for Northern Ireland, the head of the Fair Employment Agency, legal experts, business men, academics and others broadly representative of informed opinion in Northern Ireland.

Unlike the brief and superficial dissenting view, the report made 123 recommendations on action needed to promote equality of opportunity. They were not a shopping list of desirable items, some to be taken from the shelf and others to be left there; they were to be taken as a whole. They constituted a coherent strategy. Remove one part of it and the rest is weakened. It is against those recommendations that we can assess the extent to which the Government have failed to deal with the problem.

The most important of the Bill's many defects is its treatment of affirmative action. It was the view of the van Straubenzee committee, of SACHR and of the Labour party that employers must be permitted and encouraged to adopt religion-specific programmes to remedy imbalances in their work forces. If they do not, or if the legal position is so unclear that they are discouraged from doing so, the legislation, I regret, will not succeed. Without affirmative action, the historic patterns of inequality cannot be changed.

There are two main problems with the Bill's affirmative action provisions. First, affirmative action is defined as meaning practices which secure "fair participation" by the two communities in Northern Ireland. That is meaningless because the Bill does not say what is fair. Nor, despite what the Secretary of State said, does it lay down any criteria by which participation could be claimed to be fair. Nor, indeed, if it appeared in a code of practice, would that be enforceable and ensure what was fair. It would be open to any tribunal to impose its own view of what was fair, even that were at odds with equality.

Does one assess fairness in terms of selection procedures or the composition of the work force; in terms of both or of neither? That uncertainty will at best breed litigation. At worst, employers will avoid legal controversy by doing little. *[Interruption.]* I give way to the Under-Secretary of State.

Incidentally——

Mr. Barry Porter: What was all that about?

Mr. McNamara: The Under-Secretary of State disagreed with me and I, being a polite person, was prepared to give way.

The definition of fair employment is not the one that the Secretary of State included in the White Paper, which instead defined it as action taken to provide a more representative distribution of employment in the work force. What we have in the Bill is even less than the definition that we had in the White Paper.

The second main problem with the Bill's approach to affirmative action is that neither the provisions allowing limited affirmative action nor the provisions empowering the Fair Employment Commission to require employers to engage in affirmative action are treated as exceptions to the duty not to discriminate directly or indirectly on religious grounds. Without such an exception, the duty not to discriminate takes precedence and the ability to take affirmative action is, to that extent, restricted.

The consequences of that approach will be disastrous. The Fair Employment Agency has in the past advocated, and on occasion required, types of affirmative action which might have been challenged successfully under the existing Act. For instance, the recommendations made by the Fair Employment Agency about training programmes for female staff in clearing banks in order to ensure fair representation of Catholics in senior grades would be of doubtful propriety. It was to be hoped that the legality of such measures would be put beyond doubt by the new legislation.

However, instead of resolving the uncertainty in favour of legalising the types of measures currently advocated by the agency, the Bill substantially increases the chance that they will be found to be unlawful. A number of measures currently advocated by the Fair Employment Agency are called into question, a point to which my hon. Friend from Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) will no doubt return if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Bill also renders suspect a number of measures that are clearly lawful under the existing legislation. Measures which have the effect of increasing the chances of under-represented groups can now be challenged for the first time. For example, an employer who gives preference for a job to someone who has been unemployed for a considerable time can now be challenged on the basis of indirect discrimination because that has the effect of disproportionately advantaging the members of the minority community. The employer would have to show that that practice was

"justifiable irrespective of religious belief".

The approach taken in the Bill is also incompatible with existing legislation in other areas of anti-discrimination law. Race and sex discrimination law in Great Britain enables employers to engage in equivalent types of affirmative action which the Bill would make unlawful. Employers are permitted to encourage members of under-represented racial groups under section 37 of the Race Relations Act 1976, or of a gender group under section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to apply for jobs and to provide specially targeted race-specific and gender-specific training. But under the Bill there is to be no religious-specific training. Indeed, last year, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 was amended by the Government to make it easier for employers to engage in affirmative action to the benefit of women, which they will now make illegal in the context of religion.

As if that were not bad enough, the absence of an exemption for affirmative action under the Bill jeopardises existing lawful affirmative action under the sex discrimination order. Certain affirmative action measures designed to improve the representation of women in the work force may also have the effect of benefiting a greater proportion of, for instance, Catholics than Protestants, or Protestants than Catholics. The Fair Employment Agency has recognised that in its report on the investigation into the

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Northern Ireland Civil Service. However, under the Bill such affirmative action for women could be rendered unlawful. Indeed, there is some evidence that clause 50 is in breach of the EC equal treatment directive. I find it amazing that the Government could have been so ill advised as to present their proposals on affirmative action to the House.

The effect of the highly restrictive, internally inconsistent and incompetent approach to affirmative action in the Bill is of considerable importance to industry in Northern Ireland.

The legal uncertainty over the scope of lawful affirmative action in Northern Ireland is already generating great confusion among employers. Some employers are willing to redress the inequality of opportunity in Northern Ireland. Research conducted by the Policy Studies Institute found that a substantial number of employers would favour special recruitment drives to attract members of the minority community when they are under-represented in employment. That could have a significant effect when one considers that 100,000 jobs change hands in Northern Ireland every year.

There was also considerable support among employers for special training programmes to increase the representation of the minority community in jobs where they are currently under-represented. Yet those measures will not be made unlawful. The Bill will cut the feet from under progressive employers, and it is patently unfair to them. The Secretary of State may disagree, but if it is religious-specific, it is illegal.

Nor should we forget that, whether we like it or not, there is an important north American dimension to the issue. As it happens, I do not like it. The Government's proposals would be taken more seriously if they had acted of their own free will rather than waited until international and domestic pressure forced them to legislate. I for one find it depressing and distasteful that international pressure should be necessary to oblige the Government to take action to uphold such a basic human right as equality of opportunity in employment.

The Bill will do nothing to reduce the possibility of American disinvestment. I am opposed to disinvestment. It would be a disaster for the Northern Ireland economy. Far from that being a mischievous statement, the Secretary of State knows that, ever since I had the honour of speaking on behalf of the Labour party on this issue, I have been concerned about what has been happening in north America. If disinvestment occurs, much of the responsibility will lie with the Government and their failure to seize the opportunity presented by the Bill. The extent to which the Bill constrains employers from taking affirmative action will increase the problems of Northern Ireland employees with commercial and investment links to the United States. There is a considerable risk of escalation in the conflict between the United States requirements of what these employers should be doing and what they would be permitted to do lawfully in Northern Ireland.

The first casualty could be one of the Province's major employers, Shorts. If the Minister thinks that I was being mischievous about this, let us consider the facts. If the Bill as drafted becomes law, it is unlikely that Shorts will be able to fulfil its undertakings to the United States Department of the Army. I think the Secretary of State is shaking his head in disagreement. Let us consider religious-specific training. I happen to have the agreement with me. It is signed by Mr. Stone in his letter about what Mr. McNulty had said. Mr. Stone was the Under-Secretary of the Army. He wrote:

"The company will design and implement what in the United States would be termed a set-aside".

That is specific for Catholics. It is illegal.

"Shorts Bros. presently has a total of approximately 7,000 workers. Turnover rate is about 3 per cent. per year, mear ng that the company hires about 350 new employees per year. As a baseline for 1988 the company expects to achieve a rate of 17·5 per cent. for Catholic new hires in relation to total knew hires. In 1989 the goal will be to achieve a rate of 25 per cent., and in 1990 the goal will be to achieve a rate of 35 per cent."

Shorts has also undertaken to the Fair Employment Agency to approach Catholic schools to encourage more applications from Catholics. These are specific and religiously designed affirmative programmes. These committments will be unlawful under the Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): The hon. Gentleman would not wish to mislead the House. The Bill does not preclude any of the legitimate outreach measures of the kind that Shorts and other good employers have already introduced. The hon. Gentleman may not like to be corrected, but I am sure he will welcome that reassurance.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Minister say specifically that firms may recruit percentages of Catholics in new hirings; that the set-aside as agreed in the Shorts agreement will be legal under the Bill in the terms in which it was agreed; and that Shorts may go to Catholic schools to encourage people to train? If he is prepared to give those three undertakings, he is then saying that there is specific recruitment for Catholics on a religious basis. On that ground, those of us who read the Bill and did not find that in it will be delighted to know that it is included.

On the other hand, the measures agreed by Shorts are seen by many as a classic example of the type of affirmative action that is needed to rectify historical inequalities in relation to the Bill. The prospects of other firms taking similar action are seriously diminished.

Mr. Budgen: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a difficulty in understanding the Bill and deciding whether it is merely a sham or has the teeth that he wants it to have is that all such questions are left to the commission? We in this House are not allowed to decide what is discrimination or how it shall be enforced. Wide discretion is given to the commission: it may or may not do the things that he desires.

Mr. McNamara: I shall be coming to that point later. There are certain actions which the commission would be precluded from taking, and clause 50 and the clauses relating to training, outreach and so on will catch Shorts and what that company has been doing.

The same provisions making Shorts' undertakings unlawful would have a similar effect on a significant element of a Bill introduced into the United States House of Representatives by Congressman Donnelly. It would be in conflict with the law of Northern Ireland if it and the Bill now before this House were adopted in their current forms, because clause 3 of Congressman Donnelly's Bill would reduce tax credits for United States firms operating in Northern Ireland which failed to take certain steps,

including the introduction of affirmative programmes designed to give under-represented groups better access to employment and training opportunities.

If the measure now before this House inhibits affirmative action to the extent that American employers cannot comply with the provisions of United States law, that will be yet more disincentive to the establishment and expansion of American-owned firms in Northern Ireland.

But, not content with turning the clock back with regard to affirmative action, the Bill also damages the rights of individuals to seek redress. It reduces the existing rights of those discriminated against compared with their rights under the existing Fair Employment Act. There are two major steps backwards. First, the level of damages is reduced. The new maximum will be £8,500, which falls well short of what the Fair Employment Agency has been awarding and negotiating on behalf of individuals under the existing Act. Secondly, the provisions requiring an employer to engage, re-engage or reinstate a victim of discrimination will now be repealed.

In other words, the Bill not only involves a retreat from existing remedies and is a repudiation of the work of the standing advisory commission; it also involves a retreat from the proposals published in the Government's own consultative document and in the White Paper.

In the consultative document, for example, the Government proposed the adoption of a form of contract compliance similar to that adopted in the United States. Under that system, contract compliance has the function of imposing on a contractor a number of "best practice" requirements which are additional to those imposed on the mass of employers directly under the rest of the legislation.

The Bill adopts a much more limited approach to contract compliance. Under the Bill, contract compliance has a more limited function. Instead of being a positive measure designed to promote the use of best practices in fair employment, it will serve merely as a last resort sanction to be used on those employers who do not comply with the minimum standards which the legislation imposes on the mass of employers. It has turned the matter upside down. This is an important retreat both from the Department of Economic Development's consultative paper proposals and from the standing advisory commission.

The consultative document also promised to introduce an explicit legal duty on public sector employers to provide equality of opportunity. Not only has that proposal vanished, but the Bill provides weaker sanctions against recalcitrant public employers than it does against private sector employers. When we consider that 13 local authorities have refused to sign the existing fair employment declaration and that public bodies have been the subject of adverse reports from the Fair Employment Agency, the weakness of the Bill is even more apparent.

The Bill also contains a series of retreats from proposals set out in the White Paper. I have mentioned one already —the affirmative action provisions—but there are more. The White Paper promised to help the individual by providing a questionnaire procedure to ease the task of gathering evidence faced by individuals complaining of discrimination. That is not included in the Bill.

The concept of goals and timetables for the reduction of inequality has also mysteriously disappeared during the preparation of the Bill. It is no good putting that in a code of practice which is not enforceable. The White Paper promised to make available to hon. Members a draft code of practice at the same time as the Bill was being considered. We do not have that code of practice. As the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) pointed out, we are being asked to buy a pig in a poke. That is what it amounts to. We do not have the evidence to reach some of the conclusions that the Secretary of State would like us to reach. That evidence is not in the Bill and we do not have the code.

Much of what should be in the backbone of the Bill is relegated to the status of secondary legislation. Not only has the code not appeared, but in a number of crucial areas of the Bill there is a complete lack of detail on which to form an assessment of the Government's proposals. Much of the Bill merely empowers the Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development to draw up regulations and orders in the future, after the Bill has become law.

I took the same view as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West on the right to silence issue and the policies that were involved with that. If we are not enabled to amend the legislation, we are weakening the power of the House because we either accept or reject the lot. In several major clauses of the Bill the details are to be determined in regulations. These are significant areas, such as monitoring, contract compliance and the procedures of the fair employment tribunal. When they emerge, these regulations will not be subject to the full parliamentary scrutiny that the Bill will attract. If the use of affirmative action can be so signally mishandled when it is clear that it will be subject to effective parliamentary scrutiny, how much confidence can we have in the use by the Department of those delegated powers when only limited scrutiny, without the power of amendment, is possible?

It is a contempt of the House that the Government should expect us to consider the Bill in the absence of detail about what the code and regulations will contain. The absence of such detail will effectively stifle proper parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill. We should remember that the Northern Ireland Office has considerably more autonomy with regard to parliamentary scrutiny than its British counterpart.

There are two possible reasons why the Government may have chosen this course of action. One is that they do not want effective scrutiny of the Bill. The second possibility, which is perhaps closer to the truth, is that the Government have not decided the details of the measures, even at this late stage, and even in the central areas of monitoring and contract compliance. We have no evidence to assure us that the Department of Economic Development, that poacher now turned gamekeeper, is seriously committed to bringing forth tough measures to provide full equality of opportunity. Nor do we believe that it is sufficiently competent to work through the detail, even if it has the will to do so. How else can we explain a situation where key provisions of the Bill have such bizarre unintended effects as to risk a breach of the European laws, and where such a measure came to be printed and put before the House?

Mr. Budgen: Will the hon. Member give his assessment, on behalf of the Labour party, of the workings of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976? My right hon. Friend either could not or would not tell the House about it. If it was obvious by 1985 that the 1976 Act was not working and that under the Anglo-Irish Agreement Her Majesty's Government had this matter brought to their

[Mr. Budgen]

attention, most kindly, by the Americans, perhaps the legislation would have been brought forward a little sooner. I wonder why something so important has been so delayed.

Mr. McNamara: I agree with the hon. Gentleman to the extent that I, too, wonder why it has been delayed. He is perhaps giving too much credit to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I believe that what so wonderfully concentrated the mind of the Government on this matter was the MacBride campaign in north America. All the hon. Gentleman has to do is look at the incidence and mounting of the MacBride campaign, how state by state fell to it, and how the money and reources, of which the Fair Employment Commission had been starved, suddenly increased as the momentum of that campaign increased. That is a good sign of the origin of some of the pressure upon the Government. That is why I find it distasteful. This is a human rights matter which has been tackled by a British Government who seized the opportunity when they saw some of the difficulties under which the Fair Employment Commission was labouring. Those difficulties arose because it was starved of funds until the time of the MacBride campaign.

I believe that the Government would have been better employed by saying to the Americans, especially when they had the report from the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, "This statement contains everything, and more, that you could ever want in your campaigning. It will not be voluntary and will cover not just north American firms but the whole gamut of employers and all investments. We will legislate on that and ensure that your campaign is as nothing." Unfortunately, as the Secretary of State said, he has failed to implement the spirit and the letter of the SACHR report. Because of that, MacBride will not go away, and will continue to spread like measles across the United States.

I believe that, if the Government are serious about fair employment, they should demonstrate their commitment by ensuring that responsibility for the implementation of the legislation should be at the highest level, in the hands of the Secretary of State and the Northern Ireland Office. We shall be tabling amendments to that effect in Committee. We do not believe it should have been left to the Department of Economic Development and the Minister responsible for industry because of the conflicts of interest.

We also believe that there must be effective monitoring of the new legislation, and a clear goal and a target for assessing its progress. The Secretary of State should ensure that an adequate administrative structure exists within his own Department to enable him to do that. Legislation alone is not sufficient.

My hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has already reported on how the inward investment programme is meeting this problem. Existing Government programmes and future policy development must also take more fully into account the equality of opportunity dimension, which clearly was not taken into account in the past. The Government have brought forward no effective proposals to ensure that this will happen in future.

Unfortunately, the defects identified above are accompanied by a series of flaws, which will be dealt with in greater depth in Committee. Some of them must be mentioned now, including, first, the most important section 42 national security exemption. The failure to provide clearly for independent scrutiny of the national security exemption is a glaring gap in the Government's proposal.

Let me give an instructive and farcical case to show the way in which section 42 has worked. A member of my union, a scaffolder, was employed by the Northern Ireland Electricity Service at Coolkeeragh power station near Derry. He then sought to transfer and get employment at Ballylumford power station. He was turned down. When he asked the Fair Employment Agency to investigate it, a section 42 order was issued to halt the investigation. He could not be employed there on the ground of national security. That was a very sensible decision to take, because in the meantime the scaffolder had been cleared to work at the Army headquarters in Lisburn, right opposite the GOC's headquarters. So much for section 42 and the way it has been used to hide discrimination.

The exclusion of part-time employees from the monitoring provision of those who work for 16 hours a week is another glaring exemption, for this reason among others. Some of them are among the poorest and most dispossessed Catholics and Protestants. The majority of them work for fewer than 16 hours a week, and many are women. The significance of this fact is all the greater when one considers that the eastern health and social board has 30,000 employees, 13,000 of whom are part-timers who will be excluded. The majority of them are women struggling to bring up their families. Whichever community they come from, they will not be covered by this provision.

There are in addition restrictions on the monitoring of applications, which is rather like the counting of green and orange trees instead of seeing what they can be used for to get some effective affirmative action. There is, too, the compromising of the independence of the Fair Employment Commission.

I regret to say that the Labour party cannot welcome this seriously flawed Bill. At a conservative estimate, it fails to meet more than 60 per cent. of the recommendations of the standing advisory commission's report. It ignores substantially the recommendation of the Fair Employment Agency and the Irish Congress of Trades Unions. In significant respects, it is less effective and far-reaching than the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act that it replaces, and it is even a retreat from the commitments in the less than detailed White Paper of last year. No doubt, in time, we shall discover what led the Government to back down from their commitments. Whoever is responsible has a lot to answer for. People will have to live with the consequences of the failure to create equality of opportunity.

If the Bill is enacted in its present form, it will set the clock back. For the reasons that I have enumerated, the Labour party has tabled a reasoned amendment. If it is defeated, we shall vote against giving the Bill a Second Reading. We shall seek to amend the Bill in Committee. Our motive is to ensure that the eventual legislation will achieve the objective of fair employment.

The Government are out of step, and unfortunately guided by considerations other than those which deserve the most urgent attention. The Labour party has been, and will continue to be, guided on this issue by the moderate and reasonable proposals that have been put forward by

the standing advisory commission, the Fair Employment Commission and the Irish Congress of Trades Unions. They will be our three bench marks. Our concerns are also shared by the SDLP, as is apparent from the reasoned amendment that its Members have tabled.

We are determined to ensure that the effects of the Bill are clearly and unequivocally brought to the Government's attention. There is still time for them to see sense. We are genuinely and sincerely anxious that they should do so. The Labour party believes, and is indeed convinced, that failure to tackle the massive inequalities between Catholics and Protestants will drive away north American investment, which is vital to the economy of Northern Ireland. That is why we wish to see it.

Today we should have been debating a measure which would offer hope to the poor and dispossessed in Northern Ireland that for them the constitutional road to reform could deliver tangible results. Beyond them there are the others who suffer the consequences of political instability and violence, resulting from deprivation and inequalities. Despite extensive research and analysis of the massive problem of structural inequality in employment, and expert advice on the responses needed to tackle that problem, the Government have chosen to present the House with a flawed and patently ineffective Bill. All those placing their faith, as I do, in constitutional methods of achieving social justice will be gravely disappointed.

We hope that when the Bill comes to the House for Third Reading it will live up to its proud title of fair employment in Northern Ireland. For the Government it is still not too late to amend many of the proposals. We hope that they will do so in the interests of fair employment, of equity and of the individuals who live in the Six Counties.

6.30 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I listened attentively to the speech of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and to his replies to interventions from the few hon. Friends who were sitting behind him. I remain totally unconvinced about the merits of this legislation. Indeed, it speaks eloquently of the Bill that at any one time at most five Tory Back Benchers had bothered to come into the Chamber to listen to their right hon. Friend and to show their support for the Bill.

Mr. Budgen: Support?

Mr. Kilfedder: It is already being pointed out to me that at least one of those five hon. Members detests the Bill. It is remarkable in a Parliament with such a tremendous Tory majority so few Tory Back Benchers should be present in the Chamber. Where are they? It is like the debate we had last week on Northern Ireland, when very few hon. Members seemed to be interested in the legislation under discussion on that occasion.

The Secretary of State might have strengthened what he described as the moral case for the Bill if he had announced that the Government intended to introduce similar legislation for the rest of the United Kingdom to combat religious, racial and political discrimination. Hon. Members should consider this carefully. I refer the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues, whether they are here to support or to criticise this awful legislation, to an article in *The Times* today by the distinguished chairman of the Runnymede Trust, Dr. E. J. B. Rose. He stated:

"The greatest single contribution this government could make to improve race relations would be to attack black unemployment, which is twice as high as the rate for whites."

He went on to offer cogent reasons why there should be such legislation, but there has not been a word from the Government about that.

Mr. Budgen: The hon. Gentleman is often more observant of American opinion than I am. Has he any information about whether the Americans have been advising the Government on the necessity of bringing forward similar legislation in the west midlands? As the Americans are so extraordinarily generous in the advice that they volunteer to us, they may have a view about the introduction of such legislation in England.

Mr. Kilfedder: I think that American politicians view this country as a place which has not only lost an empire but needs direction from the great and brilliant minds of Washington, who are no doubt helping the Government as much as possible—just as the politicians from the Irish Republic are guiding the hand of the Government through the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

I have the honour to represent the constituency of North Down where there is no complaint about religious discrimination. I and my constituents are unequivocally and totally opposed to religious discrimination of any kind in employment, housing or any other aspect of life. There is a growing anxiety among employees on the shop floor and in offices who have received individual notices demanding bluntly that the employee should state his or her religion. This creates grave disquiet among people who have worked loyally for firms for many years. They fear, no doubt rightly, that the hand of bureaucracy will be upon their firm and that in time they may find themselves out of their jobs.

The Bill is divisive in an area such as mine—I speak of no other area, as I know that there are problems in other parts of Northern Ireland—where good relations have existed between Protestants and Roman Catholics for a long time. I do not wish to see division, but I fear that the Bill will lead to increased division.

Mr. Marlow: Is there not a possibility—to put it no higher—that this confidential personal information could find its way, sadly, into the hands of an Opposition politician who would only too avidly give it full media coverage and all the confidentiality would be lost?

Mr. Kilfedder: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to that, but I will not speculate. All I can say is that those notices, which imply that unless the information is supplied the person will be out of a job, will create a state of affairs which will not help good community relations in North Down. I hope that I shall be proved wrong as I wish to see good community relations maintained. The future of Northern Ireland lies in Protestants and Roman Cotholics coming together—that is the way forward—but this legislation will not contribute anything to that process.

I should have thought that it was in the hands of the Government to do something to ease the position. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) referred to Strabane. I do not know whether he mentioned the percentage of unemployment there, but it is appallingly high. A few months ago I suggested to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that Northern Ireland Members of all political opinions should go to America to appeal to American business men to set up factories in areas such as

[Mr. Kilfedder]

Strabane, West Belfast or anywhere else where they would help to end the misery of the dole queue. That suggestion was not taken up. It is in the hands of the Government to create employment but, as the shadow spokesman the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has already told us, some 450 people in Harland and Wolff have already received their notice. The Government, by their policies, are driving people out of jobs.

Through this legislation, the Government are branding the Protestant people of Northern Ireland as religious bigots, in the eyes of Great Britain and throughout the world. I reject the charge. I believe that whatever legislation is brought forward should be designed to help bring the people together, providing jobs and more and better homes.

I am keeping my remarks brief to allow every hon. Member to participate—especially the Secretary of State's colleagues, whose opinions I am sure that he is anxious to hear. As an elected representative, I face three options. First, I could vote against the Bill as being a bad Bill on any number of grounds, some of them enumerated by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, who pointed out serious flaws. To vote against it, however, would falsely imply that I was against fair employment, which would be contrary to my political beliefs.

Secondly, I could vote in favour of the Bill, but that would imply that I concurred with the enemies of loyalist Ulster, who are delighted to have more ammunition to attack that part of the United Kingdom. Hon. Members may rest assured that people in the United States will say that the Government have been forced to bring in this legislation to deal with an intolerable situation.

I notice that the Secretary of State is laughing at the plight of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Don't be such an idiot.

Mr. Kilfedder: The right hon. Gentleman says that I should not be such an idiot. I am proud to have any nasty remark made to me by him, because I know that if the people of Ulster have to judge between him and me they will not go through the barbed wire at Stormont castle to applaud him. They can come to my home, as they do, and tell me that I am right, on this as on other occasions.

The Secretary of State may laugh, but the people of Ulster have had any number of Secretaries of State. Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland come and go, but they do not affect the lives of ordinary people much because they do not live in the community and are not part of it, and when they go they are forgotten.

My final option is to abstain, and on occasions such as this I regret that there is no Lobby where I can register my total opposition to this pathetic piece of legislation.

6.42 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): You were not present, Madam Deputy Speaker, when the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said that during Question Time members of the minority parties asked their questions and then left. As a member of such a party, I stayed for the whole of Question Time and am still here. When an hon. Member has been called, however, he sometimes has to go out on other business. Which would be the more heinous—to do that, or to absent oneself from a debate and then roll in to obey the Whips without having listened to the arguments or considered the impact of a Bill on the people whom it concerns?

I believe in fair employment. I gave evidence before the van Straubenzee committee. When asked my view on discrimination I said that it was biblical, and I stand by that:

"do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

If anyone present in this gathering claims that he does not discriminate, he condemns himself. Each of us must discriminate, whether in choosing a hat, a holiday or even, sometimes, a job.

Mr. Gow: Or a wife.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Yes—and some folk would have been wise to exercise more discrimination.

With fair employment, the merit principle must be paramount. Unfortunately, in the case of Northern Ireland, I am not convinced that that is so. Replying to a question from me on 3 May, the Under-Secretary of State for Employment said that he was not prepared to accept the merit principle in Northern Ireland. He dismissed our point by saying:

"while the system is appropriate in Northern Ireland, we see no reason to extend it to the mainland."—[*Official Report*, 3 May 1988; Vol. 132, c. 713.]

I had said, as the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) has said, that if fair employment measures were needed in Northern Ireland they were also needed in Great Britain.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I do not seek to protect only the Scots. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is disturbing to find evidence of religious discrimination in Civil Service organisations and in nationalised companies on the mainland? If the legislation is good enough for Northern Ireland, despite all the difficulties, Ministers should at least investigate religious discrimination on the mainland, especially in the public sector.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said, and I will deal with his point more broadly in a moment.

As I made plain in a letter to the Prime Minister on 17 May last year, I stand by the merit principle. I also said:

"It is my belief that you have been forced to jettison your long-held view that employment should be by merit, and that a need to appease republican sentiment in Eire, the USA and elsewhere, has led to you allowing other considerations to determine employment policy in Northern Ireland."

Why do I say that the legislation should be applied to Great Britain? On 15 March 1988, a headline in *The Independent* read:

"Blacks' work prospects 'no better than 20 years ago'".

The paper claimed in a headline the following day:

"Black teachers 'face jobs prejudice'".

I find a major discrepancy in the answers given to me by the Minister for the Civil Service about employment opportunities. For example, in the Cabinet Office, which should be setting us an example, 451 top civil servants' grades show only four from the ethnic minorities. In the Home Office, only 563 of the top 4,278 employees are women.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): I entirely agree that we need more effective action in Great Britain to deal with discrimination, and we shall welcome the hon.

Gentleman's support when the time comes to debate that. Is he suggesting, however, that it follows from that that there is no need to deal with discrimination in Northern Ireland?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the right hon. and learned Gentleman's ability to listen and to reason, but I did not say that. I said that I believed that the legislation should extend to the United Kingdom if it is needed in Northern Ireland on the grounds that we claimed for it. The same prima facie grounds exist in Great Britain as are set out for Northern Ireland. I am prepared to argue that perceptions are not necessarily accurate, because there are other reasons why people are employed beyond the fact of their colour, religion or sex—at least, I should like to think so.

I notice a conflict between this Bill and the recently passed Local Government Act. I query the logic of such a Bill. The Secretary of State referred to contract compliance and recently introduced legislation which outlawed councils in Great Britain from using contract compliance lists and questions to promote their policies. Yet the Government are introducing this for the private sector in Northern Ireland.

One way of determining religious affiliations in Northern Ireland has developed in relation to the schools of primary choice. As a result, there are Protestants in Northern Ireland who, for reasons best known to themselves, have attended Roman Catholic schools, and Roman Catholics who have attended controlled sector schools. They are perceived as Roman Catholics or Protestants according to the school that they attend regardless of their religion.

I recently discovered that an alleged spokesman for the Fair Employment Agency had claimed that many Shi'ite Moslems worked for Belfast council. I say "alleged spokesman" because the figures have not been released —Belfast council has not forwarded the report to the agency.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) will realise that perception can be wrong. I read a book in which he was described as the Protestant spokesman of the Labour party. In one of Alistair Maclean's books——

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman knows that I am renowned for my impartiality on all these issues.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I should like to be able to agree with the hon. Gentleman, but he showed his pedigree when he set out his arguments against the Bill earlier today. Impartiality is not one of his noteworthy points.

Alastair Maclean reveals the problem of perception when he writes about rifles for the Protestant IRA. Anyone who seeks to provide legislation to govern events in Northern Ireland should do so on sounder grounds than perceptions.

The basic assumption underlying the Bill is that, if there is an imbalance between the numbers of Roman Catholic and Protestants who are unemployed, the cause is always and exclusively religious discrimination on the part of employers. A bar owner in Sandy Row was approached by a man who said, "I am an Orange man, can I have a job?" The answer was, "I don't care if you are a black man—I am looking for a barman". A sensible employer will always employ the person who is best equipped and suited for the job. If he employed people purely on the grounds of religion, he would soon be out of business.

No doubt imbalances exist, but I query the accuracy of the figures cited even on the authority of the Policy Studies Institute. I do not doubt that there are more unemployed Roman Catholics than Protestants, but it is not proven that religious discrimination is the sole or even the main cause. If I am right, the Bill will not be capable of putting matters right. It will merely build up expectations that cannot be fulfilled and, in the process, generate more bitterness.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he does not believe that the high levels of unemployment among Catholics are due to religious discrimination. We should all be interested to hear him outline in general rather than anecdotal terms the real reasons for unemployment among Catholics in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I hope to come to that if I have time.

On 27 January, the *Irish News*—not a Unionist paper —contained the headline:

"Protestant graduates find jobs come easier."

That partially answers the hon. Lady's question, but the paper gives the answer. It is found in a survey conducted by two academics, one in the university of Ulster and the other in Queen's university—both of which have from time to time provided work for the Fair Employment Agency. The survey shows that of 2,000 graduates—56 per cent. Protestant and 43 per cent. Catholic—who started their courses in 1985, the two groups opted for contrasting higher education courses, which explains the significant difference in the type of work that they later pursued. The Protestants mainly embarked on courses in science, technology and health science studies; the others showed a preference for arts, humanities and the social sciences. My point is that the choices that people make—this was mentioned in Question Time today—will have an impact on their ultimate jobs and economic opportunities.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): Is the hon. Gentleman deploying the argument usually applied to school education—that Protestant children tend to receive one sort of education and Catholic children another? Does that continue through into higher education, so that one group is equipped to do one set of tasks and another group to do a different set?

Rev. Martin Smyth: That is not necessarily my argument. I am dealing specifically with higher qualifications. Graduates are a particular group. However, if the hon. Gentleman investigates the matter he may discover that there is a considerable difference of emphasis at different levels. I quoted the article at length to make that point.

To answer the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) further, the most striking example of the discrepancies that affect unemployment is to be found in the security forces and in firms that provide them with services. The report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, dealing with fair employment, stated:

"A further contributory factor to the continuing differences in employment and unemployment is the reluctance of many Catholics to take up employment

opportunities in the police and other security services. These forms of employment currently provide up to 30,000 jobs in Northern Ireland, amounting to more than 5 per cent. of total employment, an are heavily dominated by Protestants. It is clear that greater equality in the distribution of these jobs would make a significant contribution to reducing differentials in employment or unemployment."

The Opposition have already called that report in evidence this evening.

No one would argue that the employment pattern in this area is due to religious discrimination on the part of the Northern Ireland police authority or the Ministry of Defence. I have no doubt that the RUC and the UDR would be delighted to get more Catholics to join. I pay tribute, as I have done in the past, to the members of the Roman Catholic community who have served in those forces and have made supreme sacrifices as a result of their loyalty to the country of which they are citizens.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, because there is no open encouragement, either from the politicians who represent the nationalist community or from their church leaders, to join the RUC and security forces, employment opportunities are being lost?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I agree with my hon. Friend on that. If the jobs were taken up, between 10,000 and 15,000 jobs would go to Roman Catholics which would normally go by default to Protestants. It has been said that there are two and a half times more Catholic males unemployed than Protestant males. That may be so, but the problem is that we can find no evidence to support it. To the best of my knowledge, that statistic is not based on a monitoring exercise of the unemployed. So far as I know, there are no precise statistics of Roman Catholic and Protestant unemployment or of the religious breakdown of the total economically active. Table 3.2 of the SACHR Report estimates the number of Roman Catholics unemployed as between 40,000 and 50,000 out of a total of 140,000 to 160,000 economically active Roman Catholic males. It estimates that there are 25,000 to 35,000 unemployed Protestant males out of a total of 240,000 to 260,000 economically active Protestant males. Those figures are based on the 1981 census and I presume that the margins of error arise from the fact that 19 per cent. of people refused to give their religion in their census returns. The figures, too, are obviously well out of date. I cite those figures to show that our knowledge of the actual number unemployed on religious grounds is less than perfect. I am convinced that our knowledge of the reason why a differential exists between the two groups is less precise. If, as I suspect, that reason has in large measure nothing to do with religious discrimination by employers, supporters of the Bill will be disappointed when it fails to erode the differential significance.

Ms. Abbott: Since my first intervention, I have been trying to follow the thread of the hon. Gentleman's argument carefully, but he seems to be making two divergent points. On the one hand, he says that the figures are wrong, and that is why a huge level of Catholic unemployment has been shown. On the other, he appears to be arguing that Catholics tend to have a preference for studying arts subjects and will not join the police force. With the greatest respect, a preference for the arts and the classics, and a reluctance to join the police force, would not on their own account for the fact that two and a half times more Catholics are unemployed than Protestants. Will the hon. Gentleman elaborate his argument a little further?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I should love to elaborate on my argument. I have a fair bit of material and if I had your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on until 10 o'clock, although I reckon that the Whips would be sending me notes telling me to stop at such and such a time. I have made the point, and I hope that the hon. Lady will understand that I want to be concise. I have argued that the grounds for differences in unemployment are not necessarily those of religion. I have made the point that academic studies, personal preferences, job opportunities and such like have an effect on unemployment. I believe, however, that, above all, the unwillingness of leaders of the Roman Catholic Church and the SDLP to give a lead to people to join the security forces has added to the large number of Roman Catholics who could be in work but are not.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Does my hon. Friend accept that the statistics that have been used as the basis for much of the argument about there being two and a half times more Catholics unemployed than Protestants are part of the propaganda of the Provisional IRA and its political wing, Sinn Fein? Those statistics have not been proved, and I should be glad to hear my hon. Friend prove them. They have been trotted out as though they were true by hon. Members in all parts of the House without any proof.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. In answer to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), I was about to state that I am questioning the validity and accuracy of the figures.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): May I give the hon. Gentleman the information that he requires before he goes on to his next point?

Rev. Martin Smyth: If the hon. Gentleman can give me authentic information, and tell me where the statistics have come from, I shall be happy to give way.

Mr. McGrady: The statistics are contained in table 3, paragraph 1 of the report of the independent Policy Studies Institute dated 1987. The source is "Equality and Inequality in Northern Ireland: Employment and Unemployment 1983-85". It states that there are 14·9 per cent. unemployed male Protestants and 35·1 per cent. unemployed male Catholics, which is 2·4 times as high. There are 10·2 per cent. unemployed Protestant women and 15·8 per cent. umemployed Catholic women—one and a half times as high.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I am not arguing about where the figures came from. I have actually referred to those figures. I said that we had not yet had evidence of how the statistics were obtained. I believe that figures often lie as well as liars figure.

On the question of equality of opportunity versus equality of outcome, I understand that clause 12(2)(a) will empower the commission to issue directions to employers to take whatever action the commission deems to be reasonable to promote equality of opportunity. There is nothing in the Bill to indicate when it would be appropriate for the commission to issue such directions. In

other words, in what circumstances is it reasonable to conclude that equality of opportunity is not being afforded by an employer and remedial action is called for? Our only guide on this matter is the past behaviour of the Fair Employment Agency which is due to be transformed, under the Bill, into the Fair Employment Commission.

I believe that the practice of the Fair Employment Agency in past investigations of employment patterns has left a great deal to be desired. To the best of my knowledge, the Fair Employment Agency has always taken any divergence between the religious balance in a work force and that in the catchment area of the firm to be conclusive proof of the failure of the employer to afford equality of opportunity. In other words, if the firm's work force does not reflect exactly the religious balance of the working population in the catchment area, the employer is inevitably found guilty of discrimination. No other explanation is allowed.

That conclusion is arrived at despite the clear statement in the Department of Economic Development guide, which states in paragraph 3.3:

"Equality of opportunity is not the same as equality of outcome. Individuals have different qualifications, ability and potential ability. What is important is that everyone is given the same chance to offer their talents to prospective employers."

The guide says in paragraph 4.39:

"the fact that the proportion of a religious grouping in a workforce (or part of a workforce) is lower than the proportion of that grouping in the catchment area does not necessarily imply malpractice."

I stand to be corrected, but so far as I am aware the Fair Employment Agency has always assumed that if a religious grouping is under-represented, malpractice has been and is taking place. I should like an assurance that the Government will accept the principle that there can be equality of opportunity without equality of results. I should also like an assurance that an employer will not be pilloried by the commission for failing to offer equality of opportunity if the religious balance of his work force deviates by a few per cent. from what the commission deems to be the religious balance in the catchment area. In the past, one of the difficulties seems to have been that the Fair Employment Agency regularly moved the goal posts when dealing with a catchment area and the numbers that ought to be employed from it.

There are many other things that I should like to say, but my colleagues and other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate and there will be another time, perhaps, to deploy further arguments.

7.10 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am sorry that the Secretary of State has departed for his dinner. He must have thought he was friendless in this place, and he is well aware that on occasion I have expressed mild reservations about the policy followed by the Government in relation to the Province of Ulster. I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State will give him the welcome information that I shall be voting for the Bill tonight. It may be interesting to hon. Members to know why I am in favour of this Bill.

I have listened to hon. Member's statistical arguments. There seems to me to be no doubt that the 2·5:1 ratio exists. The only matter in dispute is how that ratio comes about. No one would argue that it all comes about as a result of religious discrimination, but it would be naive of anyone with the slightest knowledge of the Province not to argue that some of it comes about as a result of religious discrimination. I believe that to be the case, and if any hon. Gentleman would like to argue the point I should like to hear from him now. There is that problem; it would be foolish and naive to pretend that there is not. [AN HON. MEMBER: "Prove it."] I have been asked to prove it. I cannot prove it. I cannot prove the negative either. But we should proceed on the basis that that element exists, and it is the duty and obligation of the Government to do something about it. The Fair Employment Act 1976 quite clearly has not had the effect that it was supposed to have.

All that the Bill purports to do is to stiffen that legislation. Of course, there is an element in this legislation of public relations for overseas compsumption. Again, it would be naive to deny that. We would want North American money coming in and we would want investment from other parts of the world. And people in North America or elsewhere who believe, rightly or wrongly, that there is religious discrimination in employment in the Province which leads to more difficulties and foments trouble are unlikely to invest. So we are making the statement by this legislation that we are trying to do something about a perceived ill.

What is the matter with that? I do not object to saying to Americans or to anybody else that we are trying to do something about a part of the United Kingdom in which something is happening that should not be happening. It seems to me to be eminently sensible so to do.

Rev. William McCrea: As the hon. Gentleman is concerned about righting wrongs, should he not perhaps be suggesting to his Government that they bring in similar legislation as a matter of urgency for the coloured population on this side of the water?

Mr. Porter: I will come to that later. I can see the thrust of that argument and I do not disagree with it, but that sort of legislation applies to the mainland already.

My third reason for being in favour of the Bill is that it is quite deliberately vague. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) sees this as a criticism, but I do not. How could one prescribe in detail what will happen in each area, each place and each job? That would be nonsense. It might provide much-needed work for my hon. Friend, or indeed for me, in another guise as a solicitor, but it is not practical.

I was much taken by the Secretary of State's comment that the emphasis in the Bill is on voluntary action by employers rather than unnecessary penalisation. That seems to be right. I want the Bill to be given a fair wind to see how it works. The commission certainly has power, but this House has the overwhelming power, has it not? If it were seen that the commission was exceeding its powers and acting in an unreasonable fashion against the employer or the employee, or if generally it was not working well, the House could amend the legislation or put something else in its place. Surely, given the reasonable grounds on which the Bill is presented, we should have the grace to agree to see how it works.

The points which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) made were, as far as I could judge, Committee points, not Second Reading points. His objections were not fundamental. I thought that he would have the grace to say that the Government were trying to

[Mr. Porter]

do something that ought to be done, and then see whether he could amend it in Committee; and of course he would have the right, on Third Reading, to oppose it if it did not come up to his expectations. I expected more of him and I hope that he will think about this before the Bill goes into Committee.

I have certain reservations. I find it distasteful that people in the Province should have their religious affiliations recorded. That makes me feel uneasy, but I was slightly heartened by the fact that at least 80 per cent. of people are willing to put their religious affiliations in the census form anyway. Eight out of 10 is not a bad start.

I am also uneasy about whether legislation will make things worse rather than better. I have an inherent dislike —I am sure that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) will understand this —about whether legislation can make people like one another or come together rather than move further apart. Of course one is bothered about that. I do not want to see a religious relations industry built up in the Province in the same way as we have a race relations industry here.

Ms. Abbott: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the issue is not a question of relations in this field or of legislation to make people like one another? The issue is whether the state has a responsibility to intervene to try to ensure equality of opportunity.

Mr. Porter: The short answer to that is yes, it has. That is why, despite my feelings of unease about whether it will succeed, I say that, in the event of extreme bigotry, the state has an obligation to see what it can do to make that bigotry disappear.

My main reservation is that the Bill will not get at the root of the problem. Other people have canvassed this matter, and we have wondered whether it is a matter of the education system. I am reminded of something that was said to me in confidence when I was in Belfast last week by one of the aircraft manufacturers in the Province. They have been recruiting from schools of all kinds and have made a deliberate, positive and benign attempt to ensure that there is fair employment in the factory. I inquired whether reverse discrimination was practised. The senior man said no rather quickly, but the personnel man said that, there was a difficulty, because they found that, at the age of 15, 16 or whatever it is, there was a difference in the attainment level and qualifications of those from one sector of the education system as opposed to another.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pursuing this argument about educational attainment and the types of education available. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that if one section of the community perceives that it is excluded from particular jobs, the education they receive will adapt in order to equip them for available jobs, so it is the economic system which distorts the school system, not the school system which distorts the economic system?

Mr. Porter: I beg leave to doubt that. It seems to me on the evidence available that certainly one sector of the education system in the Province is deliberately chosen by that sector to achieve certain ends. I am willing to pursue that at a later time, in another place perhaps.

Mr. William Ross: Does not the hon. Gentleman appreciate, and should not the Opposition Front Bench also appreciate, that some Roman Catholic parents, for those very reasons, choose to send their children to state or independent education even at the primary school stage, as is happening in my local school? Those children are perceived as Protestants and are numbered among the Protestant population rather than among the Roman Catholic population.

Mr. Porter: I did not wish to put it in such blunt terms, but the hon. Gentleman makes the point for me. So far as I can judge, the verdict of employers is that the quality of entrant they get from the Unionist Protestant sector is higher than from the other sector. I state that as a fact. It is something which ought perhaps to be recorded and reflected upon by those who have responsibility for education for Roman Catholics in the Province. I am not being critical; I merely state, despite the fact that there may be only anecdotal evidence, that that is what I have found there.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has expressed concern about the Bill. Is he concerned about clause 7, which vests in the commission the duty of maintaining a code of practice and publicising that code of practice? It also vests in the commission the responsibility for taking such steps as it considers necessary to encourage—that is a strong word—employers to adopt the policies and practices recommended in the code. This is giving considerable power to the commission, in which Parliament has no stake.

My hon. Friend has said that Parliament can take action against organisations such as this. In my view, on no occasion have any of these quangos introduced a code of practice and Parliament has amended that code of practice. Is not my hon. Friend concerned about that?

Mr. Porter: Of course I share my hon. Friend's concern, but not to the degree of my hon. Friend. I do not think "encouragement" is a particularly strong word. We have had plenty of codes of practice for good behaviour in previous statutes. Perhaps this is something that ought to be explored in more detail in Committee.

I have said why I support the Bill, and I have expressed my reservations about it. I trust and hope that I will not be on the Committee because I might be persuaded by arguments from the Opposition Benches. We have a perfectly decent, honourable Secretary of State, who, after considerable thought, has introduced this legislation. This House would do well to at least give it a chance.

7.22 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): The House of Commons is a funny place. I suspect that the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), and I will be in different Lobbies this evening, yet I think he and I probably have more in common than I have with some hon. Members who are opposing the Bill. I hope he will agree on reflection that, although one cannot change hearts and minds by passing legislation, legislation can help to form opinion now and in the future. I suspect there is a great deal that we do have in common, but he will also remember that yesterday the House was discussing the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill and how best to contain and finally—hopefully—to put an end to terrorism. Conservative Members were even suggesting

that the Opposition are not as dedicated to the fight against terrorism as they are themselves. One important contribution which this House as a whole could make to stop paramilitary activities is to show an effective concern to end the conditions which provide a source of young recruits to the paramilitary organisations.

When I held the portfolio now held by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I did not have his knowledge of conditions in Northern Ireland; still less did I have the knowledge of hon. Members who come here from constituencies in Northern Ireland. But I set out to try to get to know some of the communities over there—separately, because, unhappily, they are mainly segregated. I did it without attracting more attention than I had to and I talked to parents who were worried sick at the thought that their sons, and sometimes their daughters, would be recruited into the paramilitaries.

Then I talked to the young people themselves, and it became clear to me that there were three factors which helped to make them into potential recruits. The first was that there were genuine grievances in the places where they lived: there were housing problems, there were unattractive environments, there was poor administration of social security and there was the withdrawal of funding for community projects. Above all, there was this spectre of unemployment, which for so many of them is with them from the time they start school until the end of their lives.

Secondly, and as part of the same syndrome, there was the lack of anything constructive to do; they had idle hands, which were at the disposal of the devil. Thirdly, among people in the minority tradition there was the belief that they were the victims of discrimination, that things were not fair. We could argue about statistics and whether it should be two and a half times, twice or some other figure.

We could take the point too that was made by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume)—that perhaps the most effective thing we could do is to provide jobs across the board in Northern Ireland, because clearly it is more difficult to deal with discrimination on a falling market than on a rising one.

I do not believe that any hon. Member would question the proposition that there is an imbalance, a very real imbalance, and one which, as my hon. Friend said in an intervention, cannot be explained by any one single factor in any one primary point. I have talked to people in Northern Ireland from the majority tradition. They will normally say that there was a problem; they will sometimes say it was a few years ago; frequently they will say that it is getting better—and they may be right about that—and they will explain, quite properly, that it did not always arise from conscious discrimination: there were all kinds of factors. It arose partly from the areas where factories were situated, from the perpetuation of a family tradition—if one's uncle worked there one was more likely to get a job—and it does arise partly from cultural factors in the educational system. It arises from all these things, but it adds up to a substantail imbalance and, if one is not on the right side of the divide, it adds up to a substantial handicap.

It would be wrong, of course, not to recognise that a great deal has been achieved in recent years. Managements and unions in some plants have worked very hard and have taken very real risks to try to deal with some of these problems. They have dealt with some of the practices which made Catholics feel unwelcome: for example, the display of emblems on anniversaries. I can understand the feeling that it is a human right to put them up, but all this had an effect, and many of them have worked very hard to try to deal with it. It was not always easy for them and, of course, it does not always pay to be seen as being in the vanguard. So they have not received the recognition which they might have done, because they have not sought it. I was speaking with some of them this morning. It is important that legislation should do what legislation can be reasonably expected to do to facilitate those efforts.

The Bill could attack those problems and at the same time demonstrate a real commitment to attacking them. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North that the Government have missed that opportunity. The Bill does something towards addressing the problems, but its defects are more in evidence than its virtues. They will increase as time goes on and as people see how the Bill works. I understand the Secretary of State's problems. Some of them are caused by those who sit on his own Back Benches. Whatever he does, he will not please everybody. There are others who attack the Bill for different reasons, but the Secretary of State has missed an opportunity.

Most important of all, because it is right at the heart of any fair employment programme, is the matter that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North about affirmative action. We can all agree about some propositions. I suspect that we all agree that it is not enough simply to provide that, in future, those who are setting on labour, or considering promotions, should not discriminate. As my hon. Friend said, affirmative action has been very much a part of everyone's thinking on this matter since the van Straubenzee report.

Those who have been discriminated against in the past are entitled to expect a programme that is designed to restore their position before everybody is given equal opportunities. The horse which has been carrying an unfair handicap is entitled not only to have the weight removed; if that weight is to be removed halfway through the race, it should be given the opportunity to make up lost ground.

Mr. William Ross: It is not the same horse. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is now speaking about completely different individuals.

Mr. Archer: I wish that were true. I wish that it were possible to draw a line between present and past and to say that the hand of the past will never be heavy on the present. Some examples have been given in this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) said in an intervention that the very fact that many Catholics have found it difficult to find work in engineering has created a cultural tradition in which they do not consider obtaining engineering qualifications. There are all sorts of ways in which the past sits heavily on the present.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: In the west of Scotland from where I come, there are descendants of Irish Eiremen and Irish Ulstermen. There are heavy engineering industries in the west of Scotland, too—in particular, the aircraft industry in which I worked. Catholics find no difficulty in adapting to those jobs in the west of Scotland, so why is

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

Ulster different? If the argument is about Protestant and Catholic schools, the fact is that denominational schools also exist in the west of Scotland.

Mr. Archer: My hon. Friend is right. There is nothing about somebody's theological opinions that reflects on their ability to carry out engineering work. However, the very fact that these problems have existed in the past leads to their perpetuation in the present.

If we simply provide that there shall be no future discrimination, then, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said, we may prevent those who wish to take affirmative action from taking it. That is a real danger, as the Bill is drafted. I am certain that the Government neither intended nor planned that, but they should be very careful that it does not turn out to be one of the by-products of the legislation.

The first part of the Bill imposes a duty on the commission and, through the commission, on employers to promote equality of opportunity. Clause 20 defines equality of opportunity in terms of individual applicants. One has to give equal opportunity to each individual applicant. Anyone who takes special measures to improve the competitive position of Catholics may find that he is in breach of those earlier provisions.

Affirmative action is discussed in the White Paper—I think that it is discussed rather better there than it is addressed in the Bill—and affirmative action is dealt with in the earlier part of the Bill. It is written, by clause 1, into duties under the 1976 Act, but we do not hear much more about it in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has already read out the definition in clause 53. How does that square with the duty to provide equality of opportunity for individuals?

The White Paper contained a different definition. It referred to

"special measures taken to promote a more representative distribution of employment in the workforce."

When the Minister replies to the debate, I hope that he will say why the Government have changed that definition, which would have made it clear that special measures were not intended to fall foul of the duty to afford equality of opportunity. It would have been better still if the Government had spelt out in the Bill, at least as examples, some of the steps that they were talking about.

Of course we all understand the need for common sense and a sense of justice to individuals; otherwise, we alienate the majority and cause a digging in of heels. We make it harder for those who are trying to make progress. I would not recommend a quota system. I would not suggest that employers should give preference to a Catholic who is unsuitable for a job over a Protestant who is clearly the best applicant, although, if I were pressed, I would opt for the American tie-breaker: when two applicants have equal qualifications, preference should be given to the one who has been penalised in the past.

There are all kinds of affirmative action that would not be offensive to anybody, such as extending and formalising the recruiting and advertising procedures, establishing goals and providing outreach training schemes. The Fair Employment Agency said in its reaction to the Bill—nobody pretends that the FEA has any political axe to grind—that it regrets that affirmative action was not spelt out, as it is in the sex discrimination and the racial discrimination legislation. Then it would have been clear that that kind of action was not unlawful.

I remember the arguments that we had over the MacBride principles. They are written on my heart. The Secretary of State, if I may remind him, said at that time precisely what my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North is saying now: that the MacBride principles would fall foul of the equal opportunities legislation. The Government said that the MacBride principles recommended reverse discrimination—even a quota system. Those who have taken the trouble to read them will recollect that they did no such thing; but they did recommend affirmative action.

It was said then that to adopt those principles would entail a breach of existing legislation, because they would discriminate against Protestants. The American courts gave fairly short shrift to that argument, but the question was raised by those who wished to discredit the principles. They argued their case in the context of the existing legislation about equal opportunities.

The MacBride principles became emotively charged for two reasons. First, as the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) reminded us, there were those who were prepared to see them used to discourage American investment in Northern Ireland. I know that Sean MacBride never intended that they should have that effect. What most effectively discouraged American investment in Northern Ireland was the very discrimination which they were intended to remedy, but, I take the point made by the hon. Member for Foyle, that nobody wants to discredit what is already happening in Northern Ireland; we do not want to discourage overseas investment.

The second reason was that the principles were associated with Sean MacBride. I understand that those who knew him in the 1920s remember him as a participant in the violence that, unhappily, affected the whole of Ireland at that time. I knew him as a man whose life was dedicated to the cause of human rights, as the tireless chairman of Amnesty International, where I knew him best, and as a committed worker for peace. I should be out of order if I embarked on a further vindication of Sean MacBride, but I understand why the MacBride principles evoked some of the problems and why they were not considered objectively. But there were those who fastened upon those matters because they did not want progress to be made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North is anxious that those who do not want to see progress made will fasten on precisely those problems. I hope that that controversy will not be reopened by the Bill. It will be bad enough if it provides an excuse for those who want an excuse not to take affirmative action, and it will be a tragedy if it deters those who genuinely want to address the problem—and there are many such people. I ask the Secretary of State to avoid that risk and to look again at the Bill, while there is still time, to ensure that the omission of those clarifying words does not defeat the very purpose of the Bill.

7.41 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Earlier in the debate, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said that he did not believe that the Bill had anything to do with the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I refer the

House to the answer given by the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), who said:

"Many programmes and measures have been introduced of value to all the people of Northern Ireland, including the minority, since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. Among the items which have benefited from discussion through the Conference are the establishment of an independent commission for police complaints, the repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act, new legislation aimed at full equality of opportunity in employment".—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1989; Vol. 144, c. 979.]

So the Government have put it on record that the Bill flows from the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It ill behoves the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North to deny that, although he may not believe in the truthfulness of the Government and may justify his comments because of that.

For many years a great deal of attention has been focused in Northern Ireland on the question of fair employment. We have heard it implied in the House tonight that if we had full employment in Northern Ireland, or at least if the Roman Catholics felt that they had their quota of employment, the troubles would cease.

I was late coming to the House because I was attending the funeral of one of my constituents who was murdered in Strabane the other day. Does the House really believe that if the man who lobbed the bomb into the police vehicle had been given a job he would not have taken such action? Does the House really believe that the gangs who gathered and stoned the police, the ambulance and those who hastened to bring help to the dying man would not have done so if they had had their quota of employment? If the House believes that, it fails to realise what lies behind the Republican violence in Northern Ireland. The House should face up to that.

The very people who killed the police officer and who jeered at those who went to help as the man bled to death, also bomb factories and places of employment and repulse efforts by the Government to bring employment to their areas. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) told me that the Republicans blew up an employment centre in Londonderry and then, when an election was being held, they used the tin that had been put round the wrecked site for posters saying "Vote for Sinn Fein".

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Once again, the hon. Gentleman generalises and implies that the struggle for fair employment is to give fair employment to a group of gunmen and bombers. We are discussing fair employment for the people of Northern Ireland across the sectarian divide. When the hon. Gentleman, rightly, uses emotive examples, he is conveying a different impression. I shall vote against the Bill because it does not go far enough towards what I want, but the hon. Gentleman is trying to make us adopt an emotive approach like his.

Rev. Ian Paisley: If the hon. Gentleman had been in the House earlier and had heard what was said, he would agree that the impression was given that if these people had jobs they would not be shooting, killing, maiming and bombing. That is what was said and I was dealing with that point. I too shall be voting against the Bill, for wholly different reasons, as will my colleagues.

There are those who have tried to give the impression during the debate that there is a terrible situation in Northern Ireland in which Protestants are engaged in wholesale discrimination in employment against Roman Catholics and that Roman Catholics do not stand a chance of being employed. The hon. Member for Foyle, who unfortunately is not in his place at the moment, mentioned his own area and made some remarks about it. If one quotes anything in the House from one section of the community, it is ridiculed by another section and vice versa.

I shall quote from the Fair Employment Agency's own report. The Fair Employment Agency was set up to look at employment figures in Northern Ireland. It issued a report in October 1980 on its investigations at the Department of Health and Social Security. It dealt with 21,000 personnel—and what did it find? It found that the largest part of that particular section belonged to what was known as the amalgamated general service grades. It found when it examined that section that 54 per cent. were Roman Catholics. Most people know that the overall population figures are about 60 per cent. Protestant and 40 per cent. Roman Catholic.

Although the figures that I have quoted are in an FEA report, they are often forgotten. I could give other figures. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive, for example, has 3,500 non-manual staff. The Fair Employment Agency was pushed by many hon. Members to look into the employment question there because it had been said that Roman Catholics were not being employed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The report said that in clerical grades the numbers from each community were very similar up to the age of 30. In that age group, there were 343 Protestants and 348 Catholics, so over half of the people under 30 years of age in clerical grades were Roman Catholics.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's speech. It is interesting that the examples he has quoted from the FEA report involve public sector employers. I notice that the figures for prosecutions under the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976 show that 55 per cent. of prosecutions for unlawful discrimination have been in the public sector. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the answer is to have a far smaller public sector in Northern Ireland and that the privatisation programme would be a strong step in that direction?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman should wait to hear the rest of the statistics. His argument will not stand up to them, and he should try to find out what Northern Ireland is about. One does not find out from the FEA report who was discriminated against, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that a member of my church who was discriminated against by Michelin of Ballymena received the largest amount of money yet paid out in connection with deliberate discrimination. We need to find out the number of Protestants discriminated against, and I shall come to that.

There was an investigation into the Southern health and social services board. In the district of Newry and Mourne 57 per cent. of all nursing staff were Roman Catholic. The FEA found that nursing accounts for the largest proportion and greatest number of Roman Catholic staff in the board's employment. It said:

"57 per cent. of all nursing staff were assessed by the agency as Roman Catholics."

Page 43 of the report said:

"The representation of Roman Catholics within the job category of nursing is higher than would be expected given the

ratios of Protestants and Roman Catholics within the local areas and higher than their representation in the other job categories of the Southern Health and Social Services Board. The proportion of applicants for nursing posts who were Roman Catholic was also higher than their share of the locally resident population."

That was what the FEA found in the public sector.

Now let us consider the private sector. The hon. Member for Foyle talked about the problems that he had in his district. Pushed by the Unionist representatives of Londonderry, the FEA conducted a study of employment in Londonderry. It looked at private firms, and concluded:

"Companies located on the City side employ few Protestants and even in the case of one large company on the Waterside, the level of Protestants is substantially lower than the population as a whole."

The City side, across the river, is predominantly Roman Catholic. There used to be a number of Protestants there, but they have been driven across the river, and the Waterside is now predominantly Protestant.

The study investigated six private firms. Lee Apparel (United Kingdom) Ltd., Londonderry, employed no Protestants at all. The FEA searched but failed to find one Protestant employed by Essex International, Londonderry. The three remaining firms were in the Waterside, which is largely Protestant. One was found to have a work force with 37·6 per cent. Protestant employees. The second had 33 per cent. and the third had fewer than 20 per cent. Those are not my figures. They are the figures of the Fair Employment Agency. I might add that no Unionist has any faith in the Fair Employment Agency, but these are its figures, nevertheless.

I find it very strange that Mr. Cooper, the head of that agency, has to be pushed hard before he will look into complaints from Unionist representatives. It takes him a long time to move on our complaints, although he is happy to move on other matters. The FEA's finding was that in Londonderry, where, according to various Republican civil rights groups, Roman Catholics could not secure employment, they had in fact so many of the jobs that in the Roman Catholic areas of the city no Protestants were found in the survey and even in the Protestant areas of the city Roman Catholics had the overwhelming majority of jobs.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Do not those figures show that what we need in areas where Protestants are discriminated against in employment is effective fair employment legislation—with which we could have been presented today, but which is not properly contained in the Bill?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I believe that the answer—some people disagree—is that we need jobs in Northern Ireland. The more jobs there are, the less of a problem there will be. What is more, we should involve ourselves in a drive to get those jobs, as when we have a super-abundance of jobs people will not argue.

I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) that certain sections of the community follow particular occupations. For instance, tiling and slating have always been predominantly controlled by Roman Catholics in the city of Belfast, who have always worked at that trade. No one argues about that. In the shipyards, a system used to operate whereby four people did the riveting—father, brother, uncle and son. In the early 1920s there were serious problems in the shipyards which left a dark shadow. These are matters of history, but the way to solve the problem is to get more jobs into Northern Ireland.

I represent the whole of Northern Ireland elsewhere and I represent many Roman Catholics in my own area. I have to had to fight battles for them in this regard. A Roman Catholic nurse in my constituency was discriminated against, and I had terrible trouble in persuading a Northern Ireland Minister to do anything for me when I pleaded with him about the case. I should make it perfectly clear that I am not talking about the present Secretary of State or his team. It happened to be a Labour Minister, who is a noble Lord, with whom I had trouble. I believe that people should be appointed on their merit.

I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West that it is difficult to know what to do if two people have the same qualifications. The employer must consider them with regard to the respective percentages that there may be in his work force. In areas where employment quotas have risen, however, we find that instead of tailing off, they are inclined to continue to rise, until Protestants feel that they will be pushed out. That is a great problem. People receive letters through the post asking, "Do you come from a predominantly Protestant area?" I saw such a letter the other day. One of the big firms in Northern Ireland is now asking, "Do you come from a predominantly Roman Catholic area?"

Let us consider the banks. The Allied Irish bank has connections in the South of Ireland. The FEA investigated all five banks—the Allied Irish bank, the Bank of Ireland, the Northern bank, the Ulster bank and the TSB. It found that there was a wide disparity in the figures—only 16 per cent. Roman Catholic at the Northern bank but 72 per cent. Roman Catholic at the Allied Irish bank. Apparently the two banks with many branches in the Irish Republic have a majority of Roman Catholics while the three banks with their main branches in Northern Ireland have a majority of Protestants. The FEA stated:

"All figures provided to the Agency show that in every bank the opportunities for Roman Catholics have been improving in the last 15 years."

That is a summary of what the FEA said about this matter.

I feel that the severe position of firms in Northern Ireland in regard to the idea that employers have to monitor the religion of all their people is serious business for employers. I receive many representations from employers. We were told by the Minister that the CBI agreed with the Bill, but after he had spoken members of the CBI spoke on radio saying that they agreed with nothing of the sort and were very concerned about compulsory monitoring and so are the employers and employees. Mention has been made today of the safety of all the details about the religion of employees in Northern Ireland. People in Northern Ireland are afraid for their safety and they do not like other people to know the details of their lives. All those problems arise in regard to the legislation. If we had more employment and better employment prospects in Northern Ireland, we would not be debating this business.

I accompanied the hon. Member for Foyle on a trip to the United States of America in an attempt to persuade people to invest in Northern Ireland. It did not matter where they invested whether it be Strabane or Londonderry, the east or the west, we were both pushing for investment in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman

was very fair to us when it came to creating employment in Belfast. I bear witness to that, and I expect that he would respond by saying that I pushed just as hard as he did in regard to other places. I will continue to do so because an employed people is a happy and contented people and we need more employment in Northern Ireland.

8.2 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) has produced selective statistics which nevertheless demonstrate the great necessity for the Bill. In spite of those quotations, it is quite clear that he will vote against the Bill.

We are considering a Bill which, in its content and its extent, must appear unusual in this last part of the 20th century. I am sure that not only in north America, but in Europe, parliaments will be wondering why, after 68 years of the administration of Northern Ireland, only tonight have we produced substantive legislation to correct an ingrained injustice in the community. For many years, successive Governments hid behind the excuse that it was the problem of the then Stormont regime, but that cannot apply to the past 16 years. One of the most disappointing features of the past 16 years of direct rule was the failure meaningfully to tackle fair employment. In that period there has been no real change by persuasion or by gentle coaxing of the main employers in Northern Ireland, and gross injustices continue to be perpetrated on the religious minority in Northern Ireland.

Tonight, I was able to quote an independent assessment as late as 1987 showing that the rate of Catholic male unemployment was 2·5 times as high as Protestant, yet that statistic was queried, as were all the statistics given tonight. However, an independent body, the Policy Studies Institute, gave us that very evidence.

I listened carefully to all the hon. Members who have spoken tonight. It seems that there is a reluctance to admit that there is a problem of job discrimination in Northern Ireland, or to confront that problem. It seems that we are pussyfooting around, to use a North of Ireland expression. The statistics quoted for and against the Bill make it clear that an imbalance is caused by religious discrimination. It must naturally follow that we should do something about it. I and my party hope that the legislation that we are considering will be that something.

It is generally assumed that bigotry in Northern Ireland is the sole cause of job discrimination and that the narrow-minded small employers in Northern Ireland are doing all the damage. But that is not the case. The annual report of the Fair Employment Agency shows, surprisingly, that the blue chip companies with headquarters here in London have made a major contribution to the imbalance of employment opportunities in Northern Ireland. I am referring to the banks, the building societies and the insurance institutions which are making a great contribution to the imbalance of employment in Northern Ireland, in addition to the ingrained and endemic bigotry that exists in Northern Ireland.

The problem must be seen in perspective. As has been said, the engineering industry and the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland have caused and are causing a great imbalance in employment. Tonight, some attempts were made to excuse or justify that on the basis of a predilection towards educational courses which prevent the minority from participating and seeking employment in those sectors. The reality is that, when parents bring up a child knowing that certain sectors of employment are cut off from their family, they have very little option but to advise that boy or girl to go in a direction where there is a possible opening at the end of their secondary or tertiary education.

Over the years, and particularly since 1976, we have clear evidence that persuasion and gentle encouragement have come to naught. That was the method in the 1976 Act and has had little or no effect. We must now have positive, strong legislation with the severest penalties for those who flagrantly transgress the most basic human right—the right to work. As we have heard tonight, we are debating an issue which goes deep into the communities of Northern Ireland and reveals many of the prejudices and biases that exist there. The Bill may be our last chance to create a meaningful piece of legislation to redress the problem. Hopefully, as with the voting franchise and the housing discrimination measures, perhaps the Bill, properly amended, will consign this problem to history, but it will do so only with substantial amendments.

There is an anomaly in tonight's debate on outlawing discrimination in employment, because legislation already exists which should have accomplished that. The Government of Ireland Act 1920 referred to and dealt with that problem. The Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 and the much-mentioned Fair Employment Act 1976 made discrimination on grounds of political or religious belief illegal. However, despite that legislation, nothing has changed materially over the years. The continuous household survey of July 1985, which confirmed the 1971 and 1981 census figures, instigated SACHR to commission a major study by the independent body to which I have referred, the Policy Studies Institute. Its impeccable statistical technology gives incontrovertible evidence of the continued existence of discrimination in employment in Northern Ireland.

There have been many attempts tonight to explain away the difference between Catholic and Protestant employment. I use those words as a kind of shorthand; I am well aware of the various differences. We have heard about different labour markets and class differences. We have heard about differences in education, attitudes to work, age distribution and family size. Then there is, in the "in phrase", the so-called "chill factor"—the unwillingness of one community to travel to work in an area where another community predominates. We have heard of the dominance of the Protestant community in security-related occupations, and there is the underlying black economy.

We have heard all those arguments and excuses many times before. The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights said that all those factors had been taken into consideration. Its final conclusion was:

"While all the listed factors"—

the ones that I have mentioned—

"are related to unemployment, a man's religion is consistently shown to be a major determinant in his chance of being employed."

I do not need statistics to enable me to understand what is happening and has happened in Northern Ireland. I live there and I have experienced the consequences of the contents of the reports that have been put before us. But anyone with an interest in fair employment who has studied annually the output of the Fair Employment

[Mr. Eddie McGrady]

Agency cannot come to any conclusion but that there is an endemic problem that must be addressed with some determination. I should like to think that the Bill, in its final form—I emphasise that—will be the vehicle by which that problem can be addressed.

Ms. Abbott: Fairness in employment is a difficult issue. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that all the legislation in the world is of no avail without a genuine political will? Is the hon. Gentleman confident that this legislation is not mere window dressing to appease American opinion? What makes him confident that there is a real political will to deal with the inequality of opportunity?

Mr. McGrady: I shall deal with that in some detail. We must legislate to enable equality to be achieved. The Bill does not go far enough. There are many positive factors in the Bill that we welcome. For example, we welcome the annual monitoring of the religious composition of a work force which will enable an overview of the employment position to be obtained. That in itself will provide a ready tool for investigation if necessary.

We also welcome the expansion of the Fair Employment Agency—the commission, as it will be known—with its enhanced resources of money and manpower. We also welcome the substantial fines that can be imposed on employers and the withholding of grants and contracts from those found to have contravened the Act. We welcome the prohibition of indirect discrimination. That was a major gap in the 1976 legislation. We welcome the obligation on employers to carry out a three-yearly review of their employment practices.

However, that is as far as the Bill goes. We must examine whether the Bill in its present form will have the impact that the Secretary of State hopes. If the Bill cannot be amended in Committee, it will be difficult to accept it as a meaningful and earnest endeavour. I listened attentively to the Secretary of State on affirmative action. He listed a series of possibilities, the major one being the code of conduct. I find it strange that we are discussing the Second Reading of a Bill whose heart appears to be missing. We are debating a Bill which contains a considerable vacuum.

Affirmative action is the central issue, yet it has been consigned to a vague and imprecise definition at the end of the Bill. That will not merit great support or understanding among the people whom we represent. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred to the protection required for employers engaged in outreach and training programmes based on religious connotation. Our amendment, which was not selected, refers to specific religious training. That would be appropriate for any work force, but it should have read "religious-specific training".

There are glaring weaknesses over grants and contracts. Withdrawal will be used against employers, but the whole matter is discretionary. There is nothing mandatory about it. In practice, all kinds of pressure will be brought to bear on those charged with implementing the Act. The measures should be mandatory, not permissive. Even more surprising, in view of the 1976 legislation, the individual complainant is at a disadvantage. The Fair Employment Commission will be unable to take individual complaints unless there is a matter of policy. At present, the Fair Employment Agency will investigate an individual complaint and, as it were, run with it to its successful or unsuccessful conclusion.

In addition, the individual is being put into an adversarial environment before a tribunal. Let us be practical: an individual complaining about discrimination, either because he has not been given a job or is not getting promotion, or whatever, will be reluctant to take that courageous step against his employer. Under this legislation, he will face a variety of barristers and experts, which is not the case at the moment. Even if he wins, the maximum compensation will be £8,500. If he is not entitled to legal aid, he will have to judge whether it is worth his while to proceed, despite any injustice he may have suffered.

The targets and goals that were so much a feature of the White Paper appear nowhere in the Bill. I attempted to intervene when the Secretary of State talked about monitoring applications. The figure used will apply only to work forces of 250 and over. A sizeable proportion of the work force in Northern Ireland is employed by companies with fewer than 250 employees. Therefore, an enormous number of employers—I do not have statistics to show whether they comprise the majority of employers—will be able to excuse themselves from monitoring applications of their work force every three years. There are also imprecise definitions of "indirect discrimination" and the way in which that concept will be perceived when the Bill has completed its passage through Parliament.

We are concerned about the charges of discrimination that will be excepted from investigation, in view of the Secretary of State's intervention under section 42. While I do not want to bandy words with him on this issue now, my personal experience causes me concern lest section 42 has been misapplied. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North gave an example. The Secretary of State is aware of a sub judice case involving a large employer which is obviously a serious matter.

Whatever mechanism is found, there must be some appeal procedure. At the end of the day it must be possible for an individual or company to say, "I have been found guilty without trial of being a national security risk. What is this all about? May I make a submission on my own behalf?"

We are greatly concerned about the whole area of orders and regulations. They are too numerous for me to deal with in detail now. A plethora of instruments will be left to the Department of Economic Development, including the code of practice. It is wrong that all the matters which those instruments cover should be left to a period following debate in this House. They should be before us at least in draft form.

Hon. Members have spoken of the neutrality, as we call it, of the workplace. That issue was raised substantively in the White Paper, but it seems to have disappeared. Neutrality of the workplace is an essential factor in creating conditions by which equality of opportunity can be implemented. For example, in the marching season in Northern Ireland the workplace is where neutrality must exist, for it is the place where the two communities can be harnessed—where they can work together and not oppose each other. Just like the home, the workplace is a vital area for community relations.

I have given a long list of grave deficiencies in the Bill. I could go on with my shopping list, but I will not do so now. We have before us an opportunity—one might say

almost a last opportunity—to do something finally about discrimination in Northern Ireland. It will not be a meaningful measure unless it is considerably amended. Indeed, if it is not amended, it will be a sign—perhaps unintentionally—of a lack of interest on the part of the Government to listen to constructive criticism and heed well-argued reasons change. It will also question the good faith of the Government in wanting to solve the problem once and for all. I hope that in Committee the Government will respond to these criticisms and make the major changes in the Bill.

There is an essential requirement on the Government outside the Bill, and many hon. Members have referred to it. The whole issue of training for industry needs urgent consideration by the Government. They must also consider the location of training schools, for their present locations leave much to be desired. While we want inward investment into Northern Ireland, hopefully from abroad, we should remember that a great factor in discrimination terms in recent years has been the location of industry.

I must tell the Minister that at this time public bodies under his jurisdiction are guilty of discriminating in the location of industry. That happens on a daily basis, when officers of the Industrial Development Board and the Local Enterprise Development Unit misdirect firms away from areas, presumably for political reasons—and for "political reasons" one can read "religious reasons". If the Minister wants evidence of that, I will be pleased to give it to him privately. It is important that the location of new industries or the expansion of existing ones takes place on a fair basis; otherwise, the problem of discrimination will not be resolved.

My party hopes that, when replying, the Minister will comment on the points I have made. In particular, will he assure us that, in Committee, the Bill will be amended to take account of many of the shortcomings to which I have referred? If that does not happen, the Bill will be useless for the purpose for which it is intended and will be rejected by the disadvantaged people in the North as a meaningless exercise.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Less than an hour remains before the Front Bench speakers will be hoping to catch my eye to wind up. Many hon. Members still wish to speak, so I hope that those who are called, out of consideration for others, will be brief.

8.27 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): When the Secretary of State moved the Second Reading, he said that he was in favour of equality of opportunity in employment. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said precisely the same. My hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) made the same point, and it was also made by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth).

That shows that we have in all parts of the House a commitment to the principle of equality of opportunity in employment in Northern Ireland. There, one may think, the unanimity ceases, because despite that unanimous commitment to a single purpose, it is clear that the Opposition parties will vote against the Second Reading tonight.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): No.

Mr. Gow: We have not yet heard from the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). We shall see what happens.

I remember how, 13 or more years ago, the House voted for a Bill, introduced by the then Labour Government, which is now the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and I voted in favour of the Second Reading and Third Reading of that Bill. We meet this evening to debate the Second Reading of this measure because of a perceived failure of the 1976 Act, which was passed through the House with the support of the Conservative party for the then Labour Government.

We may mark the words of the White Paper which preceded the Bill, because in order to establish the extent to which the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976 was successful, the Government set up their review in 1985. This is what we read in the White Paper:

"the Government's statistical review revealed that the differential employment experience of the two communities was enduring, despite these extensive statutory provisions and the solid work of the Agency".

The agency, of course, under the Bill, is to be replaced, possibly in deference to the European Community, by a commission. The question which we are entitled to ask ourselves is whether my right hon. Friend believes that the 1976 Act has made matters better or worse. Has the equality of opportunity which all parts of the House desire been assisted or hindered by the 1976 Act? If the answer is that things are really no better in 1989 than they were in 1976, one may wonder why the House is being asked to replace, in effect, the 1976 Act, with further legislation if the existing legislation has not had the desired effect.

I had considerable sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South when he said that, in a sense, the whole of life is about discrimination. It would be possible to argue that, in selecting the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North as the shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the leader of the Labour party was discriminating against all other candidates for the job. I am making an assertion that, in a sense, the whole of life is about discrimination.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), who has been diligent in her attendance as usual, might assert that there is unlawful, improper or unwise discrimination by the electorate, or the "selectorate" in this country because of the small number of women who are Members of this place. It is certainly an act of discrimination because, if the kind of parity which is envisaged in this Bill had been applied to women, and for all I know the number of Roman Catholics in this place, then it would be possible to argue that discrimination is proceeding all the time.

Ms. Abbott: I simply make the point that there seems to be a semantic problem here. The hon. Gentleman, with an uncharacteristic lack of precision in the use of language, is confusing the notion of individual personal judgment with the notion of discrimination, which to my mind, and certainly in recent political discourse, involves large groups of people as a whole being substantially and provably economically disadvantaged.

The hon. Gentleman cannot equate my personal choice to wear a pink jumper as opposed to a blue one in the House this evening with substantial economic disadvantage among tens of thousands and sometimes millions of people. If the hon. Gentleman is advancing a serious

[Ms. Abbott]

argument, which I believe he is, he will do us the service of not confusing personal judgment and taste with massive economic discrimination and the political consequences which follow.

Mr. Gow: I shall not follow the hon. Lady, although I am glad that I gave way to her. The point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South that, where there is inequality of opportunity—I repeat that I wish to see equality of opportunity—the belief that such inequality can best be removed by an Act of Parliament is not proven. There are large areas of employment in Northern Ireland where there is inequality of opportunity, but it is not caused by the lack of legislative provision.

I will give just two illustrations. It is possibly a matter of regret to other hon. Members in the Chamber that there is a massive inequality of religious belief among those who are currently employed as soldiers in the Ulster Defence Regiment and those who are employed as policemen in the Royal Ulster Constabulary. But I assert that it is not the absence of legislation that has led to that differential. Indeed, I believe that there is a danger that the Bill will make matters worse.

Here we are proposing to set up a Fair Employment Commission and a fair employment tribunal. We are involving the Department of Economic Development and talking about the involvement of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights. We are proposing to spend another £900,000 a year and we shall take on a total of 34 additional employees. I do not know whether those employees are going to work in Massey avenue. I ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, who will reply to the debate, to determine how many of those additional 34 employees will be taken on by the commission or the tribunal in Northern Ireland and how we shall determine the correct proportion of Roman Catholics and Protestants, or Jews or atheists among those employees.

Can we legislate for this matter? How can we define in any meaningful sense a travel-to-work area? When we have had the annual monitoring returns from the public and private sector, how will we say that an employer in a particular area should have fewer Protestants and more Roman Catholics? It is self-evident from my right hon. Friend's speech that, even if the Bill achieves its most benign effect, we shall not see an overall diminution in the number of people who are unemployed. We may be able to spin it out rather differently so that in some parts of Northern Ireland there will be more Protestants in work and more Roman Catholics out of work. The most benign result may be that in some other parts of the kingdom more Roman Catholics are in work.

What we really should be addressing our minds to is how we can get more jobs in Northern Ireland. Of course, we are debating the Bill because the survey showed that, pro rata, more Roman Catholics than Protestants were without a job. So that is the issue to which we should be addressing our minds.

You will have gathered, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my serious reservations about the ability of legislation to improve perceived discrimination. I repeat my opening words: I am in favour of equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland. [HON. MEMBERS: "How will you do it?"] I voted in favour of what was then the 1975 Bill. I will vote in favour of this Bill tonight, because, despite my serious reservations, I approve of the purpose and the policy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the purpose and policy set out in the Bill. If one has reservations about legislation which is before the House, one is at least able to show that in the Division Lobby. Tonight I shall give the Government the benefit of the doubt.

8.39 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), as one always does, but the most interesting part of his speech was at the end when, having expressed all those warm sentiments about removing discrimination in Northern Ireland, he was asked what he would do about it and the answer was nothing.

Any piece of legislation that deals with the difficult issue of discrimination always comes up against the practical aspects of how these things will be judged, and against the problems over which lawyers will always wrestle as to how one legislates for one person to like or love another, and how to express fairness. Of course, we all know that we cannot do that perfectly. No piece of legislation that deals with discrimination has ever done it perfectly. But the fact that the legislation is there provides a bulwark and a backdrop for people to have the legitimate correction of a complaint.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 is imperfect in its actions, but its existence helps to act as a bulwark againt sex discrimination. No doubt the same is true of the racial discrimination legislation. Certainly the experience in the United States of America is that where there is legislation in all sorts of areas, even relating to discriminatory discounts for small firms, such as the Robinson Patman measure, it is a help. It may be ineffective as a counsel of perfection in its ultimate jurisdiction and in the way it is carried through, but its very existence helps to solve the problem.

Surely that is the way in which we should be dealing with this matter. It has been said that all the Opposition parties intend to vote against the legislation tonight, but we shall not do that. We shall vote for the Bill, with caveats, many of them listed in the Labour party amendment, about provisions which are inadequate. We must remember that this is a Second Reading debate, dealing with principle. That principle requires a piece of legislation which tackles discrimination to be considered by the House. We all know that on many occasions when we try to make amendments in Committee the Government refuse them. Committees are being reduced to a farce because the Government do not listen to the arguments, but on this occasion we must give the Government the benefit of the doubt.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who has made such a significant contribution to Northern Ireland debates, gave the White Paper a qualified recommendation. He listed a number of key questions which have remained unanswered. His excellent speech bears re-reading now. Nevertheless, the legislation is an attempt to address a serious problem in Northern Ireland so we shall give it a qualified welcome. We are prepared to give it a Second Reading.

There is little change in what we see before us and what was recommended in the White Paper. A number of questions spring to mind, some of them articulated in the

Labour party amendment for which we shall vote. It will fail, of course. If it does, we shall vote for the Bill and argue the case later for the amendments.

Other amendments are worth mentioning. I make no apology for the fact that they were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Mossley Hill when he considered the White Paper. I am sorry that they have not been taken into account. It is important that the question of penalties should be addressed. A £2,000 penalty is adequate for non-registration, but it is not adequate if we are dealing with deliberate misinformation in the case of very large contracts. For instance, in a contract valued at £500,000, a fine of £2,000 for deliberate misinformation would be nothing. I hope that the Government will consider a sliding scale of penalties for misinformation according to the size of the contract.

The second key point relates to legal aid. We are glad that the Government have agreed that the commission can take up cases on behalf of individuals. That is helpful, although undoubtedly it will be budget-limited. If the commission has at its disposal only a finite sum to fight such cases, it will rightly pick cases to establish useful precedents which the courts can use afterwards. This may not help an individual who cannot afford to pursue a case, as so frequently happens. The lack of adequate legal aid provision is a significant deficiency of the Bill.

Positive discrimination has not been dealt with. What would happen if an individual sought to take up a case against a firm which wanted to introduce positive discrimination to correct the religious imbalance in an area? What would happen if a person wanted the firm to operate positive discrimination to provide a fairer reflection of the religious make-up of the area? Would that be subject to the legislation played in reverse, as it were?

Mr. McNamara: Yes.

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman says yes, and so it would appear to be. That is a significant disadvantage.

The next question is addressed in the Labour amendment. It must be of great concern to people in Northern Ireland and here that the legislation clashes with existing legislation on sex discrimination and racial discrimination. I am sad not to see a tie-up on the employment rights of women, particularly those of ethnic minorities.

In a comprehensive speech, the hon. Member for——

Mr. McGrady: South Down.

Mr. Ashdown: I used to live there so I should remember the constituency. I recall that I lived next door to Captain Orr, one of the hon. Gentleman's predecessors, but that is a matter best not spoken about at the moment.

The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) mentioned the chill factor. This is an important matter brought out by the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights and it is one to which the Government should address themselves. Perhaps it cannot be legislated for, but I hope that the Government have thought about it and will consider how to deal with it.

Once again we are dealing with legislation which is not a solution in itself but merely an instrument which can be used to try to achieve a general solition in Northern Ireland. It does not tackle some key areas such as how to create jobs. We have to read the legislation against the miserable background of a Government who have imposed their ideology on Harland and Wolff in a crazy and ludricrous way. Their policy has today delivered to a primary pillar of the Belfast economy the bitter pill of 450 job losses. This is a direct result of the Government's idiotic policy of not allowing Harland and Wolff to bid for Ministry of Defence contracts until it is in the private sector. Here we see the Government taking steps to improve the labour market on the one hand while casually destroying it on the other. It makes no sense.

With all those caveats and concerns, I believe that the Bill will provide at least an instrument which may help. It deserves to be debated and to go into Committee. It deserves to be improved along the lines which have been suggested in the House, and I hope that that will happen. In that spirit, we support the Second Reading.

8.47 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) said that there is a problem, so we should do something about it. That something was legislation.

Mr. Hume: Part of the something.

Mr. Budgen: Yes, but it was claimed that legislation inexorably followed from the problem. I smiled as I reflected on how his predecessor would often have said that to suggest that a problem was capable of being cured by legislation was certainly something to which one would expect the Liberal and the Socialist traditions in the House to adhere but certainly not something that Tories on the whole believed in.

When you stand in a non-political way at an election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, knowing that you will be seated in that Chair for most of the ensuing Parliament, and someone says to you, "Sir Paul, we expect that there will be less legislation if there is a Tory Government," I expect you smile. It is undoubtedly the case that, as Governments settle in, they forget the scepticism that they ought to have about legislation.

I am sure that the hon. Member for South Down will recognise that among the persons who have affected the opinions and prejudices of myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) have been his predecessor and also a great friend of his predecessor, Mr. T. E. or Peter Utley. He once wrote a pamphlet entitled "What Laws May Cure", expressing a high Tory scepticism about the value of legislation and suggesting a number of tests that might be applied before the House proceeded to legislate. He asked whether there was a consensus for the legislation, whether the law would be enforceable, whether it could be specific and whether it could avoid being discretionary and arbitrary.

When applying those tests to the Bill, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) has said, we have the advantage of the 1976 Act. I make no party political point, but it was introduced by a Labour Government—by a party which, on the whole, believes in the efficiency of legislation and holds that men's minds can be cured and altered by Acts of Parliament. When I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in what I hoped was a helpful intervention, to explain whether the Bill was building on the 1976 Act, I was amazed when he seemed to reply that it was not. I would not be so impertinent as

[Mr. Budgen]

to say that my right hon. Friend had not read the brief, but if he had looked at the White Paper he would have seen on the first page:

"The basic objective is to strengthen and broaden the existing legislation".

If my right hon. Friend had had the White Paper handy, he would also have been able to answer my question about the way in which the 1976 Act was working. Paragraph 2.4 gives a detailed exposition of the various proceedings that have been dealt with before the agency.

I have no doubt that after my impertinence in asking him how the agency worked—I noticed a message coming over from the civil servants—my right hon. Friend would have been told about the question asked by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 25 May about the agency's activities, which is in the helpful reference sheet put out by the Library.

It is clear that when my hon. Friend came to advocate the Bill he had nothing in his mind about the necessity of bolstering the 1976 Labour Act, although that is the thrust of the White Paper. He saw the Bill as a political necessity arising from two things—the Anglo-Irish Agreement and a desire to placate American influence. He did not bother to convince the House in any way about the 1976 legislation. He did not say, "We do not know that it is very good, but it did a partial job. For instance, we have noticed a certain amount of improvement in the discrimination problem in the Province." He simply ploughed through his remarks on the basis that more legislation was necessary.

The more that we apply the Utley tests, the more sceptical we become. When I read the Bill I thought to myself, as I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) did, "My goodness, what would happen if this sort of legislation were proposed for the west midlands? When we went back to the west midlands at the weekend our constituents would be jumping up in anger." It seems that political opinion in the Province is slightly different. I do not say that there is a consensus in favour of the 1976 Act, but there seems to be a form of reluctant acquiescence.

This legislation is severely defective, and plainly not a great improvement on the 1976 Act, and greatly to be condemned because it gives the commission law-making powers that no one should have. The commission will decide what is discrimination and, in a selective way, who should be proceeded against. It is the most arbitrary and political way of enforcing the law, and we are left with no proper proof that the problems of Northern Ireland will be improved by legislation.

It is sad when a Conservative Government, with the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), say, "There is a problem; therefore it can be cured by legislation."

Mr. Hume: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is a problem?

Mr. Budgen: Of course I do.

Mr Hume: What would the hon. Gentleman do about it?

Mr. Budgen: I do not think that it will be cured by legislation. I suggest that it would best be cured by market forces. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) seems very angry. If an employer is unwise enough to employ less good people because he or she does not like the colour of someone else's skin or their religious beliefs, that employer will provide a less good service, and when he competes he, will find that he loses.

Let us suppose that I am running a small business and need a lady to do a job that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington could do. If she applied for the job—I know that she would say that such an idea is wholly unrealistic—and I refused her because of the colour of her skin, I would then have to employ a less good person who would offer a less good service. The market exercises a discipline, but in this context the law does not change people's minds or behaviour.

There is no evidence that the 1976 Act has done any substantive good—there is only the strong suspicion that poor old Northern Ireland is once again being used as a political pawn, partly to placate the Republic and partly to placate the Americans.

8.57 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Like any other hon. Member, I feel loyalty to the party that I serve in the House, and I am on a three-line Whip to vote against the Bill. Nevertheless, I feel that it would have been better if we had had a free vote tonight. I never thought I would see the day when I would oppose any Government who were trying to bring in legislation to do away with discrimination in Northern Ireland. But I feel that I have some knowledge of the circumstances, living as I do in Glasgow, where the sons and daughters of Ulstermen and people from Eire came to settle because of the great famine and lack of opportunity. My ancestors come from Rathmullin. In my grandparents' day there was terrible discrimination in Glasgow; adverts in newspapers said that Catholics need not apply. Such discrimination still exists, but it is nowhere near as bad as that in Northern Ireland.

No one should kid himself that education is a problem and that because Catholics are educated in a particular way they enter certain services and industries. That is nonsense. Certainly, the Catholic schools in which I was brought up did not specialise in technical subjects. It was considered a great achievement for a Catholic school to turn out a teacher, a doctor and a dentist, but boys like me took up apprenticeships in the engineering industry. It did not make a bit of difference who we were; if we completed the training, we were able to do the job.

No foreman in the Rolls-Royce factory where I worked, which turned out the RB211s, was able to say, "That person must be a Protestant because he is a good engineer doing a good job." That is nonsense, and it does not apply in Northern Ireland.

The Government should consider the fact that discrimination takes place not only in Northern Ireland but on the mainland. It is sad that we are even discussing the legislation. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said that no legislation could do away with discrimination. Legislation does help. His argument was used when John F. Kennedy wanted to help Martin Luther King and his people in the deep south. Those who were against helping black people in America said that legislation would not help them. It has been proved that legislation, although not the full answer, certainly helps.

It is a sad feature of our society that bowling and golf clubs bar black people, Catholics and Jews. On many occasions in the Chamber I have spoken about the British Rail Engineering Ltd. workshops in my constituency. The religious make-up of its management is such that Catholics would not be able to obtain promotion. Yet it would be difficult for an employee to complain about that.

It is galling to have a nationalised industry and Civil Service departments where discrimination takes place, and yet taxpayers' money is used to provide those jobs. A sad feature of Northern Ireland is that a great deal of taxpayers' money goes to provide these jobs. Why should that money be used to help a religious clique?

If we introduce this legislation in Northern Ireland, we should at least examine the problems on the mainland. Every year without fail articles are written about the masonic lodges in our police forces. I have nothing against anyone joining a masonic lodge if that is what he wants to do. However, lodges that are exclusively for police officers create a problem, because they cause a lack of confidence in sections of the community.

Wherever religious discrimination exists in the United Kingdom, steps should be taken to eliminate it. The outside world must be asking what is going on in communities up and down the country where people still think in the same terms as their grandfathers and great-grandfathers.

9.4 pm

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): It is now more than 150 years since the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in this House, which was the legislation which prevented anyone other than Anglicans from attending university and from participating in certain professions. Some of us who come from dissenting religions, however, still have folk memories of the sense of injustice that that legislation caused and of the fact that Quakers, Jews and other non-conformists were obliged to leave the professions to go into trade. No one should ever under-estimate the deep sense of injustice that can be felt if people believe that they are being discriminated against solely on the grounds of religion. That sense of injustice can be very deep and can go forward for many generations.

The discrimination does not have to be deliberate, positive, malicious or cruel. It is possible, especially in employment, for people to discriminate unconsciously. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) referred to people getting jobs on the basis of their father, their brother or their uncle. Of course, if people get jobs solely on that basis, almost certainly they will be awarded jobs, too, in the Northern Ireland context, because of their family connections and their religion.

We must make it clear that we are committed to fair employment because it is right and because we find it repugnant that anyone should be put at a disadvantage because of their religion. We must make it clear that we are determined to tackle the problem of religious discrimination in employment. Everyone should welcome the proposed legislation, which would require all employers not only to avoid discrimination, but actively to practise equality of opportunity and, where necessary, to take affirmative action. Some hon. Members have skated over this a little too glibly and have pretended that there is no problem in Northern Ireland, but despite almost 10 years of anti-discrimination legislation and enforcement, unemployment among the Catholic community in Northern Ireland has remained disproportionately high.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baldry: No, I will not give way.

A Catholic male is two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than a Protestant.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Baldry: No, I will not give way. I have only a limited time and my hon. Friend has already had his opportunity.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the hon. Gentleman give way.

Mr. Baldry: No, I will not give way.

Rev. William McCrea: When was the hon. Gentleman last in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Baldry: Appointments to jobs should always be on the basis of merit. For that merit principle to operate properly, it is essential that there should be no unnecessary obstacles in the way of any applicant being considered on merit. Employers in Northern Ireland must be encouraged to open up their recruitment practices and processes to the widest possible range of applicants. Under-represented groups must be given a fair and full opportunity to compete for employment. To do that is not only just and equitable, but it will thwart those critics and enemies of Northern Ireland who use the statistics of comparative unemployment—for example, unemployment among male Roman Catholics as compared to that among Protestants —as evidence that employers should not invest in Northern Ireland and that it should be ignored.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, there is now an economic opportunity for Northern Ireland and for other parts of Europe in the period coming up to the European single market in 1992. I was in Korea two weeks ago. Companies in Korea and the far east want to invest in Europe before the single market is created, as do other companies throughout the world. Now is the time for Northern Ireland to take advantage of those opportunities, but the enemies of Northern Ireland will tell companies not to go there—to go to Wales or anywhere else—because there is discrimination in Northern Ireland.

The issue of employment discrimination in Northern Ireland has been exploited in the United States by proponents of the so-called MacBride principles. We know that since 1986 a coalition of local politicians and Irish American groups, through a series of shareholder resolutions and state legislation, have sought to force American companies operating in Northern Ireland to adopt those principles. Although the principles are vague, imprecise and impractical, that campaign threatens to harm substantially the long-term prospects of Northern Ireland's economy.

American firms currently employ some 10,000 people in Northern Ireland—around 10 per cent. of the manufacturing work force. With this Bill on the statute book, those in the United States who are concerned about fair employment will have all the ressurance that they need that Northern Ireland is a place where equality of opportunity is actively implemented and the MacBride

[Mr. Baldry]

principles will be as redundant then as they are irrelevant now because it will be demonstrably clear that we are fully committed to fair employment.

We should not forget that if Northern Ireland is to prosper, investment and job creation are essential complements to the more effective practice of equality of opportunity. If Northern Ireland is to flourish and if the unacceptable employment differentials between Protestants and Catholics are to be reduced as quickly as possible, there is no doubt that more jobs are needed. All of us in the House must promote the considerable attractions that Northern Ireland presents as a location for new investment. That investment and those jobs will come more easily if there is no shadow of a suspicion of religious discrimination in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland undoubtedly has a lot to offer and we should trumpet that fact abroad.

It is sad that in debates such as this we hear very little of what Northern Ireland has to offer the world. Northern Ireland has plentiful skills and a traditional work ethic. In many ways, it is an educational showcase not only with two major universities but with many good schools. Northern Ireland has a high level of computer literacy, good labour relations, a well-trained work force, favourable tax allowances, highly competitive labour costs and a proven track record with international companies such as du Pont, Ford, GEC, and so on. In the past year du Pont alone has invested £180 million in new facilities. That is all very good news which we should be trumpeting abroad and, in so doing, helping to attract new jobs and new investment to the Province.

In the short time available to me, I do not intend to go into the details of the Bill because that has been done exhaustively throughout the debate and I am sure will be done in Committee as the Bill goes through the House, but we must make it clear that at the centre of the proposals is a determination to maintain the principle of appointment on merit. The Bill is clearly against quotas and reverse discrimination, because in the climate of Northern Ireland their effect could be catastrophic on acceptance by the wider community of the fairness of the equal opportunity proposals. In the context of Northern Ireland, religious monitoring must be the key to fair employment practice, for only such monitoring can supply the basic information necessary to determine whether fair employment is practised. The emphasis of the Bill is rightly on voluntary effort by employers rather than on unnecessary penalisation.

I hope that the Bill will demonstrate beyond peradventure to the whole world not only that Northern Ireland has a great deal to offer but that all forms of discrimination in Northern Ireland will be eliminated if the House has any say in the matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) asks what laws may cure. The fact is that we in this House have the ability, through legislation, to demonstrate to the world that we are doing everything that we can to eliminate discrimination. If those who argue against legislation feel that there is a better way, let them come forward and demonstrate what it is. Until that time we must use the best means available to us. I hope, therefore, that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading.

There is, however, one note of sadness which the House cannot pass over in silence this evening. For many years until now there has been a considered consensus of hon. Members in all parts of the House in seeking the best way to move forward in Northern Ireland. That has implied a number of things. First, it has assumed that the Government of the day, of whichever party, have been using their best endeavours, as people of good will, to find the best way forward in Northern Ireland. Secondly, it has assumed that the Opposition of the day seek to find such common ground as they can with the Government of the day to move forward in what, on any account, is perhaps one of the most difficult situations that this House faces today.

Sadly, that consensus has now apparently been broken, and the Labour party has clearly decided that it is far easier to criticise whatever the Government are doing. Of course, whatever one does in Northern Ireland, one can either argue that it is not enough or that it is too much, but what the Labour party is doing is showing that, for the most part, it is a party of political pigmies—and the same goes for the SDLP—who have not the courage to stand by the Government on certain issues and say, "We do not agree entirely with this legislation but at least it is a step in the right direction, so we shall give the Secretary of State the benefit of the doubt for wanting to achieve something and move forward on a positive basis and we shall support him." Instead, the Opposition Front Bench spokesman merely seeks to carp and to find any division whatever. I can only assume that his speech today was written by a lawyer because if I had been given a brief to carp and nit-pick at whatever points were made in this Bill I should have been hard put to do a better job.

Not one positive statement has been made from the Labour Front Bench in this debate. I hope that Labour Members will reflect that what the hon. Gentleman said may well find favour with those groups that he enumerated at the beginning of his speech as being the starting point in Irish politics, but I doubt very much whether they will command much respect in Northern Ireland or in the rest of Britain.

9.16 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The course of this debate has not been unexpected to anyone who has sat through the numerous debates we have had on Northern Ireland down the years, and I have no intention of following the course which others have followed in this debate. I prefer to deal with a single specific aspect of this legislation, and that is the methodology of the investigations and the setting out of the reports which have been followed in the past by the Fair Employment Agency and which will undoubtedly have to be followed in the future. If we are ever to get anywhere we must have absolutely accurate statistics, and I do not believe, despite all that has been said, that those statistics as yet exist in Northern Ireland.

The reports in future must have a single, uniform system applied to them. In my preparation for this debate —I am sorry that I have such a short time left to speak —I took the opportunity to compare a number of the reports, and I discovered that some reports treated the folk employed as being drawn from all of Northern Ireland. The Civil Service is a case in point, a most prominent one, but there are others, such as Northern Ireland Railways,

the Ulster museum—which surprised me somewhat—and the Northern Ireland Electricity Service, which did not really surprise me.

Then, on the report of employment patterns in the Belfast area, with particular reference to engineering, I discovered that the Fair Employment Agency used the travel-to-work area. Council areas were used for the reports on AVX, Hyster, Lucas, and the North Eastern education and library board. For the report on the Northern Ireland airports, the home towns of the various employees were listed and those home towns extended from Coleraine to Newcastle. Then, as a second string to their bow, they listed the council areas of Belfast, Ballymena, Carrickfergus, Lisburn, Antrim and Newtownabbey. For the Western health and social services board, the report gave numbers and percentages of employees and also drew attention to the fact that the catchment area included Donegal, in a foreign country. In one class of employee, 7 per cent. of the employees are from Donegal.

Mr. Hume: Tell that to the Conservatives.

Mr. Ross: That remark could also be addressed to Mr. Cooper, who is a native of Donegal.

No boundaries were drawn concerning the reports on the newsletter in the *Irish News*. However, we discovered that the statistics in the *Belfast Telegraph* seemed to be based on the number of persons who were available for each printing trade. I should have liked to deal with that matter, but unfortunately time does not permit me to do so.

If we are to produce something that makes sense and that fits together in a comprehensive manner, it is vital that each investigation should be carried out in exactly the same way, that reports should be prepared under exactly the same headings and that people should know exactly what statistics and what areas are being discussed.

In many urban areas employees will walk to work. People who live in rural areas will have either to drive or use public transport to get to work. We need to know exactly what area we are looking at and the criteria, but we do not have that information.

It is essential to find out what criteria are to be applied and those criteria should be used strictly all the time. If no information is supplied under a given heading in one report, although that information is given under the same heading in another report, the reason for the lack of that information in the first report should be stated. Only when that information is provided and only when the same procedure is followed in all reports will they make sense. I ask the Minister to take that point on board. We on this Bench agree with the first one and three quarter lines of the Opposition amendment but very little else.

9.21 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): We have had a wide-ranging debate and the difference of opinion among hon. Members is not perhaps unexpected. My first task is to explain why the Opposition will, though extremely reluctantly, be voting against the Bill.

I take as my starting point the Secretary of State's speech. I am sure that he was speaking on behalf of the Government when he said that, as a moral principle, no matter where anybody lives in Northern Ireland, he or she should have equal opportunities when applying for a job. There is no difference between the Secretary of State and me on that point. There is also no difference between his party and mine on that point.

The Secretary of State also said that it was not just a question of stopping discrimination; we need to encourage equality of opportunity. It is at that point that the Secretary of State and I, and his party and mine, begin to differ. I accept that the Secretary of State takes a different view of the implications of the Bill, but our understanding of it, and the expert opinion that we have received about it, coincides with the view of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) rather than with the view of the Secretary of State—that the Bill will not carry out the intentions that the Secretary of State and the Government would like it to carry out.

The Bill is seriously flawed, particularly over the taking of affirmative action. If the Bill were to be enacted as it stands now, it would make the situation far worse in the Province and it would not lead to the increased inward investment in Northern Ireland that all of us wish to be achieved.

The Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), say that that is not true. The only people whom I have heard say that that is not true are the Secretary of State and his Under-Secretary of State. Every expert opinion that I have read bears out our view about affirmative action rather than the Government's view. I suggest that the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary should re-read the Bill and understand it properly.

It is for those reasons and because we believe that the Bill is seriously flawed that it is in everyone's best interests, at this stage, to defeat the Bill so that the Government can come back to the House with another Bill on which there is some unanimity. We could then begin to carry out the objective that we all want to attain—fair employment in the North of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: The hon. Gentleman is an experienced enough Member of Parliament to know that what he has said is rubbish. If the Bill is defeated, it will not come back in this Session and it will be the end of an attempt to introduce measures that we believe will genuinely help fair employment. The hon. Gentleman understands the parliamentary process and I trust that he accepts the short title of the Bill, which refers to:

"the promotion of equality of opportunity in employments".

Anything beyond that can be amended in Committee. The House should give the Bill a Second Reading and then we can argue the points fairly in Committee. The hon. Gentleman is profoundly wrong, and I would be appalled if he denied us the opportunity to prove that we are right.

Mr. Marshall: The Secretary of State knows that I do not doubt his sincerity, and I do not doubt the Government's desire to do something about fair employment in the North of Ireland. Our assessment is that the Bill will fail to do that.

I want to deal with the two specific points that the Secretary of State raised. First, he said that the Bill could be amended in Committee. Our experience with this Government is that it is exceedingly difficult to persuade them to accept amendments in Committee. Secondly, the Secretary of State said that there was no further parliamentary time for another Bill on the subject this

[Mr. Marshall]

Session. We believe that the present legislation, especially in terms of affirmative action programmes, is substantially better than the provisions in the Bill.

The House will be disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm shown by the majority of hon. Members from Northern Ireland. I exempt the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady), but the majority of hon. Members from the Province who spoke tried to call into question the validity of the statistics. Every rational and sane person accepts the validity of the statistics. If one is not prepared to do so, one has only to go and see the reality of the situation in Northern Ireland.

It is difficult to accept or understand that position, but it illustrates the wide gulf between perceptions and reality in the North of Ireland. It is necessary that there should be some unanimity in the House over the need for fair employment in the North of Ireland. I must repeat the offer that I made to the Secretary of State a few minutes ago. If he is prepared to withdraw the Bill and to have consultations with the Opposition, I am sure that we can offer the Bill an easy and ready passage not only through the House but in Committee.

If we are ever to achieve lasting peace in the North of Ireland, all our citizens there must have equal political access and equal economic opportunity. Whatever the reasons for the present inequality—whether direct discrimination, indirect discrimination or the excuse we have heard this evening about accidents of geography—one cannot doubt the fact that Catholic male unemployment in Northern Ireland is a staggering two and a half times that of Protestant males. Clearly, there has not been equality of opportunity in the jobs market.

Any new legislation must be judged against two criteria —first, its impact on the existing jobs market, and, secondly, its impact on inward investment, particularly American investment. Judged on the first criterion, the Bill will be a signal failure. Whatever the conclusions we may reach, hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that the acid test for fair employment legislation must be the extent to which it enables employers to implement programmes of affirmative action, and to which it enables the new Fair Employment Commission to require affirmative action programmes. Despite the view of the Secretary of State, we are advised that the Bill as drafted endangers existing programmes and retards the possibility of more extensive affirmative action in future. If our assessment is correct, the Bill is fatally flawed.

On the second test—the need to attract foreign investment—the Bill may well prove to be a short-term propaganda success. I note that one of the Under-Secretaries—and, presumably, officials from the Northern Ireland Office—is parading round the United States of America, no doubt selling the Bill as a propaganda victory to the anti-MacBride campaigns in the United States. The Bill may well succeed in that short-term objective, but without a doubt its lack of teeth and substance will quickly become apparent.

We all accept that new investment in the form of new jobs is necessary if any significant attack is to be made on the imbalance in Catholic and Protestant employment. In that context, American investment is particularly important. However, it will not be long before the Bill is revealed as a toothless wonder. No matter what short-term propaganda success the Government may achieve, when that happens American companies will again come under pressure when they seek to invest in the North of Ireland or to place orders there.

The proposals do not match up to what we believe is necessary. Worryingly, in our view——

Mr. Budgen: It may help the hon. Gentleman if I tell him openly across the Floor of the House who, according to the Conservative research department brief, will be caught by the Bill. I quote from the final sentence of the section entitled "Attacks Answered":

"Only deliberate defiance or obstruction of the Commission and Tribunal is penalised under the Bill."

In other words, unless an employer says, "Push off" to the commission, he will be all right.

Mr. Marshall: I hesitate to say that I am grateful to have the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West as an ally on this point. He has reinforced my assertion that the Bill is a toothless wonder. I hesitate, too, to applaud him for voting with us this evening as, presumably, he does not have the courage to do so.

We are worried that some of the provisions in the Bill —on contract compliance, for example—are weaker than the proposals in the White Paper. One cannot over-emphasise the fact that, if it is passed, the Bill will provide the framework for fair employment legislation in the Province until the end of the century at least. If it is not capable of seriously addressing the imbalance and the question of Protestant and Catholic employment, it is not worth having.

In our view, the Government have failed in their responsibilities in three key areas. First, they have failed to give a clear indication of the way that all Government policies—political, social and economic—are to be subject to the litmus test of whether they promote equality of opportunity. Secondly, they fail to set targets and timetables for reducing the current ratio of unemployment between Catholics and Protestants, thus ruling out the only effective and objective way of measuring the success of the legislation. Thirdly, the Bill is extraordinarily silent about the measures to enforce the legislation in the public sector. We should emphasise the importance of the public sector in Northern Ireland. Although 200,000 people, or 40 per cent. of the work force, are employed in the public sector, the Bill fails to spell out how the legislation will be effective in the public sector.

The Bill pays lip service to the need to promote equality of opportunity, but it does not permit effective and affirmative action to bring that about. I shall mention two examples. As we understand it, and as we are advised, the legislation would make unlawful schemes to train existing employees in a company who might benefit from training for another job in the company or for promotion. We are also advised that outreach measures designed to encourage applications from school leavers to companies with serious imbalances in their work forces would also be illegal. The Minister shakes his head. I am prepared to be convinced by argument, but not by the Minister shaking his head.

If the Government are serious, the provisions of the legislation are far weaker than those available under race relations legislation or the sex discrimination legislation which provide and encourage means of affirmative action. In addition, the Bill should spell out that the Fair

Employment Commission should be specifically charged with the duty to develop and implement a strategic policy for ensuring the achievement of equal opportunity.

We welcome the proposal that all public sector bodies and all large employers should monitor applications as well as their existing work force. However, like the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, we urge that the Bill should contain a timetable for reducing the 250 employee threshold, for a number of reasons. As the Government know, private sector employers with more than 250 employees are fairly rare in many rural parts of the Province, especially west of the Bann. In certain urban areas, such as parts of Belfast, the limit is too high and very few companies would fall within the net. There should be a time scale for reducing the threshold.

The Bill is totally inadequate to deal with the scale of the problem in Northern Ireland. Unfortunately, the great expectations built up by the publication of SACHR's report on fair employment have been dashed by the Bill. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has expressed great disappointment. We share that disappointment. I urge the House to reject the Bill.

9.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): This is a major piece of legislation—a substantial Bill of 55 clauses which will affect the pattern of employment in Northern Ireland for years to come.

Let me first deal with the points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) who challenged the Bill's fundamental purpose. Speaking, as I do, as one who believes in the dynamo of the private enterprise system that is central to economic success and who believes strongly in the importance of freeing private enterprise from the shackles and burdens of government, and indeed that the private enterprise system allows and encourages the flowering of individual efforts and so makes its contribution to democracy itself, I accept that we should think carefully before introducing further regulation on business. Government should approach the subject with diffidence and move only when it is clear that action is required.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West made that point with fluency and wit. He is one of the few Members of Parliament who can amuse and entertain even as his barbs find their mark. I enjoyed my hon. Friend's speech, but I have to say to him that, in the context of Northern Ireland, it was fundamentally misconceived.

The facts on unemployment are not in dispute. The Government's own statistics suggest that the unemployment rate for Catholic males runs to about 2·5 times the rate for Protestants. Moreover, there are significant differences in the type and pay levels of the jobs, with a clear tendency for Catholics to be over-represented in the lower grades and under-represented in the higher grades.

There could be many reasons for those disparities and the report by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights and other studies have tried to identify the explanations which could be put forward. For instance, it has been argued that Catholics are concentrated in areas of higher unemployment in the west of the Province and that that contributes to the continuing differential in employment.

It has been said that social differences between Protestants and Catholics are a major element in unemployment differentials, and it is certainly true that, in using the words "Catholic" and "Protestant", one is not dealing simply with the manner of worshipping God but with a complex socio-political-economic condition. It has been argued that differences in educational attainment, and in subject choice and availability, have contributed to the disparity in employment levels.

In its important report, SACHR also studies the suggestions that have been made that Catholics tend to have a lower commitment to work than Protestants—an idea which SACHR considered and rejected—and that differences in unemployment levels derive partly from differences in age distribution of the Catholic and Protestant sections of the community and the tendency of Catholics to have larger families. All those intensely personal issues have been studied, and properly so, because they provide the framework—the background—to Government consideration and the legislation which has flowed from that.

In the context of Northern Ireland, it has been argued that Catholics and Protestants can be reluctant to travel to work outside the immediate area where they live, or may be reluctant to work in places or areas which they regard as hostile. As the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) said, this is known in Northern Ireland as "the chill factor" and there is no doubt that it has some influence. Similarly, it has been argued that Catholics are less willing to accept certain types of employment, the most obvious example being work in the security forces, where work may be available but for various reasons they may feel unable to apply.

Those are sensitive subjects, but it was right that SACHR should commission its detailed study, which in broad terms comes to the conclusion that some of those items do contribute to the employment disparity. However, it is also clear that, even when all those factors are taken into account, there is still an unexplained difference. There remains a much higher correlation than one would have expected between religion and unemployment.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is there any reason why SACHR did not put a percentage on the people who would have jobs in the security forces if they went for them?

Mr. Viggers: Yes, I believe there is. As the hon. Gentleman will know from his study of the report, it gave statistics against some of the heads that I have enumerated, but not against the security forces. It points out the number of people who do work in the security area, and I have freely admitted that that may be an element in the consideration, but the fact is that, after all those points have been carefully considered, there remains an unacceptable disparity.

At the end of the day we are left with one clear conclusion which no one can deny the Fair Employment Act 1976, conceived as it was with good intentions, has not been successful in eradicating employment disparity between Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland. In

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statistical terms, overall the improvement in Catholic employment that was indeed to flow from the 1976 Act has not been achieved.

That does not mean that progress has not been made. There have been important areas of substantial progress, I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South-West that there have been over 60 sectoral studies and investigations, and over 400 individual cases, have been examined. Many valuable improvements in employers' practices have been introduced, both at the instigation of the FEA and in the light of the Government's guide to good practice.

To take one example, and an important one, the Northern Ireland Civil Service has introduced a comprehensive monitoring programme. This example is now being more widely followed in the public service generally. The experience of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, and indeed that of the major private sector employers who have introduced monitoring and have taken affirmative action, shows that any imbalance in applications and recruitment can be reduced if tackled appropriately.

So some progress has been made but the statistics remain obstinate and clear and they are reflected in public attitudes. There is a wide perception among Catholics that they do not stand the same chance of a job. The statistics confirm this to be the case, and it would be absolutely wrong for Government to stand aside from this situation. Government have a heavy moral obligation to improve the climate of fair employment in Northern Ireland and I submit that any fair-minded person entrusted with our responsibility in this field would take the same view.

If the House agrees, as I trust it will, that legislation is required in Northern Ireland to improve equality of opportunity in employment, is this Bill the legislation which is best calculated to achieve that necessary effect? Certainly, in approaching this legislation, the Government have taken care to consult widely, and my right hon. Friend referred in his introductory remarks to the consultations over two years. Throughout the whole of this process we have been consulting very widely with employers and employee representatives and with community interests. We also had the opportunity of discussing our proposals with Government representatives from the Republic of Ireland. We have followed with interest the views expressed by the Government of the Republic of Ireland, who took a sustained interest. We have taken account of their views and, of course, we have taken account of the views of all those whom we have consulted.

We are satisfied that the thrust of our proposals now laid before the House has a broad consensus of support and that they will be successful in achieving the intention of promoting equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Viggers: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way, especially as he has not been present very much during the debate and as I am short of time. But perhaps I should, briefly.

Mr. Flannery: Apart from there being many things wrong with the Bill, it seems to have no teeth. What enforcement machinery is there to implement its provisions? It will peter out like all the others, because it contains no enforcement procedures.

Mr. Viggers: I shall come to that. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong, and I hope to reassure him on that in due course.

As I was saying, we have a level of consensus from the consultations that we have carried out. With this level of open consultation and support, one would have hoped to achieve a measure of unanimity for the proposals in the House, at least in principal. I recall that, when the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill was introduced to the House in 1976 by the Labour Government, the Conservative spokesman, the late Airey Neave, described that Bill as "essential and important." Winding up the debate on Third reading, the late John Biggs-Davison said:

> "The official Opposition have supported, and do support, the principle of the Bill".—[*Official Report*, 11 June 1976; Vol. 912, col 2002-3.]

The Conservative party at that time had reservations about points of detail on the Bill but did not seek to divide the House on Second Reading or on Third Reading. So the Conservative party supported Labour's proposal in broad terms.

How very different the situation is tonight. The Labour spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) made a grudging and petulant speech, with all the emphasis on what he perceived to be wrong about the Bill and lacking the grace to admit that much in the Bill is common ground between us. He was thrown into high relief by the hon. Member for South Down, who said that he would not oppose the Bill and that it needed amendment in Committee.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) gave the Bill a fair wind. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) said that he found himself in a surprising position, as he would have to oppose the Bill. The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), winding up for the Opposition, sought to rectify some of the damage by hedging some of his remarks and using expressions such as "as we understand it" and "as we are advised" on several occasions.

The hon. Gentleman, as we understand it, was wrong in saying that outreach training is not possible and that affirmative action has been weakened. He was badly advised if he was told that. Moreover, if the Opposition think that outreach training and the lack of affirmative action are flaws in the Bill, although I can assure them that there are no such flaws, they should support the Second Reading. Then, within the context of the long title of the Bill, they should seek to amend the Bill in Committee.

They do not have the grace to do that. They are taking an opportunity simply to show that they oppose the Bill root and branch, and to demonstrate that they have the vitality and virility to oppose the Government. They are making a serious mistake, which I am sure they will regret.

Ms. Abbott: Will the Minister accept that our opposition to the Bill is based on a point of principle? The Bill is Hamlet without the prince. An elaborate structure and 55 clauses have been drawn up to enforce a code which is the heart of the Bill, yet the test of the code is not before us. Our opposition to the Bill is based on the fact that it is sheer window dressing to appease American opinion. It will leave behind it bitterness and a feeling in the Province of having been cheated.

Mr. Viggers: I can reassure the hon. Lady completely on that point. It is normal practice, when regulations such as a code of practice are required in connection with an Act of Parliament, that they should be introduced between Second Reading and the Committee stage. The Second Reading of the Bill approves the Bill in principle, and the Committee considers it in detail, and needs to see the code of practice. We already have the guide to effective practice which gives an indication of the lines the code will take. If we had produced the code at this point before Second Reading we would have been criticised for assuming that the Bill had been given a Second Reading. We are doing exactly the right thing, consistent with normal practice.

The Opposition, whatever they say, cannot deny that the Bill proposes the most radical and incisive legislation on fair employment in Northern Ireland presented to this House by any Government. It improves significantly on the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act produced by the previous Labour Government and introduces a new range of obligations, powers, and penalties to ensure that the new law has sharp teeth. We have no doubt that the Commission will not hesitate to use them.

Dealing with a point about monitoring raised by the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder), there will be new regulations for compulsory monitoring by employers, although of course there will be no obligation on workers to register. We stress the obligation placed upon employers. Employers will have that duty and be required to produce the results of their monitoring to the Fair Employment Commission.

There will be new criminal penalties, backed by economic sanctions, covering Government grants and public sector contracts. For the first time, indirect discrimination is defined and outlawed. In all these ways, the Bill delivers fully on the major commitments of the White Paper which was published last May; indeed, it goes further and does not renege in any way on its commitments.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) complained that the Bill did not explain as clearly as the White Paper how different measures would apply—for instance, affirmative action. If I, as a humble solicitor, may say so to him, a learned barrister, this is the fault of legal language. We are turning the intentions of the White Paper into statutory language. There is no weakening of the proposals in the White Paper.

Mr. Archer: The point I was making was not that the Bill was not a textbook but that it did not make the position clear in statutory language. The point which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North was making was precisely the point which the Secretary of State made when we were discussing the MacBride principles—that equal opportunities and affirmative action can sometimes cut across each other.

Mr. Viggers: I take the point. I shall not pursue it further, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman will forgive me, because of the lack of time.

I want to explain the ways in which the Bill expands and strengthens the White Paper. There will be stronger enforcement procedures. Specifically, the fair employment tribunal may impose monetary penalties up to £30,000 for breach of a tribunal order, this being a unique power for a tribunal in the United Kingdom. There will be a new obligation on employers of more than 250 people to monitor not only their work force but also the applications for jobs. I have noted the point made in the debate that the figure of 250 should be reconsidered. That is a point clearly best considered in Committee.

All registered employers will be required to review their key employment practices at intervals of three years or less to see if affirmative action is required to improve their employment practice. There will be a new power whereby the Fair Employment Commission can investigate the patterns of employment at any particular organisation and receive voluntary but binding undertakings to improve on employment practice.

Accordingly, by any objective or informed standards, there can be no doubt—none whatever—of the radical and comprehensive nature of the Bill. Nor can there be any doubt about the Government's determination to see that the new commission is properly resourced to exercise its new powers. We are substantially increasing the budget and the numbers of the Fair Employment Commission.

The leglisation is indeed tough, but it is also fair. I say that with confidence, because it is a central feature of the legislation that appointments shall be on merit and that the best person should be appointed to the job. On that point I reassure the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley): merit is a clear principle in the Bill and it reflects the prohibition of direct discrimination which has been in force since 1976.

However, I must emphasise that merit in this respect takes account not only of ability but also of aptitude, and this latter point allows for recognition of potential. My hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) asked about this in connection with an employer in Northern Ireland whom he had visited recently. It is a central point of the Bill that there will be outreach training and affirmative action which will take account of aptitude. Employers will not simply consider the best person suitable for the job at the time. Aptitude and training potential will be relevant.

Many points were raised during the debate. Because we were anxious that as many hon. Members as possible should have a chance to speak, it will not be possible to deal in detail with all of them. I have sought to do so as far as possible, but the other points can be dealt with in Committee.

The Bill should be supported. It is a matter of grave concern to us that the Labour party does not feel it possible to support it at this point. I think the Labour party will accept that there is a great deal of discrimination which is unintentional. Recruitment by word of mouth can lead to a concentration of workers from one part of the community. Advertising jobs in one area or through one newspaper can similarly lead to an unbalanced recruitment practice. Personnel managers may not give full thought to their recruitment practices. The prevalence of flags and emblems in the workplace can discourage one or other part of the community. In that sense there are many ways in which discrimination in employment can be unintentional. We will source the Fair Employment Commission and give it more power and authority so that it can aid employers to improve their practices which may be unintentional.

Northern Ireland needs to make progress on three fronts: political, security and economic. In the field for which I have specific responsibility, economic development, great strides have been made in the last two years, with substantial investment by local companies and

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inward investment from overseas. The economy has some good features, and increased employment can assist in every aspect of life in Northern Ireland.

The Bill will play a major part in promoting fair employment and the perception of a fair and just society. It is an important and genuinely progressive measure, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 268.

Division No. 67] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*

Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading):—

The House divided: Ayes 272, Noes 192.

Division No. 68] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*

Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John D. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John

Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Rate Support Grant (Sandwell)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10.25 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The measure of the importance that those of us who have the honour to represent constituencies which include parts of the borough to Sandwell place on this debate is reflected by the fact that the four Members of Parliament for the borough —including yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker—are present. If, as I hope, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) succeeds in catching your eye, he will let the House know about the problems that his constituents face in the part of the borough that he represents with such distinction.

In October last year, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities circulated a report based, it was suggested, on the Department of the Environment forecast of the likely block grant distribution for 1989-90. The AMA produced the report because it thought that it would help local authorities in their rate planning for 1989-90 and that it would allow them to make a more considered response to the Secretary of State's proposals. The report made allowance for community charge preparation costs and for the transfer of higher education establishments from the control and funding of local authorities to polytechnics and to the colleges providing those functions in April 1989. Grant implications were shown for a range of grant distribution arrangements throughout the country, and Sandwell's block grant estimate was raised from £55·7 million to £58·3 million.

In November 1988, the Secretary of State issued full details of his proposals for the 1989-90 rate support grant settlement. From this report, Sandwell's grant was calculated on a relevant amount of expenditure amounting to £177·5 million, including an allowance for community charge preparation costs of only £295,000. However, Sandwell's total revenue costs next year for community charge preparation will amount to £2·3 million.

The Department also announced a reduction of £2·6 million in respect of the amended financing arrangements for higher education establishments, to which I have already referred. Accordingly, therefore, Sandwell's grant-related expenditure assessment was put at £172·74 million, with a block grant entitlement of only £50·8 million. On receipt of this information, the borough's councillors made strong representations to the Secretary of State and sought a meeting with him. The request for that meeting was declined.

On 19 December 1988 the Secretary of State laid a report before the House of Commons, describing the rate support grant settlement for 1989-90. It transpires from the settlement that the relevant amount of expenditure for Sandwell has been reassessed at £177·7 million. That consequently gives a slightly higher block grant entitlement for the borough of £51·06 million, which is a mere £278,000 more than the figure for the current year. The base budget for Sandwell for 1989-90 is £188·3 million, which allows for no growth whatsoever. In the light of the block grant settlement, and even if Sandwell uses all its balance of £22 million or so, the borough's rate will still have to rise by 12·7 per cent for services to be maintained at their present level.

[Mr. Peter Snape]

Clearly, as a local authority that is attempting to care for its community and to meet the severe level of deprivation faced in the borough, a standstill budget is unlikely to be acceptable. The budget requires some growth, and the council has determined that it will try to allocate that to the areas of greatest need. It has also put in train a major efficiency exercies to try to make some savings in the borough. Nevertheless, the consequence of the grant allocation for Sandwell is that instead of the anticipated grant of between £55·7 million and £58·3 million it faces a block grant of £51 million—that is, £4 million to £7 million less than expected when the figures were first prepared last year.

Over the years, the borough of Sandwell has been a consistently low-rated authority. In the current financial year, the borough has a rate in the pound of 251·50p compared to the average of all metropolitan authorities of 288·05p, so the difference is 36·55p. In each of the past six financial years, the rate in Sandwell has been significantly lower than the average for all metropolitan district authorities, and that has produced substantial savings for all domestic and industrial ratepayers. To give an example, the saving amounts to £10 million over a period when grants from central Government to local authorities have been consistently reduced.

The settlement already announced would mean that Sandwell would need a heavy rate increase merely to stand still. That settlement, and the rate increase that I have already mentioned, would include throwing in all the borough's revenue balances to keep the rate increase at that level. Bearing in mind the Government's devotion to so-called sensible financial policies for local authorities, I hope that the Minister will agree with me that no organisation with a £200 million revenue budget can operate without balances.

The facts are even worse than I have outlined. Sandwell is in the top five metropolitan authorities in terms of deprivation—a fact readily demonstrated by district audit figures and many other sources. The recent district audit service report on the borough said in the summary:

"The deprivation of the borough and its population is self-evident. Research showed that it was if anything even worse than it appears."

On expenditure in the borough over the years the report said:

"The Council has always been a careful spender, and has built up substantial balances. Its expenditure on many heads is well below average for Metropolitan Districts, and for social services it is below even the allowance for them in the block grant calculations. Social services and housing appear to be the Council's most daunting challenges."

The Government set up that audit, but far from helping the borough of Sandwell in the the two areas mentioned in the report, the Government have considerably reduced the housing allocation entitlement in the next financial year. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West will say something about the social services and the growth that is needed there. *[Interruption.]*

Although unemployment has been falling slightly faster in the borough than in England and Wales as a whole, we still have one of the highest proportions of unemployed people who have been out of work for more than a year. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Hon. Members are showing great discourtesy to the hon. Member who has the Floor, because of the noise that is going on.

Mr. Snape: I thought that Whips were traditionally silent, but that is obviously not the case in the current Administration.

Only four wards in Sandwell have unemployment rates below the national average. The average income in the borough in 1984-85, the last year for which figures are available, was only 67 per cent. of that in Great Britain as a whole. Fifty-six per cent. of Sandwell's employed earned below average incomes in 1986. The West Midlands low pay unit estimated that 40 per cent. of full-time employees were earning less than two thirds of median male earnings compared with 25 per cent. in Great Britain as a whole.

Another measure of poverty in the borough is the high proportion of households in receipt of housing benefit. As I have said earlier, the cut in housing allocation finance in the next financial year already means that the 78 per cent. of council tenants who claim housing benefit are likely to be even worse affected and 57 per cent. of private sector tenants are also poor enough to claim that benefit.

A recent university of Warwick study entitled "Local prosperity and the north-south divide" found that of 280 local labour market areas Smethwick ranked 276th and West Bromwich 240th in terms of economic performance between 1981 and 1986. Yet this is the borough that is facing swingeing rate increases. Those unfortunate enough to live in council property face a rent increase of £5 per week, which is due entirely to the financial policies of the Department of the Environment in 1989-90.

One further illustration of the shabby way in which the Government have treated this most militantly moderate of local authorities is the fact that out of budgeted expenditure of £104·4 million in the financial year 1981-82, the council's initial grant entitlement amounted to £43·1 million or 41·2 per cent. of budgeted expenditure. Without a change of heart, out of estimated budgeted expenditure of £190 million in 1989-90, Sandwell will receive only £51·06 million, or 26·8 per cent.

I make a further plea to the Minister. For years, the Government have castigated a small minority of well-publicised local authorities, most of them in this part of the world, for what they consider to be unwise and unnecessary expenditure. We in the borough of Sandwell —heavily Labour-controlled though the borough is—do not believe that the onset of global thermo-nuclear war can be prevented by hanging signs from lamp posts, and we have no obviously unnecessary expenditure. Yet the borough is to be heavily penalised under the settlement.

We all know why the Government are cutting the rate support grant for Sandwell and other boroughs and refusing to fund poll tax preparations. The Government have a big enough majority in the House to introduce the poll tax, but we believe that the Secretary of State wants to discredit the rating system so as to make the poll tax look a better prospect than it really is. It is unfair to treat a borough like Sandwell in the way that the Government seem determined to treat it. It is particularly unfair to do so having trailed views in the middle and latter part of last year which suggested that the borough's rate support grant settlement would be far higher than was eventually announced.

I appeal to the Minister to reconsider, even at this late hour. It is not just Sandwell's domestic ratepayers who face dramatic increases. The increase will also have an enormous impact on the business rate in the borough and on small businesses already struggling to cope with nine increases in interest rates in the past year. The consequences in the borough of the Department's parsimony in the rate support grant settlement will be enormous. If the Minister cannot or will not tell the four hon. Members who have the honour to represent the borough that the Department is prepared to reconsider the settlement, we shall do our utmost to ensure that the blame for the swingeing increases that all our constituents face is placed firmly where it belongs—in the laps of Ministers at the Department of the Environment.

10.38 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) for allowing me part of his time. I congratulate him on making available to us the opportunity to ventilate the problems that we face in Sandwell.

My hon. Friend has painted a clear picture of the problem that confronts Sandwell council—a problem not of the council's making, but imposed on it by the Government. It faces the choice of denying local services which are urgently needed, or imposing a massive rate increase—or sharing out the burden between ratepayers and those who need the service, many of whom will be the same people and thus will bear both halves of the burden.

I shall not seek to improve on the account given by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East. The figures that he gave speak for themselves. To most of us, those figures are so large that they are difficult to take in, and we would find it difficult to notice if a nought were added or left off. However, it was not an academic exercise because those figures break down into smaller sums which might have been used for specific purposes.

My hon. Friend mentioned social services in Sandwell. I have constituents who are handicapped and will remain trapped in their homes unless a ramp is constructed allowing access for a wheelchair. As the ramp has to be constructed by the council, the council holds the key to their freedom. I know many people who enjoy a totally different life because the council has constructed a ramp, a rail, a shower unit or in some cases a stair board. I am sure that my hon. Friend—or you, Madam Deputy Speaker—could produce similar examples.

All those facilities require council officials who are experts in that subject. The council do not have enough experts, so people are kept waiting—sometimes for months—and that is time out of their lives. The social services committee of Sandwell council understands the problem and wants to deal with it. It wants to provide for expenditure on the revenue account for people with disabilities of £94,000 in the next financial year and £111,700 the following year.

I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and my hon. Friends, have the same experience as I when at every advice bureau I see people whose lives are dominated by environmental problems. The environmental committee of Sandwell council wants to double expenditure on dealing with air pollution and noise. People come to us in tears because of housing conditions. The housing committee wants to increase revenue grants from £24,000 in the next financial year to £101,000 in the following year. The education committee wants to provide four nursery nurses for special needs at a cost of £25,700 in the next financial year and £27,200 in the following year. With that increase in rates which is now contemplated, I doubt whether that money will be available. Almost certainly the council will have to make choices between those purposes.

Those are the sums into which the macro-figures quoted by my hon. Friend break down. They can all be translated into human misery or relief. If the Minister says that there is no more money and the council cannot have an increase in rate support grant, they represent part of the even larger sums with which the Chancellor of the Exchequer was dealing last year—the sums that he gave to taxpayers on high incomes. When the Government do that, this is what happens to the other half of the equation.

10.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) on securing the debate, and the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). I note that the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) is also present. It seems something of a Sandwell occasion, with all its Members of Parliament present—including you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East suggested —the council has made similar comments—that any local rates increase next year will be a direct result of central Government. That is not the case, and I shall explain why.

First, the hon. Member should know that the present rate support grant system is mechanistic. Ultimately, an individual authority's grant entitlement is decided not by Ministers in some arbitrary way, but by the block grant formula, which must be based on general principle. I am sure that all hon. Members would not in fact wish it to be otherwise, but I accept that the present system is over-complex and incomprehensible. That is why we are abolishing it and setting up a simpler system which will be based solely on authorities' needs. On current exemplifications, that system could bring real benefits to community charge and business rate payers in Sandwell, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, by way of lower bills. But that will not be the case if the council continues to increase its expenditure as it has done in recent years.

I shall deal with Sandwell's expenditure shortly, but I want to make it clear that, nationally, for next year's settlement, we have provided £1·1 billion or some 9 per cent. more grant in aggregate than is being paid out this year, after making allowance for the transfer of funding to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council. By any account that is a generous settlement, and it is pointless to speak of reductions in grant percentages.

Mr. Snape: I am not talking about the global figure. Will the Minister accept that the figure that has been announced for Sandwell is, in actual terms, £280,000 higher than the total block grant settlement given by the Department of the Environment in the current financial year. How, given inflation of about 7 per cent., nationally agreed pay rises and other unavoidable items of expenditure with which the borough is faced, can that extra £280,000 be stretched to meet all the other factors over which the council has no control whatever?

Mrs. Bottomley: These are complex matters. I am trying as fast as I can to explain the detail of them to the hon. Gentleman, and I am coming to precisely that point.

It is not the case, as the council and the hon. Gentleman have suggested, that Sandwell will receive less grant next year. The fact is that, after making the necessary adjustment for the effects of the changes in funding for further education, the settlement actually provides extra block grant of almost £2·9 million—6 per cent. more than it is receiving this year. What is more, our proposals for closing down the present rate support grant—now enacted in the Rate Support Grants Act 1988—mean that the council can have much greater certainty of its grant entitlement next year, because the Act provides that there is no grant penalty for spending up—a difficulty faced by Sandwell on several occasions.

Hon. Members might ask why Sandwell's increase in block grant of 6 per cent. is less than the 9 per cent. that I have mentioned. Although I was referring then to the increase in aggregate Exchequer grant, there is in fact a similar increase in block grant next year. The simple answer to hon. Gentlemen's questions, is once again the grant formula. Specifically, the council gains some £7 million grant from changes in its gross rateable value, in its population and from changes in other detailed factors in the formula; but it loses some £4 million of that potential gain because its grant-related expenditure assessment increases by less than the average, largely as a result of the use of up-to-date information on capital and other financing items.

I hope that I do not have to explain GREs to this House tonight. All I would say is that an authority's GRE is essentially our assessment of that authority's spending need, calculated on the basis of principles applicable to all authorities. Each year, we discuss proposals for improving certain elements of GREs with the local authority associations.

The system works in such a way that, even if an authority's GRE increases—as it does for Sandwell next year, by 9·6 per cent. per head—if that increase is less than the average, its share of grant falls. There is no question of any Government interference in particular cases. While, as I say, the changes next year are not all to Sandwell's benefit, it is still the case, as hon. Members have said, that its GRE is the ninth highest of any metropolitan district in the country, in recognition of the area's real needs, which the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East has so powerfully spelt out.

The result of all that is that Sandwell will receive over £51 million grant next year, or £171 per head of the population—as I have said, some 6 per cent. more than the grant paid to them for the current year.

The hon. Gentleman asked why the proportion of Sandwell's total expenditure, which is to be met by block grant, is lower than the overall figure of 43·3 per cent. nationally. I think that, once again, that shows a misunderstanding of the system, which I can sympathise with only too well. The 43·3 per cent. refers to the proportion of relevant expenditure met from aggregate exchequer grant. But AEG and relevant expenditure include many specific and supplementary grants, such as police grant, certain housing and environmental improvement grants, transport supplementary grant and many others. The proper comparison is not between AEG and relevant expenditure but between block grant and the level of total expenditure, which is the measure used in calculating authorities' grant entitlements.

Looking at those figures, we have provided £8,840 million, or £715 million more block grant than this year. If authorities spend in line with the settlement, block grant will be 32 per cent. of their total expenditure. Sandwell's grant entitlement, which would represent 28·7 per cent., is lower than the national figure because of differences between GRE and total expenditure and the way rateable values are reflected in the current system. In short, it is less not because Government say it shall be less, but because of Sandwell's spending decisions and the way in which the formula works.

The hon. Gentleman also suggested that we are making Sandwell pay for most of the costs next year of preparing for the introduction of the community charge. Again, that is not the case. We are actually providing local government generally with £110 million for the current costs next year. This is very much in line with the independent Price Waterhouse report and other estimates. Fifty per cent. of this sum is to be met by specific grant and the remaining 50 per cent. is taken into account in the RSG settlement in the normal way. We estimate that Sandwell will receive specific grant of some £0·295 million with, as I say, the remainder reflected in its grant entitlement.

Hon. Members should also be aware that we have provided extra capital allocations of some £135 million next year. Sandwell will receive £0·72 million in addition to its allocation for this purpose of £0·158 million for the current year. Clearly, we do not accept what the hon. Gentleman and Sandwell are saying about the costs of setting up the community charge.

Returning to why it is simply wrong to suggest that Sandwell's suggested rate increase is somehow the Government's fault, I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that the rate levy is a matter for Sandwell. Clearly, this will depend to some extent on the amount of block grant the authority estimates that it will receive. Given closedown arrangements, this amount no longer depends on what the authority spends. But as I have said, Sandwell is getting 6 per cent. more grant next year, so why a rate rise of perhaps as much as 18 per cent.?

The answer lies not in the settlement nor in grant reductions for earlier years, which I understand had been fully taken into account by the council. It lies in the council's decisions on spending—not necessarily decisions this year, but certainly spending decisions at some time. It is always the case that, as expenditure increases, sooner or later the bills for ratepayers are higher.

One way for an authority to cushion ratepayers from the immediate effects of such increases is to use its general rate fund balances to finance part of its expenditure. This is a device used for a number of reasons, but perhaps often when a council believes that a high rate increase might be politically damaging. Sandwell has done just that. It took the decision to increase budgeted total expenditure this year—1988-89—by some 12 per cent. over estimated outturn for 1987-88. Not only was this a significant increase in real terms; it was also well above the average increase for local government generally, and came on top of an above average increase in the previous year.

This level of expenditure would have required a local rate increase of almost 30 per cent. in 1988-89, but that would have made its rate the highest in the west Midlands and well above the average for metropolitan districts

generally. I can understand why it chose instead to draw some £23 million from balances to keep the actual increase within single figures and to camouflage its existing spending from its ratepayers.

Mr. Snape: The Minister will concede that Sandwell's expenditure in the current financial year was entirely in accordance with the advice given by the Audit Commission, which pointed out that, particularly in areas such as housing and the social services, Sandwell in effect needed to spend more, which is just what it has done.

Mrs. Bottomley: I have little time in which to complete my remarks. Our proposals have been enacted in the Rate Support Grants Act 1988 and I can add nothing to what was said during the passage of that measure. Our proposals are the only practicable way forward. No system allows the truth to be hidden for ever. Sandwell council overspent in previous years and drew on its balances.

It was suggested that there had been difficulty in Sandwell having its representations heard. The letter from the Council arrived too late to arrange a visit, but the hon. Gentleman's representations were taken into account. My right hon. Friend had a meeting later with the West Midlands passenger transport authority on the points that it wished to raise.

As I said, no system allows the truth to be hidden for ever. An authority can hide its true level of spending, by using reserves and other means, for some time—certainly as long as the money holds out—but, if it does not curtail its spending, the bill must eventually be paid.

That is happening in Sandwell. This is why ratepayers face much higher increases next year. It has nothing to do *with the settlement, which would have provided for any* rate increase to be below the level of inflation had the council rated this year for the full costs of its budgeted expenditure and decided to keep its expenditure at around the same level next year.

It is not for me to comment on the council's reasons for increasing expenditure so rapidly in recent years, so that it has moved from being 5 per cent. below GRE to 8 per cent. above. Nor can I say for certain why it has budgeted to use such large amounts of funds and reserves in recent years when, I presume, it must have been aware that this would eventually lead to significant rate increases unless it addressed the root cause—and that, as I trust I have made clear, is its spending. I am certain that hon. Members will agree there can be no real justification for an expenditure increase of over 27 per cent. in the last two years.

We have heard tonight a tale of a council attempting to hide its true spending policies from its ratepayers and electorate, but the truth will out. If Sandwell's rates go up, that is because it has spent up. Nothing I have heard tonight should persuade anyone to the contrary.

What I have heard tonight from the hon. Gentleman is that Sandwell council is determined efficiently and effectively to provide services. I hope that it will take advantage of the competitive tendering and contracting out to raise the savings that the Audit Commission has made clear——

The Motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 1 February 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

NEW WRITS

Motion made and Question proposed,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Richmond, Yorks in the room of the right hon. Sir Leon Brittan, Knight, QC, who, since his election for the said county constituency hath accepted the Office of Steward or Bailiff of Her Majesty's Manor of Northstead in the county of York.—*[Mr. Waddington.]*

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to give notice that at the proper time I hope to oppose the writ for the Richmond constituency.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken. The proceedings will stand postponed until the commencement of public business.

Motion made and Question proposed,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the Pontypridd constituency in the room of Brynmor John Esquire, deceased. —*[Mr. Foster.]*

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Object.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken. That business will also stand postponed until the commencement of public business.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

MIDLAND METRO BILL

Read a Second time, and committed.

PENZANCE ALBERT PIER EXTENSION BILL

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

WESLEYAN ASSURANCE SOCIETY BILL

Read a Second time, and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

1. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the depute community charge registration officer in Paisley to discuss progress in compiling a comprehensive register.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Adams: Given that the community charge registration officer in Paisley has designated me as the responsible person in my house, and has said in a letter that my wife is not a responsible person, why is it important that my wife should divulge her age on the registration form? If she refuses to tell me her age, can the Secretary of State advise me how to extort that information from her?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the requirement for dates of birth was introduced following representations from local authority practitioners that it would be necessary. I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman may have some difficulty in establishing his wife's precise date of birth, but as I understand that he has already given that information to the press he should have no difficulty in giving it to the responsible officer.

Mr. Douglas: What advice has the Secretary of State given to registration officers in the Highland region who have registered numerous people, particularly females, as having a date of birth of 1 January 1800?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not familiar with the reasons which might have led to that date being inserted, but the hon. Gentleman will be aware that we received representations on the desirability of giving the date of birth because there could be circumstances in which more than one person with the same name resided in a house. The recommendation was made to enable a distinction to be drawn between such individuals.

Mr. Buchan: When will the Secretary of State begin to realise the unpopularity of this legislation in Scotland? Today a petition containing the signatures of many hundreds of thousands of people was presented to the Prime Minister at No. 10. Is the Secretary of State aware that one person, Terry O'Donnell who is here today, single-handedly on Paisley piazza collected no fewer than 48,000 signatures against the tax? When individuals do such things, and when the mass do such things, the Secretary of State must surely have some sense and shift his attitude.

Mr. Rifkind: The allegations made by the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends about the community charge have turned out to be of little substance. For instance, the Opposition told us that registration would be a complete fiasco, and Labour and the nationalists campaigned against it, but registration is complete to the extent of more than 99 per cent. throughout Scotland.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is wrong for certain individuals to cheat on society by using the services provided by local government and seeking to avoid paying for them? Does he agree that right hon. and hon. Members should take a lead in adhering to the law, rather than making promises to break the law?

Mr. Rifkind: Those who were not liable to pay rates under the old rating system cannot be accused of cheating on society because no one volunteers to pay a tax that Parliament does not require them to pay, but certainly those who are liable under the new legislation and for various political reasons threaten to avoid payment will be sponging on the rest of society—if they get away with it.

2. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has taken steps to ensure that the community charge register for Scotland is compiled without reference to the electoral register.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): No, Sir. The electoral register is a public document, and section 17(2) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 makes it clear that community charges registration officers—who are, of course, also the electoral registration officers—can have access to and the use of any information that is held for electoral registration purposes in their areas.

Mr. McAllion: Throughout Scotland, tens of thousands of registration forms have been returned bearing the imprint, "Not known at this address". Will the Minister confirm that registration officers will use electoral registers as one means of trying to locate missing persons liable to pay the poll tax? Does he understand that the poll tax, by taxing the vote, far from strengthening accountability within the democratic process, is driving out of the democratic process those who are poor and cannot afford to pay the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: As I have said, the electoral register is one source of information available to registration officers. It is significant that despite the Opposition's campaign to frustrate compilation of the register an average 99 per cent. completion has been achieved, so the "Stop It" campaign did not stop it. Only by spreading the tax burden evenly over the whole adult population will it be fairly borne by that population.

Mr. Worthington: Even at this late stage, will the Government show some common humanity and exclude from the register all those people suffering from degenerative diseases? All normal, decent people are offended that those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, for example, have to be included in the register. Will the Minister agree, even at this late stage, that that is offensive?

Mr. Lang: There are a number of exemptions from community charge liability, and there will be an opportunity to answer the hon. Gentleman's point when the appropriate question is reached.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that in view of his statement that 99 per cent. of the electorate has registered, the problem is surely that local authorities have increased expenditure by far more than inflation, despite the fact that they have received greatly increased grants, so their community charges are much higher than they needed to be?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right, and it is undoubtedly the case that, perhaps under cover of the turbulence produced by the changeover to the new system, certain local authorities have sought to increase their spending substantially and blame the system for it. In due course, accountability will bring home to them the importance of taking account of the ability of all adults resident in their areas to pay the community charge.

Mr. Dewar: Is not the fact that the electoral register is at the heart of the registration process, illustrated by the fact that the Strathclyde registration officer issued forms already completed with names taken from the electoral register? Does the Minister think that that is desirable? Also, does he accept that a married couple living in a house of average rateable value will together have to pay substantially more under the poll tax if they live in Glasgow, Edinburgh or almost any other part of Scotland than they pay under the present system? Given the shift in the balance of taxation against areas already disadvantaged that is built into the poll tax, and the strength of feeling that exists in Scotland, is not the Government's thrawn determination to proceed with the tax a negation of democracy?

Mr. Lang: The main source of information for the electoral registration officer will continue to be the use of inquiry forms and the annual canvass. Clearly, the procedure adopted by the registration officer in Strathclyde has been successful in view of the very high percentage registered. As to the hon. Gentleman's example, if the burden on residents in that area is rising it is because the local authorities are increasing their expenditure. The local authorities will be answerable to the electorate at the next election.

Mr. Salmond: Will the Minister of State confirm that there are 39,000 fewer people on the electoral register for this year than the Government forecast in 1985? Does he think that this is due to the disincentive effect of the poll tax, or is it because Tory economic policy is causing mass emigration from Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's figure, but we shall have to await the publication of the electoral register later this month. If there is misunderstanding as to the importance of the electoral register in the context of the community charge, it is probably because Opposition parties have described the charge as a poll tax, deliberately seeking to mislead residents in local authority areas.

Mr. Harris: Will my hon. Friend accept from me and from many other Conservative Members that the Government's stance on this issue has the overwhelming backing of all fair-minded people not just in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom? Does he understand the attitude of Opposition Members who seem to think that those who want the right to vote for local councils should escape their obligation to pay for the cost of those councils? My hon. Friend's attitude is right and the attitude of certain Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), is completely fraudulent.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reassurance. I also understand the envy of some English colleagues because we in Scotland will be getting rid of the domestic rates a year before the English.

3. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had regarding the exemption of people with chronic degenerative brain disorders from payment of the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations from Members of Parliament, interested organisations and individuals about the liability for the community charge of people with degenerative brain disorders.

Dr. Moonie: As the stated aim of introducing a poll tax was to improve local accountability, how does the Minister propose that people with chronic degenerative disorders should exercise that accountability when they are incapable of voting? Should he not therefore consider exempting them from payment of the community charge?

Mr. Lang: We took careful medical advice. The balance of medical advice is that it is impossible to establish a method of assessment which would enable a precise and accurate moment to be discerned when an individual should be exempted from the community charge without creating more anomalies than it would remove. Anyone in that condition in a long-term care hospital will be exempt from the community charge.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Is it not an unfair burden on doctors to have to decide whether a person should pay the poll tax, and should not the registration officer also be medically qualified if, following receipt of a doctor's certificate, he has the right to determine whether or not to grant exemption?

Mr. Lang: The whole point of requiring medical advice is so that professional expertise may be available to the community charge registration officer. Doctors have to take difficult decisions on a wide range of matters affecting the health of patients. Our decision on this difficult and sensitive issue was based on clear medical advice.

Mr. Galbraith: Surely the issue is whether or not the patient is severely mentally impaired, not the way in which he comes to be so mentally impaired. Why should the 91,000 patients with Alzheimer's disease be discriminated against? They live for an average of 10 years after diagnosis. Why should they alone of the severely mentally impaired have to pay the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: The provisions in the Act exempt from liability those with severe mental impairment from birth or as a result of an accident. Degenerative diseases are often of a fluctuating nature.

Hon. Members: Rubbish!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lang: These are often of a fluctuating nature. There will be periods of lucidity. The best medical advice open to us has convinced us that there is no way of assessing the right moment at which exemption should apply without creating more anomalies that it would solve.

Forestry

4. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs are associated with the forestry industry in *(a)* the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): At 31 March 1988 there were about 41,000 jobs associated directly with the forestry industry in the United Kingdom, of which 11,500 were in Scotland.

Mr. Wood: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he agree that properly managed woodland can be both attractive environmentally and provide valuable jobs? Can my hon. Friend tell me more about the woodland, initiative for central Scotland and how that will help to improve the environment?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend is right to say that many more jobs can be created by this means. We expect that several hundred jobs will be created by the central Scotland woodlands initiative and that this will bring more environmental and recreational opportunities. We envisage that in the next 20 years up to £50 million will be committed. The whole purpose is to improve the environment in areas where there are many derelict sites and scars on the landscape, and this will be of assistance to the local communities concerned.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Does the Minister realise that the headquarters of the Forestry Commission in Scotland is situated in Edinburgh, and that the workers there will have to pay £393 in poll tax, whereas if the Government gave poll tax payers in Edinburgh the same subsidy as in Glasgow, they would have to pay only £151?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That supplementary question could not spring directly from the main question, which is about jobs in the forestry industry. We expect that the number of jobs in Scotland, and in Britain generally, will increase greatly. I am delighted that the Forestry Commission's headquarters is in my constituency, and I shall give every possible support to my constituents in this matter.

Mr. Andy Stewart: May I take this opportunity to congratulate the Scottish Office on its initiative in creating the new central lowlands forest? My hon. Friend will be aware that I am hoping that the English national forest will be in Sherwood. Will he send me the papers and tell me what job opportunities I can expect from the forest there?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I certainly will, and I will bring my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment as I think that my hon. Friend is referring to the forest of the legendary Robin Hood.

Rating Reform

5. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from organisations on behalf of disabled persons concerning exemptions from the community charge.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from a number of organisations which act on behalf of people with various forms of disability.

Mr. McTaggart: Given the tremendous depth of feeling that exists on this issue, may I ask the Minister to agree that it is an absolute disgrace to differentiate between the severely mentally handicapped, the mentally handicapped and the handicapped to establish who should be exempt from this tax? It is also a disgrace that many of his well-heeled, greedy friends should gain enormously financially from the poll tax. Even at this late stage, will he abolish the tax or at least exempt this disadvantaged group?

Mr. Lang: No. The distinctions have been made on the basis of medical advice and I believe that they are right. A great many of the physically handicapped would resent the implication that they were somehow incapable of playing their full part in public life, including participation in local government matters.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will the Minister note that under the previous rating system none of the categories mentioned by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart) was exempt and that our system is infinitely more humane than the Labour Government's callous attitude ever was?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is right. We are now spending about £7·3 billion in help for the long-term sick and disabled. That represents a 90 per cent. increase over what was being spent in 1979.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Will the Minister agree that warrant sales are a barbaric and inhuman procedure? Will he commend Angus district council for issuing a standing instruction banning their use? Given that one poll tax registration officer tried to pursue a warrant sale against an 82-year-old pensioner, will the Minister issue an instruction banning their use against the disabled, the handicapped and anyone else?

Mr. Lang: Nobody welcomes the excessive use of warrant sales, but everyone acknowledges that a need for them exists. I believe that the modification that has taken place as a result of the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1988 has improved the situation considerably. I commend Angus district council for its support for the implementation of the community charge.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister tell the House which medical advisers have told him that Alzheimer's disease is a fluctuating condition? Is it not morally repugnant that this tax is being imposed on those who are suffering from that disease, those who are mildly mentally handicapped and those who are severely physically handicapped, bed-ridden and in wheelchairs, while at the same time, on 1 April, the Minister and all his friends will receive a large fat increase in the money that they have, because their tax bills will be cut?

Mr. Lang: Many degenerative diseases fluctuate considerably, with periods of lucidity. Alzheimer's disease involves the problem that I described earlier—the difficulty of deciding exactly when it would be appropriate to exempt a particular individual from the provisions of the legislation. The vast majority of the disabled, if on rebate, would be eligible for a considerably enhanced entitlement to rebate in consideration of the disability premiums and allowances to which they are entitled.

6. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the impact of the standard community charge on the tourist industry in rural areas and on agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

8. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the effects of the poll tax in rural areas.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received a number of such representations. In response to these, my hon. Friend the Minister of State has today issued a consultation paper proposing that empty farm cottages should remain in rating and hence not become subject to the standard community charge. I am confident that this will be widely welcomed. Copies of the paper have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: While I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for responding to the representations that I and others have made, and without being in any way ungrateful—I believe that he has done the right thing—may I ask him to extend that sensitivity to houses which are let for holiday purposes? In parts of my constituency, certainly, the community charge would hit the development of the tourist trade.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my right hon. Friend for the earlier part of his question. With regard to holiday homes, part of the problem has been caused because most local authorities have insisted on a multiplier of two, when the Act freely enables them to have a multiplier of one. If those authorities were to allow a multiplier of one, as they have a discretion to do, the consequential tax would be halved.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Secretary of State go one step further and restore the rating concession for crofters? Will he give an update on his 1986 estimate that the loss of the rating concession would cost crofters £500,000? Does he agree that this kind of financial blow to the crofting counties is senseless at a time when of the biggest economic problems facing Britain is the imbalance between regions.

Mr. Rifkind: We gave careful consideration to the position of crofters. The hon. Gentleman, who is an honest man, will be the first to appreciate that it is difficult to suggest that a crofter should be given an advantage over another member of the public who might have the same income. A crofter on low income—*[Interruption.]* It is not only crofters who sometimes suffer deficiencies in services. A crofter on low income will be entitled to rebate. There is no reason in equity why a crofter with a specific income should be in a different position from any member of the public with the same income.

Mr. Bill Walker: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his helpful reply about empty farm cottages, but will he continue to bear in mind that in areas of Scotland where tourism is a vital and essential part of the local economy it is important that cottages, chalets, and so on, that are let on an ad hoc basis should be recognised as being part of a business and treated in the same way?

Mr. Rifkind: It was for precisely that reason that we gave local authorities the discretion to determine the

multiplier to be used. With the exception of Western Isles district council, I believe that all other local authorities have chosen the higher multiplier. If authorities are concerned about the tourist implications in their area, it is open to them to halve the tax liability by using the discretion that Parliament has given to them.

Mr. Canavan: Does the Secretary of State accept that it is blatantly unjust to impose a £50 fine for failure to register on an old-age pensioner suffering from senility, whether that person lives in a rural or urban area, and then to threaten such a person with a warrant sale for failing to pay that fine? Is it not absolutely draconian that sheriff officers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about tourist cottages.

Mr. Canavan: —that sheriff officers in urban or rural areas are allowed to use Tory Government legislation to subject old-age pensioners to such Gestapo-type harassment?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that no old-age pensioner living in a rural or urban area is liable to face any fine through failure to register through genuine confusion, misunderstanding or anything other than deliberate intent.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister confirm his views on what I regard as his astonishingly dishonest comment on the second home multiplier?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Not "dishonest" in respect of the Minister.

Mr. Wilson: I will withdraw that word. Will he comment on his astonishingly flexible use of the truth in relation to second homes?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that the Scottish Office's calculations of poll tax for each area were based on the assumption of a multiplier of two? Will he confirm that the absurdity of that aspect of the poll tax is highlighted by the fact that the consequence of introducing a multiplier of one on local authorities would have been even more massive savings for those who own the most expensive and palatial second homes in a given area? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that it is now possible for a traveller from Muckle Flugga to Machrihanish to pass through Scotland without encountering one single inch of Scottish territory held by a Tory Member of Parliament? Will he name one local authority in the Scottish rural areas, of any political persuasion, which regards the poll tax as anything but a further disincentive to live in rural areas and a further blow to fragile communities?

Mr. Rifkind: I am bound to say that the hon. Gentleman is getting into a lather with little substance. If rural local authorities believe that the community charge is an imposition on their local communities it is rather surprising that, in almost every case, they are proposing to increase their expenditure substantially and, as a consequence, are fixing community charges that are considerably higher than they would otherwise need to be.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Secretary of State realise that many people in rural areas with cottages let them for a few weeks in the year? They include not only farmers, who might be covered by the review that he has in mind, but others who will be unable to let their cottages. Such people are having to seek expensive change of use approvals to take the cottages out of taxation. That is a disincentive to tourism and a positive burden on people who, in many cases, are on a low income. Will he extend his consideration of this problem beyond farmers to cover such people?

Mr. Rifkind: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said, but in the shorter term his best course would be to make representations to the Highland regional council, as it is within its power to reduce substantially the level of tax on such properties. I shall, however, consider what the hon. Gentleman said about the wider issues.

Competitive Tendering

7. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made towards competitive tendering for local government services in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities are now fully engaged in implementing the competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988. Detailed implementation regulations were made in August 1988 and the first round of contracts have to be let by 1 August 1989.

Mr. Jack: Does my hon. Friend agree that negative attitudes to the benefits of competitive tendering are still being displayed by Opposition Members? Does he agree that such an attitude denies the Scottish people local services at lower prices? Does my hon. Friend have any evidence that the benefits of such tendering have penetrated the closed minds of Opposition Members?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I believe that there has been a change of attitude, as evidenced by the remarks of the president of COSLA, reported in *The Scotsman* of 5 January, who suggested:

"the best answer councils could give in response to that threat would be to win compulsory competitive tenders so that services would remain in-house."

The president is quoted as saying:

"If that happens it will inject fresh confidence and life into local authorities and simultaneously disarm our critics."

I believe that more and more hon. Members are coming round to that view.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I put it to the Minister that Strathclyde region has an excellent lighting department, but because he has forced competitive tenders—*[Interruption.]* It is not funny. Because he forced the local authority to accept competitive tenders the night shift was taken off—in a week when a young girl in my constituency was raped and brutally beaten up. The lighting in the city of Glasgow can be out for as long as two days, particularly over a weekend. Does the Minister care more about competitive tenders than the safety of our women and children on the streets?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman must be quite clear that local authorities remain responsible for deciding the level of service they wish to deliver. It is for them to write into the tender specification the precise level of service that they wish to have implemented. The activities listed in the Act cost £300

million, so it is quite clear that the modest target of 10 per cent. savings would lead to savings of some £30 million a year which are well worth making.

Employment Training

9. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current situation regarding the implementation of employment training in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am glad to say that employment training is now progressing well. There is no shortage of employers willing to participate and the latest figures show that almost 16,000 people have entered the new programme.

Mr. Hind: No doubt my hon. Friend will have noted that since January 1987 unemployment in Scotland has fallen by 80,000. Does he agree that local authorities in Scotland and the Scottish TUC, in turning their backs on the unemployed and not participating in the employment training programme, are ensuring that many of them will not have the opportunity to fill the 20,000 vacancies that currently exist in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The failure of the STUC and COSLA actively to support the employment training scheme has led to a widening of the differential in unemployment figures between Scotland and England. Although COSLA is modifying its attitude to some extent, if the STUC persists in its view it will become increasingly uninfluential and irrelevant to the economic scene in Scotland.

Dr. Godman: In regard to the fusion of employment training and enterprise creation under the umbrella of Scottish Enterprise, I remind the Minister of the dreadfully high unemployment figures in Greenock and Port Glasgow. The present situation at the Ferguson yard in Port Glasgow is causing very deep concern. Will he urge on his ministerial colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry the urgent necessity to welcome further offers for the acquisition of the yard? Does he agree that the offer from Ailsa Perth of Troon was pitifully inadequate and therefore was understandably rejected by the entire work force?

Mr. Lang: I am glad that unemployment is falling in Greenock and Port Glasgow and has done so in the past two years, as it has elsewhere in Scotland. However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the figures remain far too high. The area has particular economic difficulties and that is why we are setting up an enterprise zone in that area. I believe that the fusion of the Training Agency with the activities of the Scottish Development Agency will lead to an improvement in the way in which we are able to respond to such matters. As to his reference to the bid for the Ferguson yard, while negotiations are taking place it would be inappropriate for me to comment on them.

Mr. McLeish: Is the Minister aware that out of a planned provision of 41,000 places in Scotland, his Government have managed to fill only 12,000 places? Does he regard the shortfall of 30,000 places as a success or, as we would describe it, as a classic failure? Will the Minister acknowledge that the responsibility lies fairly and squarely with the Government? Will he give the House an assurance that he will arrange an early meeting with the STUC, COSLA and the voluntary sector to put together a package to help the 100,000 unemployed, instead of displaying complacency at the Dispatch Box on every occasion?

Mr. Lang: I had a meeting with the STUC general council only last Friday at which it did not seek to raise that matter. As for the hon. Gentleman's figures, there is high demand for places on the employment training scheme which has been doing well since it started. Like all new schemes, of course it will take time to get going, but almost 16,000 people have entered the new programme since its inception—that is not the figure that the hon. Gentleman gave the House. If the STUC would co-operate and support the scheme, which is of crucial importance in preparing people for the 20,000 job vacancies mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) and for the fact that some 700,000 jobs turn over in the Scottish economy every year, the scheme would work much more successfully.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my hon. Friend agree that the protestations of Opposition Members about unemployment ring rather hollow, considering that they will at no stage assist in valuable measures such as the employment training programme which are designed to put people back into work and to remove the unemployment problems about which those Members claim to be so concerned?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is very encouraging that unemployment has been falling steadily in Scotland over the past two years. That, of course, is a phenomenon with which no Labour Government have ever been familiar.

Rating Reform

10. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to publicise the effects of the poll tax on women in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: No, Sir.

Mrs. Fyfe: That was a commendably brief answer. Will the Minister nevertheless explain to the women of Scotland why they will have to pay the same amount of poll tax as men when, on average, their earnings are only three quarters as much? How does the Minister justify the joint and several liability provision in the legislation, whereby if a marriage breaks up and the man leaves the home—as commonly happens—the poll tax officers will demand the unpaid poll tax from the woman, regardless of how low her income may be? How does he justify all the other injustices perpetrated on Scottish women by the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: The income of a man or woman becomes relevant in the context of an application for a rebate. The vast majority of specific groups such as single pensioners, most of whom are women, or single parent families, most of whom are led by women, will benefit from the community charge.

Joint and several liability provisions have been inserted to protect the woman in a marriage or other partnership who, in many cases has no income, and might otherwise be unable to pay the charge if her partner declined to do so.

Mr. Sillars: Will the Minister return to the point that he has just made and answer the question that the Secretary of State for Defence so conspicuously failed to answer on

the BBC's "Scottish Question Time"? What happens to a woman whose husband has been responsible for her poll tax, because she has no income, when he leaves her and cannot be found, and she is left with the legal responsibility of joint and several liability?

Mr. Lang: If, as is implied, the woman has no income she will be eligible for income support, and on income support she will be eligible for an 80 per cent. rebate. The level of income support has been raised to take account of the remaining 20 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Has my hon. Friend read the reported comments of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) about the community charge in the Communist paper the *Morning Star* on 17 September last year? She said that if voting did not get people what they wanted they must resist the Government by any means available to them. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is not a democratic way of opposing Government policy?

Mr. Lang: I think that it was James Thurber who said that a woman's place was in the wrong. In the case of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) he was clearly quite right.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I am sure that the women of Scotland will take note of the acid comments of the Minister who is supposed to be responsible for the poll tax in Scotland and for ensuring fairness and justice. It might serve the Conservative party better if he tried to deal honestly with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe).

Women are generally exploited and less well off, and it does not help the Minister to be supported by comments such as those of his hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on such a serious issue. Women are looking for a response from the Government, but all they are told is that they may not be responsible. What is the Minister doing to help women, who generally do not earn as much as men, to offset the damage inflicted on them by the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: As I have said, there is a rebate scheme from which more than 1 million people in Scotland should be eligible to benefit. That is about 30 per cent. of Scotland's adult population. I have cited specific groups in which women predominate and will benefit. In so far as women's interests are a specific feature of the impact of the community charge, we have tried to make provisions for them. For instance, there is provision for women's refuges, and women are entitled to register anonymously if they are in fear of physical violence.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend understand my confusion that women should suddenly be resurrected by the Socialist party as an identifiable group? I understood that, under all the legislation introduced by the Labour Government, we were supposed to regard each other as persons and that women were not identifiable as a group. As the Lord Provost of Glasgow is a woman, what on earth are we talking about?

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. Essentially, there is no difference, but, as I am sure he will agree with me, "Vive la différence".

Mr. Dewar: I fear that we now have evidence that the Minister of State lives in an unreal world.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, because of longevity, Alzheimer's disease is a particular hazard for women and that many Members have sad family and constituency experience of that disease? Does he recognise that those struggling to help people suffering from Alzheimer's disease will be appalled by the insensitivity of the Government's response? Does he also accept that we are genuinely astonished by the continued exclusion of those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and from other degenerative brain disorders and even more astonished that the ground given is that the disease fluctuates? Will he call for a report on that aspect of the matter and the medical situation from his new chief medical officer, Mr. Kenneth Calman, and publish that report so that the House can see the basis on which the Government have acted in a mean and mistaken way?

Mr. Lang: These matters were fully debated when the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 and the Local Government Act 1988 went through Parliament.

I readily acknowledge, as I did in my earlier answers, that the subject of degenerative diseases is a sensitive and difficult issue, but, on the best medical advice available to us, we decided that to seek to establish a specific exemption would create more anomalies than leaving the situation as it is, where, in the vast majority of cases, people will either be on rebate, and thus be eligible for a small proportion of the community charge, or in long-stay homes or hospitals.

Tree Planting

11. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are any Government initiatives to encourage tree planting down the hill.

Mr. Rifkind: There are a number of Government initiatives in place to encourage tree planting down the hill. Both the woodland grant scheme and the farm woodland scheme which we introduced last year have added incentives for planting carried out on arable and improved grassland. They also offer much higher grants for the planting of broadleaved species, which do well on lower ground of better quality.

Mr. Stern: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the schemes that have been introduced are necessary to maintain rural economies and communities, and would have been much more difficult to implement without the fiscal initiatives introduced in the last Budget?

Mr. Rifkind: That is so, and they are much more environmentally attractive and consistent with what the public expect from a woodland policy?

Mr. Foulkes: The hill referred to is clearly in Cumnock and Doon Valley. The Secretary of State will recall the excellent visit that he paid to Cumnock and Doon Valley. I am sure that he is as sorry as I am to know that the employment situation in Cumnock and Doon Valley, in textile and other industries, has not improved since his visit. Will he consider carefully the representations that I have now made to him on behalf of Cumnock and Doon Valley district council and have an urgent follow-up meeting to consider carefully the measures—including tree planting—that might improve the chronic unemployment situation which is causing great distress in Cumnock and Doon Valley?

Mr. Rifkind: With the best will in the world, I cannot claim to remember tree planting as one of the suggestions raised at the time, but I am happy to consider the hon. Gentleman's point and look carefully at any representations that might be made.

Zircon Film

12. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he is giving to charges following the raid by special branch on Queen Margaret drive, Glasgow, in relation to the Zircon film.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Consideration of criminal charges was, of course, a matter for the Lord Advocate, not my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. As I informed the hon. Gentleman in the House on 9 December 1987, the then Lord Advocate announced on 27 November 1987 that no criminal proceedings would be instituted in Scotland.

Mr. Dalyell: On Tuesday 27 January 1987, what indications were available to the Secretary of State personally that special branch might visit Queen Margaret drive?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The short answer is none. The Secretary of State became aware that there was likely to be a police operation at the BBC's premises when, quite coincidentally, he visited them with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on the evening of Friday 30 January to participate in the recording of a BBC Scotland television programme. That was after the decision had been made and warrants issued by the sheriff court in Scotland. There are no grounds for the allegation that the Government were involved in that decision.

Mr. Galloway: BBC Scotland's headquarters are in my constituency. Brian Barr, who was witch-hunted as a result of that raid, is one of my most distinguished constituents. The incredible gymnastics of the Minister's answer, supplemented by a brief quickly whispered to him by the Secretary of State, do not disguise the simple question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). Did the Secretary of State for Scotland know on 30 January that there was to be a police raid on BBC Scotland? Yes or no? The truth please.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I made it quite clear that the decision was made when the warrant was submitted to the court. My right hon. and learned Friend was informally informed of the decision that evening by a police officer at the BBC Scotland premises. He was not consulted about the decision before it was made and was not in any way involved in it. The decision was the responsibility of the Law Officers and the procurator fiscal.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that there was nothing unusual about this incident? The police entered the premises to look for evidence, having obtained a warrant from a sheriff. That is not an unusual occurrence. The next question is whether the evidence found is sufficient to bring charges. That is how the police and courts normally operate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Lord Advocate was certain that the proper procedures for obtaining the search warrant were followed, and that the involvement of the procurator fiscal and the sheriff was in accordance with the established law in Scotland. On 27 November the Lord Advocate announced that, having considered reports from the fiscal, having consulted the Attorney-General and having regard to the public interest, he had issued instructions not to institute criminal proceedings in respect of any disclosure.

Mr. Galloway: Apologise then.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is no need for me to apologise. The police were investigating a potentially serious criminal offence. The fact that, at the end of the day, no criminal proceedings were instituted, does not mean that the police action was wrong.

Revenue Support Grant

13. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he arrived at the safety-netting levels applicable to individual authorities in the revenue support grant settlement for 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government decided to end the excessive grant entitlements of high-spending authorities. Rather than eliminate them immediately, they decided, as with many other reforms, to phase the changes, and that will be achieved over a three to five-year period. The arrangements for 1989-90 were arrived at having regard to the effect of these grant changes on community charge payers. Details of the calculations are explained in the report on the Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Ingram: Does the Secretary of State accept that the arrangements have worked harshly against East Kilbride district council? They have taken it from the third-lowest rated council to the highest poll-taxed council in Scotland. Will the Secretary of State assure us that the revenue support grant settlement will be reviewed in the light of the outturn on poll tax yields, rate products and other relevant factors?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall consider all relevant factors. The hon. Gentleman is correct; the district council did not benefit from the changes. However, East Kilbride taxpayers did. The combined effect on the regional and district councils has given East Kilbride taxpayers a net benefit of £6 per adult.

Mr. Doran: Apart from the efforts of the Secretary of State to reduce the income of local authorities, all Scottish hon. Members will be aware of the principled stand taken by Councillor Roy Munn of Grampian regional council to reduce the income of his own authority. What the House may be less aware of is that last year, in Grampian regional council there were 28 warrant sales, which were authorised by the finance convenor. Twenty-two of those were domestic warrant sales. We know that the finance convenor at that time was Roy Munn, the very same individual involved in the principled stand. Is such a principled stand by the Scottish National party one of which the Government approve?

Mr. Rifkind: We are all familiar with nationalist rhetoric and nationalist actions having nothing in common.

Mr. Redwood: When considering the overall revenue support grant for local authorities, did my right hon. and

learned Friend take into account that it is one of the benefits of the Union to Scotland? Is it for that reason that some Opposition parties are not joining the SNP and are walking out of the constitutional convention?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to point to the substantial level of support that Scottish community charge payers receive from revenue support grant. Wales has a higher level of revenue support grant and England has a lower level.

Mr. Steel: Each elected local authority in Scotland, of whatever political persuasion, considers that its expenditure needs are higher than the Secretary of State considers and, therefore, has produced a higher poll tax than he forecast. How long does the Secretary of State intend to maintain the fiction that they are all wrong and he is right?

Mr. Rifkind: I should be more inclined to accept what the right hon. Gentleman said if his own regional council in the Borders had not received a revenue support grant of 13·5 per cent. To use that as a basis for increasing expenditure in the way that it has done shows a strong commitment to high spending and, perhaps, insufficient consideration for the interests of community charge payers.

Primary Schools

14. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to monitor the performance of primary schools in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): My right hon. and learned Friend has decided to intensify the assessment of achievement programme to cover English, science and mathematics in a three-yearly cycle, instead of five-yearly as hitherto. An assessment of English will be undertaken this year. Regular reports are also received from Her Majesty's inspectors of schools.

Mr. Bruce: Does my hon. Friend agree that parents in Scotland are keen to see such assessment coming on to the scene? They are keen to see that their children are keeping up to the standards throughout the nation. Can my hon. Friend also tell us what discussions he has with colleagues such as our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science about feeding back the good experience in Scottish schools and transferring some of the excellence in Scottish primary schools to English and Welsh schools?

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is right about the interest that parents have in the achievements of their children at school, and our proposals to introduce testing in English and mathematics in primary 4 and primary 7 will provide for that. The "Home from School" report provided clear evidence of parental interest in the matter. I shall quote one parent who put the matter succinctly, saying:

"It is all very well to say he is competing against himself. Great. But he is not competing against himself when it comes to getting a job and then he has got to wake up to the rude discovery that he is only pretty good in his own terms but not by anyone else's standards."

My hon. Friend is right. Parents want testing in schools so that they know how their children are getting on in those basic subjects.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Minister accept that educational provision in primary schools in Scotland is considerably hampered by the incredible lack of provision hitherto for under-fives? We have some of the most disgraceful circumstances in the whole of Europe. When will the Minister do something about that?

Mr. Forsyth: The provision of education for under-fives is a matter for local authorities, and the hon. Gentleman's own party is in control of a number of those authorities, so it is in a position to do something about it. The results from the assessment of achievement programme in Scotland show clearly that there has been a decline in performance in mathematics and English over the past five years. When I read data that show that in primary 7, a total of 22 per cent. of children cannot divide 630 by 10, I am convinced that our proposals to bring testing into the curriculum and to introduce testing have the support of parents, if not of Opposition Members.

Trunk Roads

15. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's review of future development of trunk road routes south of Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There has been a slight delay in preparation of the report of the "Routes South of Edinburgh" study which was due to have been submitted by the end of January.

Mr. Kirkwood: Why has there been that delay? It is vital to the whole Borders region that the A1, A68 and A7 are improved and developed. Will the Minister assure us that the report will be published before the summer and that there is no suggestion that detrunking will play any part in action implemented by the Government?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Some delays ensued from technical difficulties, but the more important fact is the increasingly evident need for interchange between the M74 studies and the "Routes South of Edinburgh" study.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the report would be published. The document is technical and it is not usual to publish such documents, but we plan to publish a summary of the recommendations and then state what action we intend to take as a result. We shall do that as soon as possible. There was also the problem that the study area proved larger than the usual computer programme could handle, so that had to be rewritten to cope with the amount of data involved.

I note also the hon. Gentleman's comment about detrunking, but at this stage I cannot give him the commitment that he seeks.

Mr. Strang: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the exchanges between my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and the Minister on question No. 2, you will have noted that the decision of yourself and your staff to allow the poll tax to be called the poll tax on the Order Paper, and not to give way to the Government in calling it the community charge, was completely vindicated. I hope that when the broadcasting organisations in Scotland report today—when representatives from all walks of life in Scotland present a petition with a third of a million signatures against the poll tax

—and say that the only concession that we achieved was for empty farm cottages, they will recognise that we are talking about a poll tax and not a community charge.

Mr. Speaker: That is hypothetical at the moment.

Mr. Bill Walker: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When a statutory body such as a local authority is established by the House by statute and operates under the statute for collecting local taxation, is the local authority allowed to call that local taxation by a term other than that which this House has passed?

Mr. Speaker: The correct term is what is in the Act.

Mr. Home Robertson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the Secretary of State for Scotland announced a major concession to farmers in empty farm cottages, have you had any indication from him that he intends to make any statement of any relief for the 11,000 farm workers in tied cottages who will be worse hit than those farmers?

Mr. Speaker: I have had no indication of that.

New Writ (Richmond, Yorks)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Richmond, Yorks in the room of the right hon. Sir Leon Brittan, QC, who, since his election for the said county constituency, hath accepted the Office of Steward or Bailiff of Her Majesty's Manor of Northstead in the County of York. —*[Mr. Waddington.]*

3.33 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I rise to oppose the issuing of the writ for the Richmond, Yorks constituency, under the rules set out in "Erskine May", pages 326 and 327, and on the precedent of 19 April 1983.

The crux of the argument for opposing the writ is that, before the electors of the Richmond, Yorks constituency go to the polls, they are entitled to the truth about exactly what happened in January 1986. Before the writ is issued a tribunal should be set up under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921, which should report to the House about what occurred before the by-election takes place.

As things stand at present, the purpose behind the writ, to allow one of our former colleagues—we must now call him Sir Leon Brittan—to become Vice-President of the European Commission, seems improper. To many of the electors of Richmond, it looks like the reward for silence.

In normal circumstances perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman would have been a highly qualified candidate on grounds of intellectual and academic attainment and of experience of great offices of state. But as things stand at present the circumstances are far from usual; in fact, they are exceedingly unusual and abnormal. The electors of Richmond need to know the real reasons for the departure of Sir Leon Brittan before they are required to make an electoral judgment.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that this is Opposition time. Would it be in order, if the hon. Gentleman is to make a speech about the writ, for hon. Members on this side of the House to make speeches of similar, if not greater, length? If so, it might be rather tragic for the Opposition motion this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: As the House knows, the motion is debatable; but it must be debated in order.

Mr. Dalyell: Whether hon. Members like it or not, the fact is that the former right hon. and learned Member for Richmond remains the scapegoat, the fall guy, the man who has taken, and continues to take, the blame for one of the most shoddy misunderstandings that this House has seen.

There are colleagues who say that the Westland affair occurred three years ago, but it continues to be the case that the electors of Richmond need to know whether the House of Commons is simply going to shrug its collective shoulders when it knows that matters have not been cleared up. Are we doucely to allow a by-election to facilitate the then Member who, we are required to believe, caused misunderstandings in the stratosphere of British politics? The electors of Richmond are entitled to know, because it is an issue of the collective self-respect of the House and, in my opinion, the self-respect of the honourable profession of being a politician.

Remember the consternation of the present Attorney-General, formerly the Solicitor-General, the author of the Law Officer's letter which was so abused without his knowledge. Remember how the then Attorney-General, Sir Michael Havers, came back from his sick bed and was so angry that he said that if an inquiry were not set up he would have the police at the door of No. 10 Downing street. That is why an inquiry was set up—because of the Attorney-General's threat to have the constabulary at the door of No. 10 if an inquiry were not agreed to.

Before we agree to the issuing of a writ, the electors of Richmond should have an explanation about how that inquiry never came to any conclusions about the timing and the state of knowledge of senior Ministers as to how that leak occurred. The electors of Richmond will want to know, before they choose a new Member, how it was that their last Member appeared before the Select Committee on Defence, chaired by a Conservative Privy Councillor subsequently sent to the House of Lords, and solemnly refused to answer questions properly put by his colleagues and mine.

Never has a Minister treated a Select Committee of the House in that manner. Members of the Committee and others present, as I was, will not forget the contemptuous attitude displayed upstairs that day by our former colleague Leon Brittan, stonewalling a Committee that was set up by the House to do a job.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I also took the trouble to attend that Committee meeting. I could see no sign of contempt on the part of our colleague.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady can make that point if she catches the eye of the Chair.

Mr. Dalyell: One thing will alter our attitude towards the by-election and allow us to send our former colleague on his way to Brussels with our good will, and that is if it were explained to the electors of Richmond that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not to blame for the Westland affair and that he was simply carrying the can for the misbehaviour of someone else.

In order to accept the Prime Minister's version of events in January 1986, the House has been required to believe that, for 14 days or more, Leon Brittan, the cause of this by-election, kept his senior civil servants, such as Sir Brian Hayes, his Cabinet colleagues and his Prime Minister in the dark about his role relating to the Law Officer's letter. If Leon Brittan really did that, should the House be creating a by-election to send him as our country's nominee to a highly prestigious job in the EEC? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman's behaviour is by no means the whole story, should not the electorate of Richmond——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman keeps referring to 1986. There has been a general election since 1986 at which Leon Brittan had an overwhelming majority. The people of Richmond must have been highly satisfied with their representative.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman might make that point if he is called to speak.

Mr. Dalyell: The electors of Richmond will want to know about the Prime Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who has often put pertinent questions to her. She said to my hon. Friend that she did not know about the role of the then Trade Secretary until the inquiry had reported. Before a writ is issued, a tribunal should be satisfied on that point.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether I could have your guidance. Clearly this is a narrow debate on whether the writ should be moved. We all know that the former Member for Richmond has already left. Surely we must be talking about the candidates who are to be put forward. Clearly Sir Leon Brittan is not to be one of those candidates, so what we are hearing must be out of order.

Mr. Speaker: I am listening with great care, as I listened on Friday nearly two weeks ago when this writ was first moved. Nothing that the hon. Gentleman has said today and nothing that was said then was out of order.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the House agrees to the issuing of a writ for the Richmond constituency, for the sake of the good name and reputation of the former Member, should not the Prime Minister give the electors of Richmond an explanation of her own role——

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order? I have heard nothing out of order from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Field: Representing the Isle of Wight, I cannot take too much excitement. I have heard this argument once or twice before. I wonder whether it would be in order to move a writ this afternoon for a by-election in the constituency of the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the House agrees to the issuing of a writ, for the sake of the good name of Leon Brittan, should not the Prime Minister give an explanation to the electors of Richmond of her own role in the Westland affair? The House heard her answer yesterday to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. All this could have been avoided had she explained her role. After all, at the end of the day the Prime Minister is accountable not to President Bush, Mr. Gorbachev or any other world politician; she is accountable to the British electorate through the House of Commons, and particularly to the electors of Richmond.

The House has not yet had an explanation of the unique resignation correspondence between the Prime Minister and the then right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, which ended:

"I hope that it will not be long before you return to high office to continue your Ministerial career."

The Prime Minister did not say that to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) or to anybody else. That is unique. How could any Prime Minister have expressed such a hope if her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had really misled her? The electors of Richmond will want to know.

They will want to know that it was a negotiated correspondence. As things turned out, the Prime Minister found it hard to deliver her side of the bargain. What we have before us today, with the Government asking for the writ to be issued, is the shoddy compromise of being made a Vice-President of the European Commission. Should the House of Commons go along with allowing the by-election to oblige the Prime Minister and Sir Leon Brittan?

Is it not in the interests of the electors of Richmond that we should have an inquiry which might ask Colette Bowe and John Mogg why they found it necessary to put their accounts of these events in a bank vault? Civil servants whose accounts of events tally with that of their political masters do not normally find it necessary to put their accounts in bank vaults.

The inquiry might also ask Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell why they did not tell the Prime Minister what the Select Committee—chaired, I repeat, by a Conservative Privy Councillor, sent subsequently to the other place—knew about Leon Brittan's role: paragraph 187 of the report of the Select Committee on Defence.

The Prime Minister should also be asked by the inquiry for the benefit of the electors of Richmond why, if Mr. Ingham and Mr. Powell failed to tell her what they knew about the Law Officer's letter, they still remain in two of the most important offices in Britain. Why are they still in Downing street, basking in unprecedented favour, if that was the case?

The tribunal might also ask why this most inquisitive of Prime Ministers—no Conservative Member would deny that—requires us to believe that she never had the curiosity to ask her Secretary of State for Trade and Industry——

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman's comments are interesting, and we have cantered round this course before, but how far are you prepared to let the debate widen? For some while the hon. Gentleman has been talking about circumstances in which Sir Leon Brittan left the Government, not the House of Commons. Therefore, I suggest that he is going wide of the point.

Mr. Speaker: I was present for much of what went on a fortnight ago when the motion was first debated. Nothing was out of order then, and nothing that I have heard today has been out of order. However, I hope that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will not take too much time of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: I am curious to know how it was that, according to the Select Committee, Mr. Powell and Mr. Ingham knew all about its former member's role on 7 January, and yet a Prime Minister who saw them five times a day never sought to ask about a matter that was threatening her Government, or at least her personal position, day after day. That was an exceedingly uncharacteristic lack of curiosity.

There is something more that the Prime Minister and Sir Leon Brittan ought to tell the electorate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has given the House his views on that matter. Perhaps he will return to explaining why he believes that the writ should not be issued.

Mr. Dalyell: Before any writ is issued, and before any by-election takes place, there ought to be an explanation as to why, on 27 January, the Prime Minister could murmur, "I may not be Prime Minister at six o'clock tonight."—*[Interruption.]* She herself confirmed that to David Frost.

He asked her four times, and on the fourth time of asking she replied to Mr. Frost, "Well, it is just one of the things that one says."

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the issuing of the writ. I ask the hon. Gentleman to return to that matter.

Mr. Dalyell: The British electorate may wonder why, after seven years in Downing street, and wanting to be re-elected for a third term, the Prime Minister would say such a thing. She said it for one reason only—because she did not know whether Sir Leon Brittan, sitting on the Back Benches, would spill the beans on her. That is why she said, quite uncharacteristically, that she might not be Prime Minister by six o'clock on that night.

I do not wish to try the patience of the House, but for some right hon. and hon. Members these are not frivolous issues but issues of deep importance concerning the integrity and probity of public life. That is why—for the first, and I suspect only, time—I oppose the writ.

3.52 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) seems not to have understood that our former right hon. and learned Friend took up his appointment as commissioner in Brussels at the beginning of last month. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's attempt to deny the people of Richmond the opportunity to have a Member of Parliament, if its purpose is to prevent Sir Leon Brittan from becoming our commissioner, is futile. The hon. Gentleman told the House today nothing that he has not told it on many previous occasions. I have no doubt that the electors of Richmond will pay precisely the same avid interest to his remarks this afternoon as they paid to his remarks on all the previous occasions.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) pointed out, since the events to which the hon. Member for Linlithgow referred took place in January 1986, there has been a general election, when Sir Leon Brittan was Conservative candidate for Richmond. Between January 1986 and June 1987, the hon. Member for Linlithgow made many speeches almost identical to that which he made this afternoon. Therefore, if the people of Richmond were to be influenced by his words, they had the opportunity to do something about the matter in the months that elapsed between January 1986 and June 1987. The people of Richmond gave their verdict on our former right hon. and learned Friend when, at the last general election, the Conservative majority in Richmond increased from 18,000 to 19,500. That was in marked contrast to the Labour majority in Linlithgow, which fell from 11,000 to 10,000.

We are entitled to inquire about the real motive behind the hon. Gentleman's speech. At the last general election, the Labour candidate for Richmond received even fewer votes than the alliance candidate. This time the Labour party, characteristically, has chosen a dud candidate in Richmond.

The reason why the hon. Gentleman seeks to defer the writ——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Does the hon. Gentleman regard as a dud a man who parachuted at 2 in the morning of D-day to capture the bridges behind the beaches? Is that man a dud? He is our candidate at Richmond.

Mr. Gow: The courage of the Labour candidate is not in doubt; but, almost by definition, if one is a candidate for the Labour party in present circumstances, one is a dud. Indeed, it is a mark of the courage of the Labour candidate at Richmond that he has put himself forward as a candidate.

We may mark the contrast between the courage of the Labour candidate at Richmond and the courage of the Labour delegation which has made a journey to Moscow to seek advice about what defence policy should be put before the electorate. Indeed, that is one factor behind the wish of the hon. Member for Linlithgow to defer the by-election, for it may take many months—some might think many years—for the Labour party to fashion a defence policy suitable to be put before the electorate of Richmond, or anywhere else.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is in his place. He is anxious to expound the virtues of the Government's housing policy, but my right hon. Friend will expect, as I do, that those on the Opposition Front Bench will seek to prolong the life of this Parliament so that they may try to get together a defence policy to submit to the electorate.

There is another aspect of the Richmond by-election. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, because you follow these things closely, that at the general election there was but a single candidate for what was then called the alliance. Since then the alliance has split asunder and we are told that there will be two candidates for the single grouping which at the general election formed the alliance. I could well understand it if the representatives of the Liberal party and of the Social and Liberal Democratic party had sought to postpone the by-election because they need more time to get their act together.

I have a keen affection, as does the hon. Member for Linlithgow, for another former Member of the House, Dick Crossman. I had the good fortune to be the Conservative candidate in Coventry, East nearly 25 years ago. I have to say, because I am a fair man, that as a result of my efforts, Dick Crossman's majority rose from 6,000 to 16,000—but we shall let that pass. I have been re-reading the diaries which are so beloved by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. On page 49 of volume 1 these words appear:

"Tam Dalyell himself makes it very difficult. He is as awkward, stubborn and lovable as ever."

I agree with Dick Crossman's verdict.

4 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The House has considered at some length the question of the issuing of the writ for the Richmond by-election. On a previous occasion I said that I preferred to rely on the judgment of the Patronage Secretary as to when the writ should be moved, although I signified that he would, of course, follow the convention of moving it before three months had elapsed from the time the seat became vacant.

My right hon. and learned Friend is now keen to give the voters of Richmond the opportunity, as is their wont, to return a Conservative Member of Parliament. A wide variety of issues concerning this motion have already been debated, from the likely weather on polling day to the rigours of Catterick camp.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has made his predictable speech and he will know by heart my

[Mr. John Wakeham]

response to it. We have an important Opposition day debate this afternoon, and I do not think the hon. Gentleman's colleagues would thank him if their Supply Day were truncated by yet another debate on the Richmond writ.

I hope that the House will now approve the motion.

4.2 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I support the Leader of the House in calling for the House to move ahead with the writ. The people of Richmond have been deprived of representation for a considerable time by silly party political bickering between Labour and Conservative Members over the timing of this by-election.

The real scandal is the delay on the part of the Conservative party over this by-election, which could have been over before Christmas and the people of the constituency would have had proper representation. The delays that are now occurring are preventing important matters being debated, including housing.

4.3 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): We should be told why the Labour party is so undesirous of having this by-election held. This is the second occasion on which the Government have attempted to move the writ. Two weeks ago the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) frustrated the evident desire of the people of Richmond to have a Member of Parliament to represent them. Today the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) seeks to delay the moving of the writ yet again.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow is sticking as tenaciously as ever to his obsession with the Belgrano, with Westland and with various other issues in which the country long ago lost any interest. Just as the Belgrano has gone to the bottom of the Atlantic, so the Labour party will go to the bottom of the poll when this by-election is held. Although the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) sits on the Labour Front Bench and appears to be desirous of having this by-election, Labour Members are running scared and do not want it to take place under any circumstances.

We could resolve this matter today and the hon. Member for Linlithgow could bring his views to the attention of the country if he would apply to the Patronage Secretary for the Stewardship of the Manor of Northstead, resign his seat and then become the Labour candidate in the by-election in Richmond. In those circumstances, the hon. Gentleman, who is a member of the county aristocracy in his part of the world, would greatly appeal to the up-market members of the community in Richmond. So he could do a great deal to improve the Labour party's potential in the by-election.

But if the hon. Gentleman were to take that course, it might not appeal to the occupants of the Labour Front Bench. I do not think they would be happy to have a by-election in Scotland at this time. It is not long since there was a by-election in the Glasgow, Govan constituency, and just as Queen Mary of England went to her grave with "Calais" written on her heart, so I believe the Leader of the Opposition will go to his political grave at the next election with the word "Govan" tattooed on his fingers. Therefore, the Labour party would not be keen on having an election in Scotland, or anywhere else, just now.

The Labour candidate in Richmond is performing the same sort of function as the Light Brigade performed for this country in the Crimean war. He knows that he is going into the jaws of death and the mouth of hell, and we admire his courage. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who appear to be having a committee meeting on the Bench below the Gangway please desist or leave the Chamber?

Mr. Hamilton: I know what it must be like to be the Labour candidate in Richmond. On the first occasion that I put myself forward as a parliamentary candidate I stood for Abertillery. I duly turned in 9 per cent. of the vote, which I doubt the Labour condidate in Richmond will achieve. A least I had the satisfaction, when we were able to bring the boundary changes into force after the election, of seeing that constituency abolished and divided between Islwyn and Blaenau Gwent. I thought, "Serve them right" in the Abertillery constituency for rejecting me.

I appreciate the sensitivity of Labour Members to having by-elections at this time. That is surprising because at the mid-point of a Parliament Oppositions normally do well. At present, we seem to be in the extraordinary situation—perhaps not so extraordinary when one considers the huge success of the Government—that today the Conservatives are doing better in the opinion polls than they were at the time of the last general election. So we shall be looking to increasing the majority of the Conservative candidate in the Richmond by-election, and that will be the most eloquent testimony to the interest of the people of this country in the points that the hon. Member for Linlithgow has made today and in the policies of the Labour party.

While I, as a kind and compassionate individual, should be happy not to cause more hurt and harm to the Labour party—because we should always look upon the political down-and-outs with the same compassion as we should look to those who have difficulty in running their own lives—the interests of the people of Richmond, and of Britain generally, depend on moving the writ, not only for this by-election but for Pontypridd as well. I look forward to seeing another two representatives of the Conservative party on these Benches after those by-elections have taken place.

4.7 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): There is a melancholy ruin in Linlithgow. I recall that the Palace of Linlithgow is a red sandstone building. Queen Margaret, shortly after the battle of Flodden, took to one of the upper rooms and gazed across the horizon for her husband to return, and he did not. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) reminds me of Queen Margaret gazing forlornly, hoping for something to turn up.

My constituency of Skipton and Ripon borders that of Richmond. I worked with Sir Leon Brittan when he was the Member for Richmond—one of those happy parts of the country which could be described as a Labour-free zone—and I am in a position to testify to the esteem in which he was held by his constituents.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow kept referring to what the people of Richmond were entitled to have and needed.

I can tell him about both of those. They are entitled to a Member of Parliament, and that we are now trying to give them. They are concerned with issues about which I could speak for some time, but I assure him that they are not concerned about the events of several years ago to which the hon. Gentleman frequently refers.

Mr. Dalyell: Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of Queen Margaret, may I ask him to agree that we should receive an explanation of the Westland affair?

Mr. Curry: The Secretary of State for Education and Science has said that more British history should be taught in our schools. If it were, perhaps more people, including the hon. Gentleman, would be aware that the battle of Flodden pre-dates the Westland affair, having taken place in 1513.

The matters which concern the people of Richmond and which need the attention of a Member of Parliament are, for example, the future of the national parks, which was referred to in the recent planning document published by the Secretary of State for the Environment, farm incomes, matters affecting the uplands and less favoured areas and the whole question of planning permission. We are speaking of one of those happy areas where there is rapid growth and where unemployment is rarely over 4 per cent., thanks to the success of the Government's policies. While they are concerned about low-flying aircraft, they welcome the presence of our defence forces in the constituency which testify to the success of the policy of deterrence.

They wish Sir Leon well in his new responsibilities. They saw him go with regret because he was such a good Member. They know that he will have great enthusiasm in Brussels and that he will do an outstanding job for Britain, and I could easily enumerate his responsibilities there and their great importance.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): As Sir Leon Brittan's old constituency borders my hon. Friend's constituency, I presume that my hon. Friend will be including in his peroration comments about the Settle to Carlisle railway line.

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend is right. I have received some letters about that matter from Richmond constituents, and I am dealing with that correspondence. They are most anxious to ensure that the line is maintained. My hon. Friend will recall that a report on the tourist implications of the closure of that line said that there could be a serious tourist loss. We support, therefore, the continued existence of a railway which is unique in the United Kingdom and which touches the Richmond constituency, mine and many other constituencies. We could go into the details of this matter this afternoon.

There are two essential points. First, the people of Richmond are concerned about their Member of Parliament getting their matters dealt with and supporting the Government in the House. For that they need a Member of Parliament—a Conservative Member of Parliament. The dismal battle for fifth place between the ecologists and the Labour party is of very little concern to the people in that constituency. Secondly, they wish Sir Leon the greatest luck in his important responsibility. They saw him go with regret and they wish him well. They applaud his excellent work, and they are confident that the next Conservative Member will do just as well.

4.21 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): When I looked at my Order Paper this morning, I noticed that today was an important day, because it was an Opposition day. I noticed that the Opposition have set out two important—I presume they are to them—motions. The first was to have been on housing, and the second on wages councils. I said "was", but they still may be debated. I then asked myself why, when the Opposition have what they consider to be important motions on the Order Paper and have a few of their troops here—there are many Conservative Members here, but not many Opposition Members, which is the usual position—they have decided to initiate a debate about the Richmond by-election. They have initiated it, and they shall have it.

I believe that there are many points to be made about the Opposition's reasons for initiating this debate. I confess that I am not capable of making all the points myself. The Opposition may be having a debate on the moving of the writ for the by-election because they are concerned about their motions on the Order Paper. The Opposition may have had second thoughts. They may be deeply worried about the implications of those motions. They have a motion on housing. Why should they be worried about that one? Perhaps it is because they do not have a housing policy.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): If the hon. Gentleman would sit down, he would find out.

Mr. Marlow: Does the hon. Lady wish to intervene?

Mrs. Clwyd: If the hon. Gentleman sat down, he would find out the answer to that question very rapidly.

Mr. Marlow: I will indeed, when I have addressed myself to this important debate, which her hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow initiated, I presume, with the full support of the Opposition. I shall sit down when I have dealt with this matter, but, of course, some of my hon. Friends may then have something to say.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On three occasions the hon. Gentleman has said that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has made this point about the writ with the agreement of the official Opposition. The hon. Gentleman and the House know that that is untrue. Any individual Back Bencher can raise any subject he likes. I have done it many times, and certainly without the agreement of my Front Bench. Hon. Members must not say that the Opposition are doing something officially when, in fact, it is a Back Bencher using his rights in this House.

Mr. Speaker: It is an absolute right of an hon. Member. All Members are equal in this House.

Mr. Marlow: If I have made a wrong statement, I crave the indulgence of the House. However, I and my hon. Friends have a great deal of difficulty with this, because there are so many splits and crevices in the Opposition that it is difficult to know whether a motion or a measure such as this is proposed with the whole-hearted support of the entire Opposition Front Bench, part of the Opposition Front Bench, the Chief Whip on the Opposition Front Bench, the leader of the party or anybody else.

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who is a kind and compassionate man. In view of what the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has said, I am concerned that it may be argued that the Opposition Chief Whip is not in control of the troops on his own Benches. That has serious implications for this House and the parliamentary procedures which we all follow. I wonder if my hon. Friend would like to turn his mind to that point.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that he will not do that. The hon. Member should get back to the reason why we should pass this motion. Is not that what the hon. Member is arguing?

Mr. Marlow: You are right, of course, Mr. Speaker. I am afraid that my hon. Friend was being a little uncharitable. I am sure that the Opposition Chief Whip has total control over his party. The difficulty is knowing what proportion and what part of the Labour party he has control over.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said that, if I were to sit down—my hon. Friends having made their points and Opposition Members having spoken on this important writ, because I am sure that many other Opposition Members wish to make a contribution——

Mr. Heffer: Sit down, you idiot.

Mr. Marlow: I am not sure that I heard that, but I am told that it takes one to know one.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend be patient? I shall give way in a moment.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley said that she wanted me to sit down so that the Opposition could tell us about housing policy. We have now embarked upon an important debate, and it may take a significant amount of time. What will not take a significant amount of time is telling the House about the Labour party's housing policy.

Mr. Favell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, which I believe he has just done. Has it escaped his notice that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who is opposing this motion, is a Member of the Scottish Labour party? Does he welcome his intervention, as I do, in what is essentially English business, just as English Members try to participate in Scottish business?

Mr. Marlow: That is an important point. As you remind us—often quite rightly—Mr. Speaker, we all stand or sit here as Members of Parliament for the United Kingdom, and we are proud to do so. It is important that Members of Parliament for the United Kingdom are involved in debates on all subjects concerning the whole of the United Kingdom. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing that point to my attention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) stated in his all-too-brief intervention that the Labour party was concerned because of its defence policy. It was concerned about the date of the writ being moved, and the by-election coming forward, because the Labour party had not quite worked out its defence policy. Members of the Labour party have gone to Russia to sort out the party's defence policy; the party has received its orders from Russia; but it has not yet put its defence policy together.

Mr. Speaker: Order. the hon. Gentleman's comments must be related to the Richmond by-election.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure you will acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that Catterick camp, one of the foremost military camps, is located right in the centre of the Richmond constituency. Defence, therefore, will be on everybody's tongue throughout the by-election campaign. It is an issue which is of the essence. I am sure that it will feature strongly and prominently throughout the whole campaign. If the writ is moved today to the date which my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary has suggested, it will be a relatively short campaign. One might almost say that defence is such an important issue in that constituency that one should be concerned that it is such a short campaign. Labour party's policy on defence is so obscure, convoluted and changing by the day that not only would it take a long time for the Labour party to sort out its approach to that policy, but it would take even longer to explain it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: As defence is so important to the electorate of Richmond, I wonder whether they listened to the Labour spokesman on Sunday, who outlined a policy that bore no resemblance to Labour party policy. Which is the official policy?

Mr. Marlow: Normally my hon. Friend is extremely charitable—we all try to be charitable about people in difficulties and we particularly try to be charitable about the Labour party. This is an opportunity for the Labour party to clarify its policy on defence before the by-election takes place. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne cogently said earlier on, the time afforded for such clarification is not long enough.

Defence is one of the many policies which will be debated and discussed during the forthcoming by-election, if the motion is carried today. The constituents of Richmond will also need to know about education policy.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that one of the issues that must be discussed before the by-election is our attitude to Europe, particularly prior to 1992? Bearing in mind the history of the ex-Member of Parliament for Richmond, Yorks who is now the Commissioner in Europe, does he believe that Europe will come to the fore during the by-election? The hon. Gentleman and I are members of the Select Committee on European Legislation, a sitting of which started 21 minutes ago. Does he not believe that he should wind up his contribution to get this matter out of the way so that we may both go upstairs to fulfil our duties?

Mr. Marlow: I second the hon. Gentleman about the importance of Europe and later in my speech I intend to develop my thoughts on that at greater length than I have done thus far. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is concerned about the sitting of the Select Committee on European Legislation, which was supposed to start 21 minutes ago. The hon. Gentleman would like to be there, as would many of us. It has been suggested that— *[Interruption.]* What is going on on the Opposition Benches, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think it matters what is going on on the Opposition Benches. The hon. Gentleman should keep to the question about the Richmond writ being moved; that is what should be going on.

Mr. Marlow: Yes, but messages have been passed. I suppose that those messages were not from you, Mr. Speaker, but originated from some other power within the House. That is fine. There is a problem.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh) *rose*——

Mr. Marlow: I shall give way in a moment, if my hon. Friend would be patient.

Someone has suggested that it may be possible to suspend the sitting of the European Select Committee until such time as this particular issue has been debated. I do not know whether there is a procedure to do so. Is that possible, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for the sittings of Select Committees.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful for your ruling.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend giving way, as the discussion of European elections gives me the opportunity to discuss the attitude of the Labour party in the neighbouring constituency to mine, which has a Conservative Member of Parliament. What will be the Labour party candidate's attitude at the forthcoming by-election given that in the north-east we fought the two previous general elections on the Labour party's desire to come out of Europe?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not believe that that is relevant to the Richmond by-election, to which we must return. There is a further writ to move before we get on to the business of the day.

Mr. Marlow: May I gently and mildly reprimand my hon. Friend for trying to lead me down a path other than that of righteousness? What he raised is certainly something to which I should not refer at this stage in the debate.

I have already told the House about the problems inherent in the Richmond by-election and in conducting it within a short period of time. One policy of particular importance to Richmond, as it is to my constituency, is education. The Labour party has no defence policy to put before the people of Richmond and I believe that it has no education policy to put before them. Perhaps that is why the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was called upon to move the writ, so as possibly to delay the holding of the by-election. We do not know, but perhaps we should be told. If the Labour party has no proper policy on education, how can it face the electorate of Richmond?

I will take another example out of the hat. Yesterday, we had an extremely important statement from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. He set out a brilliant, new, exciting, stimulating and revolutionary policy for improving the Health Service of this country and, among the health services of this country, obviously the health service of Richmond figured prominently in his mind. He wants to improve the health services available to the people of Richmond. Various questions were put by Opposition Members, we had leaks by the Opposition, smothering tactics and misleading statements by the Opposition, but we have had no policy from the Opposition. That is the problem. Probably that is another reason why the hon. Member for Linlithgow was called upon to make his speech—because the Labour party does not want the by-election to take place until it has a positive policy on health, education and defence. On that basis, it will be an extremely long time before it is ready to take a by-election in Richmond.

4.25 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I was constrained to join briefly in this debate only by the confirmation by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) that the Settle-Carlisle railway line runs along the boundary of the constituency.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall accept the closure when the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) has completed his speech.

Mr. Adley: This is a serious matter, because the people of Richmond may believe that the Government's decision on whether to keep open the Settle-Carlisle railway line is determined by the timing of the by-election. Therefore, this is an appropriate opportunity to say a few words. I am sure that the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) recognise the relevance of that issue to the by-election and will join me in hoping that, somehow, the holding of the by-election will help to convince the Government of the absolute necessity of retaining that railway line. I am confident that my right hon. and learned Friend the Patronage Secretary, who never speaks, will be silently nodding his head as the River Ribble rises in his constituency.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Adley: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton).

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend cannot give way during an intervention.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is some confusion. I called the hon. Member for Christchurch. He has started his speech and I hope that he can get on with it.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) feels constrained to intervene in my speech, which he thought was an intervention in his speech, but which Mr. Speaker believes is a speech on its own account. I shall give way later to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton, on the assumption that my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North does not wish to make an intervention in what he thought was an intervention in his speech.

I am waiting to decide how to vote on this motion by determinig whether it is better for the people of Richmond, who want to see the Settle-Carlisle line retained, to have a by-election or whether to allow the Government a pregnant pause for thought before that by-election. Perhaps we should restrain our enthusiasm for this by-election. The Government must reach a decision on the future of that railway line by May, and they might be further and better pressurised by not having the by-election and by not moving the writ today.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I am sure that the House will have great sympathy with my hon. Friend about the possible closure of the Settle-Carlisle railway line. On the question of closures, did my hon. Friend note, a moment ago, that

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) shortly intends to move the closure of the debate? Considering that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) instigated the debate in the first place because he believes that the Government have gagged discussion of Westland and so on, does my hon. Friend agree that it is rather extraordinary that his colleague, the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland, is pursuing the same tactics of which he falsely accuses the Government?

Mr. Adley: I agree with my hon. Friend. It shows, first, that Labour Members have a contempt for democracy, and, secondly, that they have no real interest in the outcome of the Richmond by-election. Perhaps that answers the point that my hon. Friend made so eloquently.

Mr. Conway: I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that some hon. Members may believe that some off-the-wire filibuster has begun. That is not the case, because some of us have prepared speeches for the housing debate which we hope will follow, and if you, Mr. Speaker, were gracious enough to call me, I would wish to make that speech. Some of us did want, if an early closure motion was not moved, to contribute to the debate. Those of us who have a personal knowledge of Richmond, where my wife went to school and where I did some military training, wished to talk about the excellent constituents who live there. The filibuster was begun by Labour Members who spoke about everything but Richmond and has been continued by the Conservative Members who want to let the electors of Richmond know how concerned and aware we are of their life styles and their interests.

Mr. Adley: I share my hon. Friend's concern. I agree with everything he said except his split infinitive which I am sure *Hansard* will adjust properly.

Mr. Holt: I want to remind my hon. Friend about a recent occasion when an Opposition Member spoke on this writ for about three hours. One of the subjects that was vital to that debate was the weather in the area. As I represent the next-door constituency, and live there, I would be able to make a considerable contribution about the weather if the debate were allowed to continue. I remind the House that at that time Mr. Deputy Speaker ruled that, as long as sufficient hon. Members wanted to speak and stood up, the debate would not be curtailed except by the Chair. Therefore, I hope that, when my hon. Friend has sat down, I will have the opportunity to speak at great length on the weather in the area at the moment and the likely weather pattern over the next few weeks leading up to the by-election.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend will excuse me, but if I were to agree with him it would be taken as critical of Mr. Speaker of how long he allows the debate to continue.

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Adley: In a moment. I should like to comment on an eloquent and eminently acceptable speech made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bolsover is hiding his head in his hands at the thought of receiving compliments from me, but he is also a supporter of the Settle-Carlisle railway line, so I hope that he will not mind my mentioning his eloquent speech.

As I have a meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport at 5 o'clock to discuss the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway line, you, Mr. Speaker, my hon. Friends and Opposition Members will be pleased to know that I shall not continue my speech for much longer.

Mr. Favell: I understand my hon. Friend to be suggesting either that the writ should not be moved until he has received from the Government a decision satisfactory to him about the Settle-Carlisle railway line, or alternatively he intends to continue speaking until such a decision has been taken. Is he really suggesting what is now known in Labour party annals in Yorkshire as doing a Humber bridge?

Mr. Adley: Before I comment on the Humber bridge, my hon. Friend has in his constituency the famous Stockport viaduct which has been restored——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should address his remarks to the motion. That viaduct is not in Richmond.

Mr. Adley: I was going to go straight from the Stockport viaduct to the Ribblehead viaduct, which is the main physical feature of the Settle-Carlisle railway line. Many people in the Richmond parliamentary constituency hope that the railway line stays open and are extremely concerned about that great listed structure immediately adjoining their constituency. I hope that the candidates in the by-election, when it is declared, will turn their minds to the importance of the retention of that line.

At the moment, British Rail is seeking permission to close the line, but the Government have put British Rail in charge of co-ordinating efforts to keep the line open. To my mind, that is rather like inviting Genghis Khan to become the general manager of a refugee camp. Therefore, I very much hope that candidates in the Richmond by-election will give the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway line their absolute priority. By a quirk of legislative fate, the Manpower Services Commission is unable to provide assistance to British Rail, as it is a nationalised industry.

One reason why the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway line is in jeopardy is the state of the Ribblehead viaduct. Over the years, British Rail has exaggerated the cost of repairing the viaduct and is unable to take advantage of the Manpower Services Commission funds because British Rail is a nationalised industry.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of my constituents has been instrumental in trying to preserve one of the arches of that viaduct in which the people of Richmond have a legal interest?

Mr. Speaker: Order. These comments are interesting. I know about the railway line, but could the debate be related to why the writ should or should not be moved?

Mr. Adley: I entirely agree with you, Mr. Speaker; therefore, I shall conclude after my hon. Friend has intervened again.

Mr. Holt: I appreciate my hon. Friend's great interest in the railway line. He mentioned the Humber bridge. One of the matters which will be germane——

Mr. Speaker: Order. But that bridge is not in Richmond.

Mr. Holt: I was saying that one of the matters which will be germane in Richmond will be whether the A1 road which goes right through the constituency should be made into a motorway. That is of vital importance for the people of Richmond. My hon. Friend would do well to balance his remarks about the railway by considering the needs of road traffic, as the two matters are very much complementary.

Mr. Adley: I shall be brief, as I do not wish to abuse the House, and I do not wish to be late for my meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport.

My hon. Friend may have heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister respond to my question yesterday. I asked her to instruct the Department of Transport to reconsider the comparative criteria which that Department uses in assessing the costs of and benefits to the nation of road versus rail transport. I certainly hope that the candidates in the Richmond by-election will take my point. I do not know the budget of the north Yorkshire constabulary in whose area the Richmond constituency lies. The budget of the Dorset constabulary is £40 million a year. The chief constable does not know, because he has never been invited to find out, what proportion of his budget has to be spent on costs involving roads and road traffic offences.

An enormous proportion of any chief constable's budget involves not only policing accidents but dealing with offences, attending court and administration. I am quite sure that the situation in north Yorkshire is exactly the same as that in Dorset. How can any Government accurately assess road versus rail costs unless items such as the policing costs of road traffic and road transport are taken into account?

Mr. Marlow *rose——*

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield) *rose——*

Mr. Adley: While I welcome my hon. Friends' views, in view of my appointment at the Department of Transport, I shall not give way. I would be abusing my position if I were to give way. You, Mr. Speaker, asked me to come to the point about the timing of the by-election.

I am not certain whether the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway line is best preserved by an early by-election or a later by-election. In view of the timing of the decision by the Department of Transport in May as to the future of the railway line, it may be better if the by-election is postponed and left hanging over the Government's head until they have made that decision. That is the purpose of my brief intervention in the debate.

Mr. Foster *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 344, Noes 6.

Division No. 69] **[4.39 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gould, Bryan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heffer, Eric S.
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lightbown, David
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Hesley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paice, James
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wall, Pat
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Ann Clwyd and
Mr. Ted Rowlands.

NOES

Blackburn, Dr John G.
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Marlow, Tony
Montgomery, Sir Fergus

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Neil Hamilton and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question agreed to.

Question put accordingly and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new Writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Richmond, Yorks in the room of the right hon. Sir Leon Brittan, QC, who, since his election for the said county constituency, hath accepted the Office of Steward or Bailiff of Her Majesty's Manor of Northstead in the County of York.

4.52 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The closure of the previous debate was moved after one hour and nine minutes which is an extremely short period after which a closure motion is accepted. May I take it that, in accepting the closure, you were taking into account our five-hour debate on this subject the Friday before last? If that is so, may I take it that, when we debate the Pontypridd writ, which has not previously been debated, you will bear in mind the wishes of hon. Members who want to speak on the subject?

Mr. Speaker: I take account of all kinds of matters in accepting a closure motion to be put to the House. Thereafter, I am bound to abide by the House's decision.

Mr. Holt: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I must draw your attention to Madam Deputy Speaker's ruling on this subject a week last Friday. She said—I believe that I quote her almost exactly—that she would not allow a closure motion to be put until there were fewer Members rising in their places to speak. I made a challenge on a point of order at that time and she told me that, in her opinion, as too many Members were still rising to speak, a closure motion could not be allowed. In other words, the Chair's decision was based on the number of Members rising to speak.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that it is the Chair's decision whether to accept the closure, but it is then up to the House to decide whether it wishes the debate to continue.

Mr. Holt: With respect, I must point out that we were not allowed to vote on whether the House wanted a closure on that occasion. Surely that precedent could have been followed today.

Mr. Speaker: No. No occupant of the Chair gives his reasons for accepting the closure.

New Writ (Pontypridd)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new Writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Pontypridd in the room of Brynmor Thomas John, Esquire, deceased.—*[Mr. Foster.]*

4.55 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I wish to speak not as a procedural way of delaying a debate or to refer to the impeccable tradition and service of Brynmor John, whom we still mourn in this House, but to refer to the technical issue of the nature of the electorate and the rights of potential electors to be registered and able to vote. I have made this technical objection to raise the issue and to request the official Opposition Chief Whip to delay the moving of the writ so that all the potential voters will have an opportunity to register and vote.

At the beginning of this year, it became clear to the electoral registration officers of the Taff Ely borough council which is the district authority for the parliamentary constituency of Pontypridd, that there were at that time some 4,000 houses in the Pontypridd constituency without an entry in the electoral register. Under the legislation, those who are not registered are of course entitled to be placed on supplementary lists, but, because of the changes in electoral law passed by the House last year, many electors are not yet aware of the way in which the registration rules operate. The Taff Ely borough council officers have contacted those electors and we understand that the rate of response is improving, but, if the election is to be held on 23 February, many electors —hundreds, possibly thousands—including a high proportion of younger people, may not by then have registered their right to vote.

The names of those wishing to vote in any election held before 28 February will have to have been received by electoral registration officers before 19 January because supplementary lists normally come into effect on the first day of the month. By calling the election one or two weeks later, in March, there would be a greater opportunity for unregistered electors to have their names entered on supplementary lists and, therefore, to be able to vote.

I raise this issue because I am anxious that all electors entitled to vote should be registered to do so. We in Wales and elsewhere in the United Kingdom do not want to slip into American-style electoral practices where non-registration can have as much effect on election results as the votes cast. For those reasons, I object technically to the moving of the writ and request the Labour Opposition to defer moving the writ in the interests of democracy.

4.57 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I should first like to pay tribute to Brynmor John, who died so sadly on 13 December. He had been a Member of this House for more than 18 years and was extremely well liked and respected on both sides of the Chamber. He will be greatly missed. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

It is the convention not only that the writ should be moved within three months of the vacancy occurring but also that it should be moved by the party whose Member formerly occupied the seat, and that party should have priority in choosing the day for the by-election. That is what the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) is now seeking to do, and I do not think that there can be much objection to it.

The comments of the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) about the electoral register will have been heard in the appropriate quarters. The new register comes into force on 16 February, in time for the by-election, as he said. Any possible omissions are a matter for the local registration officer. About 4,000 homes were missing from the first draft roll, but the local registration officer recanvassed and the 1989 register now has about 1,250 more electors than the 1988 register. The claims of the Plaid Cymru candidate do not bear much inspection. The House should support the motion.

4.59 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I join the Leader of the House in paying tribute to the late Brynmor John, who was popular not only in the House but with the electors of Pontypridd—rightly so, because he represented them well for many years. They will miss him, and so shall we.

I also join the Leader of the House in responding to the point raised by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas). The electoral registration officer for the district council of Taff Ely said that during the preparation of the 1989 register of electors it became apparent that there would be a parliamentary by-election in 1989. At that time, 89 per cent. of the householders in the constituency had responded to the original canvass. A further canvass was undertaken and 4,000 householders were identified as not having responded. They were then re-canvassed. One thousand six hundred people immediately responded, increasing the percentage response to 94·5 per cent. However, the remainder of those who had not responded but were on the 1988 register have been carried forward to be included in the 1989 register, which will therefore include 1,260 more electors than appeared on last year's register.

Any concern that the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy may have felt is rendered irrelevant by the electoral registration officer's information. The hon. Gentleman may be more concerned about the limited number who will register votes for his candidate than about those who will register for the election.

5.2 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I should like to link my name to the remarks already made by other hon. Members about the late Brynmor John. I recall his last speech in the Welsh Grand Committee. We crossed swords there, but generally he had a gentle and polite way of treating his political opponents.

The Pontypridd by-election should go ahead as soon as possible, if only to spare the Opposition the trauma of deciding where they stand on Welsh devolution. That will be a major issue in the by-election—so major that the Leader of the Opposition was reported in last Friday's *Western Mail*, the national newspaper of Wales, as having come "off the fence on devolution". The *Western Mail* said that the Leader of the Opposition

"gave his clearest commitment so far to the principle of establishing an elected assembly in Cardiff . . . he told a press conference at Westminster, 'I am in favour of devolution throughout Britain'".

It said that the conversion came

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

"only weeks before the 10th anniversary of the ill-fated devolution referendum, which the then left-wing back bencher"—

I think that is a reference to the Leader of the Opposition—

"did much to sink as a leader of the 'No' campaign."

By Saturday, 28 January, a *Western Mail* headline read:

"Off-the-fence report gets short shrift".

The article said:

"Labour leader Mr. Neil Kinnock yesterday waded into the *Western Mail* report saying that he had come off the fence over devolution.

He said it was a 'mischievous misrepresentation or gross ignorance of what I have said and stood for over the last 15 years'.

The *Western Mail* report he referred to as 'palpable nonsense'. He told a Cardiff press conference, 'Wales will get devolution (under a Labour Government), but what is not yet determined is the form of devolution.'"

The article continued:

"While Mr. Kinnock said he supported devolution, he refused to say what form it should take, and whether Wales would remain one unit or be divided into two or three."

Presumably the Leader of the Opposition is working on the basis that, if Wales and the United Kingdom are divided into small enough bits, one bit will eventually return a Labour majority. I do not know how small those bits would have to be.

It will be of great importance to the people of Pontypridd when they vote to know that the *Western Mail* continued:

"After the press conference, Mr. Jones"—

the Welsh chairman of the Labour party—

"admitted he personally had not seen any replies from the 2,500 organisations approached in Wales which favoured the possible division of Wales spoken of by Mr. Kinnock."

The article said that the deputy leader of the Labour party, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), as chairman of the central review group, took

"a stronger line on a Welsh assembly than Mr. Kinnock. In late December, he published his own views involving a Welsh assembly possessing powers to make its own laws and to raise the necessary revenue.

The article quoted the Opposition Leader as saying: 'In the North-East, the predominant demand is for an economic planning council'."

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) has heard much demand from people in the north-east for an economic planning council. I am sure that is all they talk about.

The article quoted the Labour leader as saying that in London the demand was for a strategic authority, and

"'in Wales the demand is for a different form to Scotland'"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind that it is in order to quote from an article, but not to read at length.

Mr. Bennett: I am trying to be fair to the Leader of the Opposition. It is important for the electors in the Pontypridd by-election to be aware of what the Leader of the Opposition said and that he should not be misrepresented.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I know that my hon. Friend is trying to be fair to the Leader of the Opposition. He is right to raise the Opposition Leader's conflicting and confusing stance on devolution during our debate on the writ for the Pontypridd by-election. However, perhaps this is not merely the Leader of the Opposition shooting himself in the foot again, but a desperate tactic on the part of the Labour party to talk up the Plaid Cymru campaign, which until last week was a nonentity, because it is afraid of the rapid advance of the Conservative candidate, Mr. Nigel Evans.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend makes a telling point. There may be a second reason why the Opposition want the by-election to take place quickly. Perhaps they have an attack of Govanitis. They saw what happened in that Scottish constituency, where there was a larger Labour majority than the Labour candidate enjoyed at the last Pontypridd election and were worried that, if the debate was allowed to continue, and Plaid Cymru and other candidates were allowed to question the stance of the Leader of the Opposition from day to day, they might find themselves in even more of a mess on devolution.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Perhaps the Opposition wish to move the by-election writ as quickly as possible because, during the past 10 years, they have changed their view on defence—an important issue for everyone in this country—and no doubt there is concern that they may change their mind on devolution.

Mr. Bennett: That is a good point. As we discovered when we discussed Richmond, the Labour party would not like the electors to consider a range of issues, including education and defence. We can add Welsh devolution to that list, and before polling day arrives, I am sure that several other isues—for example, rates—will arise which the Labour party will not wish to discuss.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): My hon. Friend was good enough to say that he had reached the conclusion that the by-election should be held straight away. Will he consider another matter, which may lead him to a different conclusion? There have been reports in the press that the Labour candidate for Pontypridd is a Communist or has Communist sympathies. My hon. Friend talked about setting up democratic institutions for Wales. Perhaps the Labour candidate does not believe in democracy.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend is right. The Labour candidate for Pontypridd, according to the Leader of the Opposition, was a member of the Communist party for a short time. The *Western Mail* of 27 January said that the Opposition Leader said that

"it was a Euro-communist party at the time he was in it, and the issue has never had particular resonance in the South Wales Valleys".

When the Labour candidate fell out with the leader of the National Union of Mineworkers during the 1984-85 strike, he resigned from the Communist party.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I know that my hon. Friend is in a hurry to finish his contribution, but lest he be in too much of a hurry, I wonder if he could take note of the fact that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who is very concerned about not moving writs for by-elections, is not here—perhaps it is a call of nature or he is having a cup of tea—so can my hon. Friend go slowly through his notes? Of course, he will want to accelerate afterwards. If the hon. Gentleman is detained longer,

perhaps my hon. Friend, being a kind gentleman, will send him a copy of *Hansard* so that he can get the full benefit of my hon. Friend's remarks.

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's contribution. I am sure that it will be noted by my secretary, who will send a copy of *Hansard* to the hon. Gentleman.

The views of the Leader of the Opposition are of great interest. In the *Western Mail*, the Leader of the Opposition reportedly came off the fence on Friday and back-tracked a bit on Saturday. When we look at his record—because the Leader of the Opposition has challenged the *Western Mail* as being inaccurate—we find that when he was a Back Bencher, he said on Second Reading of the Wales Bill on 15 November 1977, which was introduced by a Labour Government:

"I certainly hope and confidently believe"

that the referendum will

"crush this nonsense once and for all and, with it, the architects of it and the profiteers from it, the Welsh nationalists . . . But we shall have some difficulty in explaining to the people of Wales the incredible waste of time and the incredible insensitivity of the Government to what they must surely know—because members of the Government are people who represent seats which are no different in any important respect from ours, in a country beset by the most enormous social and economic difficulties—is the most nominal support among the people for this constitutional change."—[*Official Report*, 15 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 465-6.]

So the Leader of the Opposition was attacking his own Government in 1977 and opposing in principle the whole concept of devolution.

That was not the first time that the Leader of the Opposition had changed his mind. In 1974, in an election address for the constituency of Bedwellty, as the Labour candidate he put in a line saying that he was in favour of meaningful devolution and an assembly. By 1977, he was against it; he had changed his mind again—and now he has back-tracked yet again. Is it any wonder that on Monday the *Western Mail* was moved to write in an editorial on the subject that there was a

"whiff of déjà vu around. It is better known as devolution, although some would have us believe it is the slippery slope to Home Rule. Many of the players are the same as in the great debate which preceded the 1979 referendum. Only the costumes have changed. Remember Neil Kinnock, the voluble backbencher, and Leo Abse, the flamboyant member for Pontypool, whose cut and threat despatched the then proposed devolution package (with its Welsh Assembly) into a political black hole? Ten years later Mr. Kinnock leads a Labour Party struggling to escape from its own black hole."

Mr. Speaker: Order. Remarks must be related to why the writ should or should not be moved, but not to the views and opinions of the leader of the Labour party.

Mr. Bennett: One of the major issues in the by-election will be where the Government and the Opposition parties stand on the crucial issues of Welsh devolution and separatism. We thought we knew where the Leader of the Opposition stood in 1974 and 1977, and where he stood until last Friday. We are not sure where he stood on Saturday, and even less sure where he stood on Monday or today. it is clearly important for the electors of Pontypridd to know that, but it is clearly also important for the Labour party that a by-election should take place as quickly as possible before it changes its policies and its mind again.

On 23 February, the electors will at least have the opportunity to make a decision on what they believe to be the policies of the various parties. They will find a Conservative candidate, Nigel Evans, who will stand clearly and firmly against Welsh separatism, devolution and a Mickey Mouse assembly in Cardiff, for retaining the unity of the United Kingdom and for the people of Wales having a proper voice in the House.

5.16 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I should first like to pay tribute to the late Member for Pontypridd, Brynmor John. He was a sincere and kindly man and expressed the character of the valley from which he came. He was the epitome of the people whence he came, and it is with great regret that we have lost that Member of Parliament.

It is not for us in the House to be lectured by Nicholas-come-latelys to the Welsh political scene. I have been fighting on the issue of devolution for many years and, like many of my fellow countrymen, I have been forced to leave the country to find work.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Livsey: I shall not give way.

Since I have compaigned consistently on the issue of devolution for Wales, the House knows exactly where I stand on that issue. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Scotland?"] If the writ is moved, the by-election in Pontypridd will be held on 23 February. It is regrettable that many electors in Pontypridd have not been registered at an earlier stage, but we have heard sufficient here this afternoon to know that many more people are now on the register and it is important that the people of Pontypridd have the earliest opportunity to go to the poll. They are greatly afflicted by problems of housing and employment, in particular, and are in great need. I do not see any reason why the people of Pontypridd should have to wait any longer to be represented here, and I trust that the writ will be approved by the House this afternoon so that democracy can prevail.

5.18 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I rise in something of a quandary. On the one hand, I should be pleased to see the electorate of Pontypridd return a Member of Parliament—and a Conservative one—as soon as possible. On the other hand, I am concerned about the effect that that might have on my constituency and my region. At this very important time in our industrial redevelopment, there arises for the people of Pontypridd the unique opportunity to place their achievements on the map of the world's industrial achievements.

Much of what has happened in south Wales has been a transformation industrially, especially with the arrival of the Ford engine plant at Bridgend with an enormous investment in jobs and money, which the electorate of Pontypridd will fully appreciate and realise to be a direct consequence of this country—I mean the United Kingdom—embracing the disciplines of a Conservative economic policy which has encouraged enormous investment in this country. There has, especially, been enormous investment in Japanese factories here and Japanese job opportunities.

[Mr. Roger King]

The electorate of Pontypridd can put something over on the electorate in Birmingham and elsewhere by presenting themselves as an electorate ready to embrace those economic achievements and new disciplines in the workplace and the new productivity and jobs available and by advocating that theirs is the place for the Japanese Toyota company to come to invest in this country.

That places me in an embarrassing position. I know that the Conservative candidate in Pontypridd will advocate such a policy and point out the new economic vitality of the province, the new opportunities that have arisen and the economic growth and achievements that are taking place and that is the area where companies such as Toyota should come to invest. I shall read about that and see it on television and I shall be saying that I should like those jobs in the midlands as well. But we do not have a by-election, so we do not have that unique opportunity.

Mr. McLoughlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that, the other day, the Leader of the Opposition said that 1992 would steal 1 million jobs? Is that not strange bearing in mind that that was the very week that Toyota said that it wanted to come to this country to take advantage of the Community? Does my hon. Friend agree that the only way that 1992 will lead to the loss of 1 million jobs is if a Labour Government are elected?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is right. I must point out that Toyota has not committed itself to this country just yet, but I have absolute confidence that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will leave no stone unturned to ensure that Toyota comes to this country—and, in particular, to the province of south Wales, which would be a highly acceptable place for Toyota to set up business.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) is absolutely right. On the one hand, the Labour leader and the Labour party advocate decline, dereliction and no hope, while on the other hand the Conservative Government are bringing jobs to the province. I hope that they will continue to bring jobs, especially to Pontypridd. However, there is a price or a cost for the electorate of Pontypridd—to endorse wholly the philosophies that the Government hold so dear.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my hon. Friend recognise the great work done by people who move around Wales to help the Welsh economy and Welsh political life, and pay a special tribute to "Richard Move-around-the country-side", who represents Brecon and Radnor, who went to Reading university and Bedales school in Hampshire, was a farm manager in Scotland, fought the seats of Perth and East Perthshire in 1970 and of Pembroke in 1979, before ending up with Brecon and Radnor?

Mr. King: As my hon. Friend knows, each and every member of that party has a global responsibility, so it is necessary that they adopt the maxim, "Have bag, will travel", and that is what they have done.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke said, many people have come to Wales and helped the Welsh economy. It is because they have come, and because it is an area that has turned its attention to restructuring and redeveloping itself satisfactorily, that jobs and investments come to that area not only from the United Kingdom and Europe, but from the rest of the world. I am sure that the electorate of Pontypridd cannot wait to get the election over, to prove to everybody that they are determined to continue to attract inward investment, but I am also sure that they will recognise that, for people like me, trying to attract that inward investment to our areas, the election comes as something of a setback. May the best constituency and the province win, for the sake of all those new jobs.

5.22 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I should like to join the tributes that have been paid to the late hon. Member for Pontypridd, Mr. Brynmor John. He commanded great affection among hon. Members of all parties and great respect from all hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies. He was a marvellous constituency Member and everybody is right to pay tribute to him.

Before turning to the writ, I should like to comment on the speech made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), who told the House that he had supported devolution for many years. Perhaps that is why his majority fell so dramatically between his by-election victory and the last election and why, with his slender majority of 56, we shall win the seat from him at the next election. I advise the hon. Gentleman to keep up the fight for devolution because then he will disappear from this place.

I turn now to the reasons for moving the writ for Pontypridd today. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) was absolutely right about the extraordinary conversion of the Leader of the Opposition on devolution. He was the man who played such a significant and major role in bringing down the last Labour Government. He was the Labour leader of the "Wales say No" campaign in Wales, and, apart from Conservative Members, he did more than anybody else to bring down his party and defeat his own Government in 1979.

However, in his accurate remarks about devolution, my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke missed one nuance, one slight contradiction in Labour's argument. Although the Labour party proposes devolution for the people of Wales, it chose its Pontrypridd candidate in London. At the very moment that it is saying that the people of Wales should have far greater say, in Cardiff, in debating their own political future, the Labour party is saying that the Welsh Labour party is not fit to choose its own candidate for Pontypridd and that that candidate must be approved by the London-based national executive, and chosen, not because of his ability to represent constituents in this place, but because of his televisual ability to try to avoid another Govan.

That is what is at the heart of the Labour party's sudden and dramatic conversion on devolution and why, with every day that passes, the promises become more committed and more detailed. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is now going into great detail, promising that there will be a Welsh assembly—this is even before his party's official policy review and before his party has agreed to it. Conservative Members had been under the distinct impression that such things had to be approved by the Labour party conference but, to avoid another Govan, that has gone out of the

window and the Labour party is making policy on its feet. It will do anything, however desperate, to try to hold on to this seat.

The political antecedents of the Labour candidate are important. No doubt we shall be able to judge him on the hustings and that is why I am also in favour of the writ being moved as soon as possible. The Labour candidate has been a member of another political party in the relatively recent past—as recent as 1981. The Leader of the Opposition told us that the candidate was a Eurocommunist. That is fair enough and, in a sense, it is fairly flattering because a Eurocommunist is probably greatly to the Right of the Labour party in this House. I realise that that is a helpful point to make on behalf of Dr. Howells.

However, I wonder what would happen if we in the Conservative party put up a candidate in a by-election who had National Front antecedents. Think of the howls we would hear from the Labour party and how Labour Members would lambast us in press conferences day after day. I have been a candidate's aide in by-elections. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller), a former vice-chairman of our party, in his place. He joined me in those by-elections and we know what happens at those press conferences. Each day as the by-election continued the Labour party would concentrate on hammering home the political antecedents of our candidate, so Labour Members should realise that we are justified in inquiring into, and making points about, the recent political antecedents of the Labour candidate at Pontypridd.

The campaign will also revolve around the tremendous achievements of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales since he took office after the last general election. That is what the Labour party cannot stand. Last summer my right hon. Friend introduced the valleys initiative. He has done more for the Opposition's safe Labour seats than they ever did. What they cannot stand is that they had the opportunity, when they were in government, to act for the valleys—the hard core of their party support—their safest seats in the entire country and seats that they have consistently represented for many years. The Opposition had the opportunity to bring jobs to those valleys and to improve the housing there, but they did not do so. It is this Government, with the valleys initiative, who are doing that.

I am glad that the former shadow Secretary of State for Wales, the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), is in his place. We in Wales get rather dizzy because the Opposition change their chief shadow spokesmen so frequently. When I was with the *Daily Express* and someone asked me at lunch who the editor was, I used to say, "I'll check when I get back to the office and give you a ring." The position is the same with the Opposition—they change their shadow Secretaries of State for Wales with the same frequency. The right hon. Gentleman criticised the valleys initiative when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales announced it in the House, while at the same time the leaders of Labour-controlled local authorities in the valleys were welcoming it sincerely, and with open arms, knowing that they would never have had it from their own party.

In the by-election we shall see a campaign that is not only about devolution but about the economic good fortune, industrial regeneration and the housing improvements that this Conservative Government have brought to the valleys—not because we had a vested interest in doing so, and not because we shall necessarily benefit politically or electorally from them, but because we thought them right. The fact that the Opposition never introduced such an initiative will be one of the main planks of our campaign, and that is why I believe that we shall see a significant improvement in the fortunes of our party in that constituency, with our young, able, energetic and eloquent candidate, Nigel Evans.

Unemployment is falling faster in Wales, in the valleys, than almost anywhere else. In my constituency it has fallen by 46 per cent. in two years—because of the Government's policies. Under the previous and the present Secretaries of State, housing in Pontypridd that had never been improved has now been improved. The Opposition did not do it when in government—we did. It is for those reasons —the decrease in unemployment, the improved housing, the creation of jobs the clearance of derelict land, the improvement of the environment—that the Conservative party stands such a good chance of achieving a good result in this by-election. Let us get to it. Let us move the writ now so that we can begin the campaign. We have nothing to fear.

5.29 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): The House is a little ambivalent about whether the writ should be moved, but there is no division between us in our sincere remarks about the late Brynmor John. I am sure that the people of Pontypridd will find it extremely difficult to find a candidate, from any party, who could command so much respect in the House.

When we had a debate in the House just 10 days ago on moving another writ, one of the subjects that came very much to the fore was the weather. It was said by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—and he was supported by many of his colleagues—that there should not be a motion for a writ which would force a by-election at a time when the weather was so likely to be intemperate. This was said by people who had never ever been to north Yorkshire.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Would my hon. Friend care to reflect on the decision by his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) to have a general election—my hon. Friend will remember it—on 28 February 1974? My right hon. Friend—no, his right hon. Friend—is not, alas, in his place. Would we not be wise to proceed with a vote on this matter without listening to the advice of his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup?

Mr. Holt: I have to say to my hon. Friend that that was a most timely interjection—timely because he draws out of me the fact that on that bitter, cold February day I celebrated my 24th wedding anniversary with one of the biggest hidings of my life when I lost in Brent, South, and it is impressed on me that the right hon. Member for Old "somewhere or other"—I would not wish to be described as other than a candidate colleague of his in 1974—suffered from the bitter extremes.

I know that my hon. Friend followed my campaign in Brent, South very closely, but he probably was not fully aware that the paid-up membership of the Conservative party in that region was not overwhelming. But I did have a supporter. He was a coalman, and we used to go out day

[Mr. Holt]

after day on a flat lorry after he had delivered his coal. We stood on the back of the lorry doing our campaigning, finishing up at the end of the day covered in snow and coal dust. It was most atrocious, but I remember it well. Perhaps everyone ought to remember that that was the sort of weather that was enjoyed in the London borough of Brent, whereas at present people up in the north-east of England, and perhaps in Pontypridd, are enjoying a magnificant sunny period.

Dr. Thomas: I can give the hon. Member a weather report for Pontypridd as of yesterday. It was fair and dry, and I expect that it will be the same tomorrow and from now until polling day.

Mr. Holt: I am very grateful for that up-to-date information. That is exactly what I was seeking to do in comparing the weather of 10 days ago, which played such a vital and germane part, with what it might be likely to be in Pontypridd. As I recall from my schoolboy knowledge of Wales, it is very wet down there in the month of February.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend talks about wetness. Does he recall that when we had a general election in February 1974 my—no, his—right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was Prime Minister? Does he recall that that Government had asked the approval of Parliament to a measure that asserted that by passing an Act of Parliament the evil of inflation could be abated, and that we had a compulsory prices and incomes policy? Will my hon. Friend address his attention to that matter?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Only if it is relevant to the by-election.

Mr. Holt: Would I ever stray from the path of righteousness, Mr. Speaker?

I recall very well what my hon. Friend says because, as I have just said, it was my wedding anniversary. I think that I might have misled the House over the number of years, but I will work it out, or my wife will tell me when I get home.

The important thing, in relating that to the people of Pontypridd, is that many young people in Pontypridd may be casting their vote for the first time when this election comes round.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important motion that we are debating. It is about moving a writ for a constituency in Wales. It is obviously a matter of great importance for the Labour party. I believe that at the moment, for some reason or other, there is no Labour Back Bencher from Wales in the House. I wonder if it would be possible to adjourn the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Patently that is not a matter of order.

Mr. Holt: As I was saying, these young people will be casting their votes for the first time, and they will be paying for the same possible faults of inflation and the runaway loss of their savings, and wondering how they are going to bring up their children.

I was always taught that if the Jesuits got you they had you for ever. I feel the same about Communists, and I find it very difficult to refer to anybody who has ever been a member of the Communist party as being a member of any other party. So if I slip up it will not be with any malice; it is just that it is a habit of mine always to work in that way.

I was talking about the weather in Pontypridd, and I was brought up to date on that matter. The hon. Gentleman who did so may well have checked on the weather at the moment, but has he done as my hon. Friends have and checked on the weather in Pontypridd during that crucial week in February over the last 20 years, and is he satisfied that the weather would be satisfactory and would allow all the elderly and all the other people that we heard about from the hon. Member for Bolsover to vote? One of his hon. Friends kept saying, "and the women". Might he reflect on that and say that the weather may not be right?

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): When debating current issues in respect of Pontypridd, will my hon. Friend please recall also that trade and industry will be major subjects? No doubt the sacking by the leader of the Labour party within the last two hours of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) as trade and industry spokesman will be an issue in the Pontypridd election. If they have to sack a spokesman no doubt there is uncertainty about their policy.

Mr. Holt: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, but I believe that it is possible that one of my other hon. Friends will be making that point during the speech that I know he wishes desperately to make. But perhaps I will be excused from talking about that very embarrassing matter at this moment because I think I have enough to keep me going for the next five or six minutes.

I want to refer briefly to the question of Toyota. Everyone has seen what a magnificent success Nissan has been under a Conservative Government in going to the Labour heartlands where the Conservative Members supported the project all the way, as did all Conservatives in that area. Only today, at lunch time, I was at the launch of a new Wearside campaign led by Tyne-Tees Television, the industrialists and the people of the area. We are encouraging Toyota to go there to stand side by side with the Nissan factory.

We are not going to adopt a dog in the manger attitude just because this is not exactly a Conservative constituency at the moment. It is only a matter of time. As the people in the north of England see the benefits of this Government, gradually more and more Conservatives at all levels are being returned. And that will happen in Wales. So I imagine that there is a certain ambiguity among Welsh Members as to whether they want Toyota to go there. The last thing that the Labour party ever wants is success. Our policy is never to have poor people; we want to have only rich people. We want everyone to be in a job; we do not want to keep the people subjugated.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I shall try to correct my hon. Friend. He is using the generic term "Welsh Members" as though Welsh Members resisted Nissan or Toyota. That is certainly not the case with Welsh Conservative Members, who are steadily increasing in number. It was inexplicable that Nissan did not go to south Wales. I am sure that Toyota will go to south Wales. The green light for Toyota to go to south Wales would be for Nigel Evans, the Conservative candidate, to be elected to Pontypridd.

Mr. Holt: I bow to my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right. One thing that would guarantee Toyota going to south Wales is the return of Nigel Evans at the by-election.

I do not wish to tax the House unnecessarily, but I shall raise another matter before I resume my seat. It is of vital interest not only to the people of Pontypridd but to my constituents in the north-east of England.

We can never get a clear-cut policy statement from any Opposition Member. The House has heard a brilliant speech about the somersaulting methods of the leader of the Labour party. I am concerned about the deputy leader of the Labour party. I wonder what he will say in Pontypridd. He has stated publicly in the north-east of England that he would have regional councils with their own tax-raising rights. Never before has that been the case.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has asked what the right hon. Gentleman the Lunchtime O'Sparkbrook would have to say if he went to the constituency of Pontypridd. I ask my hon. Friend if he knows whether there are any decent restaurants there. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Holt: I confess that, because of the laughter of other hon. Members, I did not hear my hon. Friend, but I take it that it was a germane point, and perhaps almost as relevant—*[Interruption.]* I must defer to my hon. Friend. He would know better than I whether there are any decent restaurants there.

Dr. Thomas: I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is an excellent Italian restaurant there called John and Maria's. I am sure that he will want to dine there, because he will have nothing else to do if he is to canvass for the Conservative candidate.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps we can share a celebration lunch after Nigel Evans is elected.

It is important for the people of Pontypridd to have a clear statement on the Labour party's policies. Although hon. Members are discussing a writ for one constituency, we all know that, by their definition, by-elections tend to have an impact on the rest of the country. Therefore, the rest of the country will focus on how the Labour party's policies would reflect on the rest of the country, and my constituents would be frightened.

We shall have a resounding victory in Richmond. There is no doubt about that. It will shake the Opposition even more when two new Conservative Members are elected to the House.

5.42 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I start by associating myself with all that has been said about the late Brynmor John, and I do so as a neighbouring Member of Parliament, because my constituency abuts the Pontypridd constituency. Hon. Members know that I do not demur from anything that has been said about Brynmor John —a man of great kindness and gentleness, who would listen to all arguments and would steadfastly put forward his own point of view in an entirely reasonable manner. I cannot but feel that it must be at least a contradiction or, worse, an insult for the Labour party to advance its present candidate for the Pontypridd constituency. Surely all hon. Members will recollect——

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jones: I shall develop my point and then I will give way to my hon. Friend.

All hon. Members will recollect that Brynmor John stood for all that was best in the traditions of the Labour party—a fast-disappearing animal in the party today. Instead, the Labour party has adopted a Communist candidate for the Pontypridd constituency. Surely he is still a Communist candidate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) mentioned, we have certainly not heard of any recantation or that there has been a blinding light conversion on the road to Damascus by the Labour candidate in Pontypridd. He is merely a Communist who has changed label.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend will remember that, during an earlier intervention, I drew the attention of our hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) to the situation of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), about whom we are all deeply concerned. My hon. Friend said that he would see that he got a copy of his speech. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is now fast asleep in the Tea Room. Perhaps my hon. Friend could also undertake——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that that has anything to do with this writ.

Mr. Jones: I will not digress down that road or raise my voice so that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) can hear me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is temporarily absent from his place. I suggest that the Labour candidate in Pontypridd does not look like a dud candidate, or at least not in the obvious definitions of the word. He might instead be defined as a sleeper or some form of time bomb.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I shall finish this point and then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Labour candidate for Pontypridd might be some form of time bomb. His true colours will later be revealed for all to see, whatever protestations I am now to get from Opposition Members.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman referred to the past background—I emphasise the word "past"—of a certain person who will be a Member of this House in the near future. Will the hon. Gentleman be good enough to tell us about his own background?

Mr. Jones: If I did that, you would rather quickly rule me out of order, Mr. Speaker, for speaking about something that was not necessarily relevant to the writ for the Pontypridd by-election. The hon. Gentleman referred to the past. I recall that, as recently as the last general election—we know how far past that was—the Labour candidate for Pontypridd admitted that he had recently joined the Labour party. He admitted also that he had so recently left the Communist party that, by the Labour party's own rules, he was not allowed to stand for Parliament. Presumably that short period has elapsed and he can stand.

I offer these comments as they are entirely relevant to the Pontypridd by-election, particularly in view of the character of the former incumbent for that constituency

[Mr. Jones]

—a man who was greatly liked throughout the House. Indeed, I should think he was greatly liked by Opposition Members.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most pressing reasons why the writ should be successfully moved this afternoon is that with the forthcoming by-election in Pontypridd we will have an opportunity to debate the outbreak of authoritarianism in the Labour party? My hon. Friend will be aware that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) recently went into partnership with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit).

Mr. Speaker: Order. In what way is that relevant to the by-election?

Mr. Hamilton: It will be relevant to the by-election because it is an issue that will certainly loom large in the minds of the constituents of Pontypridd. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby is going to work for Mr. Rupert Murdoch on Sky television. As a result, the Leader of the Opposition has sacked the hon. Gentleman for Great Grimsby. That is a most appalling denial of free speech, restraint of trade, and so on. The hon. Member——

Mr. Speaker: This is supposed to be an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Hamilton: It is an intervention and I am trying to make my point as succinctly as possible. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby is held in great affection by us all. Conservative Members are frequently accused——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an abuse. The hon. Gentleman is intervening in the speech of another hon. Member. He has made his point.

Mr. Jones: I accept my hon. Friend's point, that there is yet another example of the rise of authoritarianism. It was said that the rise of authoritarianism was noticeable in the recent decison of the Labour party's national executive committee conveniently to be able to ignore party conference decisions whenever it suited it to do so.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): Does my hon. Friend consider that a crucial issue in the timing of this writ is the possibility of the return of the Labour group from Russia? Maybe it is planning to bring multilateralism in our time—from Russia with love. Perhaps the idea is to leave the SLDP cruelly exposed as the only party without some kind of a defence policy and the only party with a totally idiotic policy of unilateral disarmament, or whatever it was when it last stated it. Does my hon. Friend think that that is the key to Labour's strategy in moving the writ today?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. It is highly questionable whether there is enough time between now and 23 February for the Labour party's representatives to return from Russia and make sense of a policy which they can package up in a cohesive form. Perhaps the Labour party's Chief Whip has made a great mistake.

During the deliberations of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs this morning I learnt why the writ was to be moved today. Some hon. Members might find it difficult to appreciate how supremely important and crucial that Committee is. It has a vacancy for a Labour Member. Far from the massed ranks of Labour Members eager to fill that place, the Labour party is so desperate to find somebody to fill it that it is hoping that its candidate for the Pontypridd constituency will be successful because, on the basis of Buggin's turn and the last in principle, he will have to do duty on that Committee.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): The late Brynmor John was my first pair when I entered the House, and I want to put it on record that he was held in deep affection by hon. Members on both sides of the House. He was also helpful when I occasionally raised with him railway matters that were relevant to his constituency. My hon. Friend will know that the Wales Railway Centre in Cardiff, which was my brainchild, is connected by rail through the Pontypridd constituency with Big Pit at Blaenavon. Does my hon. Friend agree that all the candidates in the by-election should do everything that they can to keep open all the railway lines that presently pass through the Pontypridd constituency?

Mr. Jones: I go along with my hon. Friend's sentiments. He touches on some aspects that are important to the people of south Wales. The Wales Railway Centre in Cardiff will be important. I was pleased to hear of his support for Big Pit. When British Rail last appeared before the Select Committee, I asked it to reconsider improving and expanding rail links in south Wales, particularly the rail link for the new garden festival in Ebbw Vale. I am glad that it has recently announced that it hopes to have some service running up to Ebbw Vale for that festival.

My hon. Friend may also know that the Wales Railway Centre is linked with my constituency and the neighbouring constituency of Pontypridd by the old Taff Vale railway line. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend on the importance of our local railway lines, which the former Secretary of State for Wales, Lord Crickhowell, and the present Secretary of State for Wales have done so much to encourage.

On this occasion it would not be inappropriate for me to pay tribute to Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan county councils. They do not get much right, but they have followed the urgings and advice of my right hon. Friend and his predecessor in the exciting plans for south Wales railways.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My hon. Friend mentioned the defence issue, which is so important to the people of Pontypridd. My hon. Friend will know that the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) is a native of the Pontypridd area. No doubt, as a newly appointed junior Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Lady will be making a visit to Pontypridd to discuss defence. Does my hon. Friend think that when she does so she might explain what she means by reciprocal unilateralism?

Mr. Jones: I hesitate to mention it, but I think that my hon. Friend means Pontypool, not Pontypridd. It is close to Pontypridd in geographical terms. However, I suggest that that question is not best answered now, certainly not at the time of the Pontypridd by-election, because the last thing that the Labour party wants to do in the interests of

hanging on to the marginal seat of Pontypridd is to allow the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) to run riot there.

Mr. Marlow: The writ was moved in good spirit and good heart by the Labour party at a time of peace in its ranks. But since the writ has been moved, an unholy row has broken out. An Opposition Front-Bench spokesman has been sacked, and sacked by a Welsh Member of Parliament—the Leader of the Opposition. The Opposition might want to change their mind about the writ, and one reason for that is that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is in such a fury with the Leader of the Opposition that he may well wish to resign his seat and fight that of Pontypridd instead. If my hon. Friend were to allow the Opposition a little more time, they might be able to come to a mature decision about whether to move the writ.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend ret..ns to a significant point. My hon. Friend seems to be having a destructive effect on the Opposition Front Bench, as he always does. He will have noticed that his previous point of order had the effect of physically forcing the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) to move from the Opposition Front Bench to the Back Benches just when she was thinking that she had served her penance and might now be brought back to the Front Bench. My hon. Friend's point of order seems to have downed her for another two years or so.

The writ for the Pontypridd by-election should be moved today. That by-election needs to be fought on most important issues, not least the need to reduce the number of people unemployed. The fall in unemployment in Wales began earlier, and has continued longer, than the fall in unemployment in the rest of the United Kingdom. Wales has been successful in developing new industries and in helping new employment and attracting investment. For a number of years now Wales has been able to attract one fifth of all investment coming into the United Kingdom. The massive investment in the engine plant at Bridgend has been mentioned, as have Nissan and Toyota. I stand by what I said about Toyota's excellent prospects of coming to south Wales. I look forward to that.

There has also been significant growth in indigenous industries. I mention just one. AB Electronics in my constituency, which also fortunately happens to be in practically every valley constituency in south Wales, is going from strengh to strength.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) *rose——*

Mr. Jones: I give way to the hon. Lady because I know that AB Electronics' headquarters are in her constituency.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 365, Noes 3.

Division No. 70] **[5.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cousins, Jim
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Dr John
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fallon, Michael
Fearn, Ronald
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gould, Bryan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael

Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lightbown, David
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrindle, Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Malins, Humfrey
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paice, James
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sackville, Hon Tom
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Porter, David *(Waveney)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Bennett and
Mr. Tony Marlow.

Question agreed to.

Question put accordingly and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his Warrant to the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new Writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Pontypridd in the room of Brynmor Thomas John, Esquire, deceased.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House will have noted that you accepted a closure motion of a debate on a by-election writ within 60 minutes. I am sure that you will understand that that has implications for proceedings on other legislation that comes before the House.

Mr. Speaker: As I said earlier in answer to a point of order, the Chair does not give reasons at the moment a closure is taken.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you will recall, when the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) moved the closure, the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) was on her feet. As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has pointed out, grave constitutional questions are raised by what has just happened. The action of the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland could be regarded as sexist. As the hon. Lady is from Wales, it could also be regarded as racist. I believe that those are two of the greatest crimes in the statute book of the Labour party. Most important, the authoritarianism shown by the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland in cutting off the debate after such a short time should be noted for the future and censured.

Mr. Speaker: The House will take a charitable view. It is possible that the Opposition Chief Whip did not see what was happening behind him.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is proper, if one makes a mistake in the House, to apologise. I may have to crave the indulgence of the House. I suggested earlier that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who had taken a great interest earlier in our proceedings on writs for by-elections, might be asleep in the Tea Room. That has certain implications. I understand that it is possible that on his way to the Tea Room he was gathered into the torture chamber on the right hand side——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

BILL PRESENTED

Local Government and Housing

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Clarke, Mr. John Major, Mr. Richard Luce, Mr. John Gummer, Mr. David Trippier and Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to the members, officers and other staff and the procedure of local authorities; to amend Part III of the Local Government Act 1974 and Part II of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1975 and to provide for a national code of local government conduct; to make further provision about the finances and expenditure of local authorities (including provision with respect to housing subsidies) and about companies in which local authorities have interests; to make provision for and in connection with renewal areas, grants towards the cost of improvement and repair of housing accommodation and the carrying out of works of maintenance, repair and improvement; to amend the Housing Act 1985 and Part III of the Local Government Finance Act 1982; to amend the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 and certain enactments relating, as respects Scotland, to rating and valuation, and to provide for the making of grants in respect of certain expenditure incurred before 1st April 1990; to make provision with respect to the imposition of charges by local authorities; to make further provision about certain existing grants and about financial assistance to local authorities in respect of emergencies; to enable local authorities in Wales to be known solely by Welsh language names; to provide for the transfer of new town housing stock; to amend section 47 of the Race Relations Act 1976; to make provision about security of tenure for certain tenants under long tenancies; to provide for the making of grants and giving of guarantees in respect of certain activities carried on in relation to the construction industry; to provide for the repeal of certain enactments relating to improvement notices, town development and education support grants; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 58.]

Planning (Notification of Development Proposals)

6.14 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to secure fuller, more effective and more consistent public involvement in the development control process.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that there is mounting concern about all aspects of planning and development control, whether it is about the green belt, so-called bad neighbour development, including dumping, misunderstandings about private property owners' rights, perceived inconsistencies in planning decisions and the appeal process. In the words of the District Planning Officers Society:

"Third party interest is here to stay and understandably so."

The third party interest and concern are shared by those responsible for taking planning decisions. Planners feel besieged by critics, including the ombudsman, described by one planning officer as having

"crucified every small fault and failing of the authorities, who set out with best of intentions."

There is no lack of legislation to guide planning authorities in England and Wales on consultation and notification in certain spheres. Their duties to consult and notify are clearly defined for certain kinds of development, with certain public bodies and in certain kinds of location. Developments defined as bad neighbours include scrapyards, refuse dumps, mineral workings and cemeteries. In such cases the applicant is required to advertise his proposal, usually by site notice, and the planning authority has to advertise by press or site notice, or both, under section 26 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. The same Act, in section 25, lists public bodies such as highway authorities and the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, which have to be consulted in certain circumstances.

Planning authorities also have to advertise applications for developments in conservation areas for listed buildings, and in other prescribed areas set out in the Act. They must notify parish councils if those councils so wish. In all these areas, therefore, planning authorities—in the main, district councils—know what is required of them by law and the public are protected, by recourse either to the law or to the ombudsman.

But there is another area where the public of England and Wales are not protected by planning law, although their Scottish and Irish counterparts are. Moreover, it is precisely in this area that there is the greatest public concern, according to the ombudsman and the District Planning Officers Society, which says:

"Next-door neighbour complaints are easily the largest planning postbag of the Ombudsman. Most complaints look to the planning authority to inform them of neighbour proposals to build, say, an extension."

It is the issue of neighbour notice, already grasped by Government action for the people of Scotland and Northern Ireland, that I wish to address in the Bill by proposing that planning authorities are required by law to have a code of practice for neighbour notification, drawn up by themselves in accordance with local needs.

Many people are astonished to find that, in England and Wales, planning authorities are not required to notify

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

or inform neighbours of proposed developments affecting their properties. In practice, many district councils have a code of practice for neighbour notification, which may be a site notice, a letter, an advertisement in the local press or simply a list of proposed plans in the local free sheet. Others, because of difficulties with the ombudsman, have no code of practice on the ground that, as one of them put it, he would expect them to observe it. Either way, there is no consistency of practice. Such practice as there is may not be understood by the public; indeed, they may be unaware of its existence. All hon. Members will be familiar with complaints from constituents that the first they knew of a neighbouring development was when the bulldozers arrived next door.

The Government have clearly accepted in principle that there is a problem, since they have acted in Scotland and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, the principle of neighbour notification was first introduced under the General Development Order 1981, amended by the General Development Order 1984.

The applicant is required to notify owners, occupiers and lessees on neighbouring land, which is defined in guidelines, and to accompany his application with a certificate listing the names and addresses of those parties having a notifiable interest. The list is scrutinised by the authority, and if the applicant has been unable to identify all the neighbours, the authority must advertise the proposal in a local newspaper, the applicant paying the cost.

In Northern Ireland, the same principle of neighbour notification is being applied, although on a non-statutory trial basis. The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has laid upon itself the task of notifying in writing occupiers of buildings on land adjoining the application site. Surveys in Scotland and Northern Ireland reveal support for neighbour notification in principle, which planners consider has increased the public's awareness of the planning system; but the systems in force in those parts of the British Isles are costly in personnel and time, and because the public believe that the purpose of planning is to protect individual property interests, they do not always give satisfaction.

In England and Wales, the Association of District Councils, which has discussed this issue many times, is opposed to an extension, for example, of the Scottish system to England and Wales. Some of its members oppose entirely the direct notification of neighbours by any means on grounds of cost and raising false hopes. Others favour some notification, to be undertaken by the applicant, on a non-statutory basis.

This diversity of approach is confusing for the public, as within one county or even one constituency, such as mine, adjoining councils may have widely differing practices. The borough council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk has a good code of practice, clearly expressed, while Breckland district council prefers to consult only at the discretion of the officer involved.

The District Planning Officers Society is rightly concerned on two counts—because of the volume of complaints received by the ombudsman on neighbour notification, and because it feels that such complaints damage its relationship with the public. It has identified the best practice, while emphasising that local circumstances must be taken into account. It stresses also that renotification of material amendments to submitted plans is an important issue which must be addressed.

The view of the Department of the Environment as expressed in a letter from the then Under-Secretary of State, in May 1987, is:

> "There is no substitute for a properly thought out strategy by each local planning authority in accordance with local needs."

I agree, but unless this strategy is made a statutory requirement, it will remain meaningless.

We must remember that public interest in planning matters can only increase, that members of the public have no right of appeal against planning conditions which may intimately affect them and their families and that the least people in England and Wales can expect is a consistently applied code of practice which will give them protection, wherever they live, even if not so elaborate and costly as Government legislation has already provided for people in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The Bill seeks to require planning authorities to have a code of practice for neighbour notification, to be drawn up by themselves in accordance with local circumstances, widely publicised and subject to scrutiny by the Secretary of State. It is a modest measure designed to be consonant with Government aims of local autonomy and containing public expenditure. It would be a step towards bringing the same rights of information to people in England and Wales as are already enjoyed by their Scottish and Northern Irish counterparts, and I hope that it will gain the support of the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Sir Rhodes Boyson, Mr. Peter Thurnham, Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Malcolm Moss, Mr. David Evans, Mr. Simon Burns, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. Ian Taylor and Sir Geoffrey Finsberg.

PLANNING (NOTIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS)

Mrs. Gillian Shephard accordingly presented a Bill to secure fuller, more effective and more consistent public involvement in the development control process: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 17 February and to be printed. [Bill 59.]

Orders of the Day

Opposition Day

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the first Opposition Day motion is not to be moved. We move to the second motion.

Low Pay

6.25 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to move,

That this House, noting that the number of low-paid workers paid below the European decency threshold has increased by two million since 1979 and that the lowest paid are now relatively poorer than at any time for a century, strongly condemns the Government's proposal to abolish the Wages Councils, which will depress the living standards of millions of families and will encourage employers to compete by wage cutting rather than by improved efficiency.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Meacher: In two days' time the consultation period ends for the Government's consultative document on wages councils. Since the Government have made clear their intention to abolish wages councils, whatever the facade of consultation concludes, the Secretary of State for Employment will leave Britain alone in Europe and almost alone in the world in having no legally enforceable minimum wage provisions.

The right hon. Gentleman will be acting in defiance of the CBI, the employers and other management organisations; he will be breaking a number of international agreements; he will be disregarding the almost unanimous view of the Tory-dominated Select Committee on Employment: and, worst of all, he will be the architect of the wrong economic policy for Britain, encouraging inefficient employers who cut wages at the expense of good employers who compete by innovation, new investment and new technologies.

One can appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's embarrassment at the consultative document. It is as thin in substance—it is three and half pages if one excludes the appendices—as it is vapid in fact and in argument. Much of the document, I understand, was written in Downing street rather than in the Department of Employment, no doubt by the same young Turks who wrote the National Health Service review. It was sneaked out separately from the White Paper—and several hours later—on 5 December, although it is not clear whether that was because of its economic illiteracy or so as not to harm too much the right hon. Gentleman's reputation in the coming Cabinet reshuffle.

The document refers to

"evidence that Council minima continue to be above the levels required to fill jobs."

In other words, the objective of abolition is wage cuts. Yet a few paragraphs later the document states that since the abolition of wages councils' protection for young people, "their earnings continued to rise."

Given the Government's belief that the main cause of rising unemployment is high wages, one would expect the rise in earnings of young people to be followed by job losses, but, on the contrary, the document tells us that

"the rate of youth unemployment has declined dramatically."

The Secretary of State cannot have his cake and eat it. At one and the same time he wants to argue that wages councils are holding wages too high and thereby destroying jobs, but also that abolition of the wages councils will not lead to wage reductions which might cause hardship. Or perhaps the right hon. Gentleman wishes to dissociate himself from the document because it is riddled with internal inconsistencies.

As hon. Members in all parts of the House know, the truth is that the Government want to lower minimum wages but do not want to be seen doing it because they judge it would be unpopular. The document says, without a shred of evidence:

"the facts do not suggest that cases of extremely low wages, imposed against workers' wishes, will become endemic or widespread."

Yet the document reports that current minimum rates of pay for adult workers range from as little as £76 a week to £92 for a full week's work, before tax and other deductions.

We want to know from the right hon. Gentleman—with his £1,000 a week salary and his £100,000 minimum fee membership of Lloyd's—whether he regards those levels as extremely low wages. The right hon. Gentleman is obviously embarrassed when the facts are revealed. Would a member of Lloyd's regard those as extremely low wages? If the right hon. Gentleman does not, perhaps he will tell the House what he does regard as extremely low wages. If he does regard them as extremely low wages, how could he not accept that the abolition of the wages councils will increase the number of workers paid at these, or even lower, levels?

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Meacher: I shall be glad to give way to my hon. Friend, but the right hon. Gentleman keeps murmuring and I am sure the House would like an answer to those questions from him.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does my hon. Friend agree that the major issues in the Pontypridd by-election are not the extravagant claims which have been made by Conservative Members during the last hour and a half, but those of high unemployment in areas such as Pontypridd, and, especially, low pay? Is my hon. Friend aware that 40 per cent. of the people working in the Pontypridd constituency earn £4,000 a year or less? Is that not disgraceful?

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend makes a significant point, which undoubtedly will feature strongly in the by-election. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) will comment in more detail on that matter when he replies.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said, more than 40 per cent. of people in Wales —that certainly includes Pontypridd—are now earning less than the European decency threshold. That figure is nearly 10 per cent. higher than it was 10 years ago. That fact is far more important than all the ridiculous filibustering on the by-election which has occurred in the past one and a half hours.

[Mr. Meacher]

We are entitled to know the Secretary of State's attitude to low pay, because his Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), was the sole member of the all-party Select Committee on Employment to vote last time round for the abolition of the wages councils. At that time he said:

"People have said they do not want to go back to Victorian sweatshops. Would we not be better off if the country was one sweatshop, hard at work instead of having 3 million unemployed?"

We should like to know whether the right hon. Gentleman also holds those views, or whether he repudiates his own Parliamentary Private Secretary? I notice that the right hon. Gentleman is keeping extremely quiet.

In one sense we already know the right hon. Gentleman's attitude to low pay—he is in favour of it. He has pursued criminal underpayment of wages below minimum rates with all the enthusiasm of the Prime Minister canvassing at election time for the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Out of 88,000 establishments caught paying illegally low wages in the past 10 years, he has prosecuted only 56—less than one in 1,000.

The right hon. Gentleman has doubled the number of his fraud investigators, while at the same time he has halved the number of his wages inspectors. The low paid might be excused for thinking that the right hon. Gentleman will certainly use the law against them when they are unemployed, but he will refuse to use it to assist them when they are in work.

Ministers like to refer to the Government as a law and order Government, but it is law and order in a kid glove when it comes to tracking down employers who break the law. The consultation document even admits that, to cope with the reduced inspectorate, routine visits to small firms have now been replaced by postal questionnaires asking the employer whether he is committing the criminal offence of illegal underpayment of his workers. I suppose, on that precedent, the Government might as well abolish the police force, and send regular letters to known criminals asking them whether they have committed any crimes recently. In this case, the right hon. Gentleman is abolishing the wages police force, and he is abandoning any follow up, even letters.

Not one reputable organisation is in favour of the Government's destruction of the wages councils. Just as the Botha Government in South Africa is much more hardline Right than the business community, so the Thatcher Government are much more rigid and intransigent than all the employer organisations. I shall not mention, of course, the Low Pay Unit, the TUC and the Labour party, because their views are well known, but the Confederation of British Industry has made it clear that it sees no reason to change its policy from that which emerged from its consultation in 1985 which showed overwhelming support in the CBI for the retention of reformed wages councils.

In a letter of 17 June last year, the director-general of the CBI reported to the right hon. Gentleman—I hope that he will refer to it later:

"it would be wrong to suggest that abolition of Wages Councils is as yet favoured by employers in every sector covered."

A stronger view is taken by the British Institute of Management. Its director-general wrote to the right hon. Gentleman on 19 January. He said:

"We remain unconvinced that the time is right for the abolition of Wages Councils. We do not see the structures as being inflationary, nor harming job creation to a significant extent, and they continue to provide some necessary protection for low-paid workers."

I do not believe that the right hon. Gentleman could expect a more majestic put down.

Not even the right hon. Gentleman's favourite, the Institute of Directors, is a lot of help to him. It may come out later in the debate, but the Institute of Directors claimed that its call for abolition was supported by three quarters of its members. However, on closer examination it emerged that the survey on which that conclusion was based had a non-response rate of 93·5 per cent. The Institute of Directors admitted, too, that most of its membership had no direct experience of wages councils. Of course, that did not stop Sir John Hoskyns, the director-general—never one to be put off by lack of knowledge or facts—saying two days later that anyone whose pay dropped because of abolition could rely on family credit. What he did not say, or perhaps he did not know, was that there are 2·5 million workers covered by wages councils, of which 400,000 are entitled to family credit, but only half that number claim it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is my hon. Friend aware that, in a previous incarnation, John Hoskyns worked for the No. 10 policy unit, where he wrote the paper which set up the YTS scheme in 1983? In that paper he said that the aim of the YTS should be to bring in

"a scheme that increases the differential between youth and adult wages."

John Hoskyns' experience is all about driving down wages, especially those of young people.

Mr. Meacher: That is why John Hoskyns has always been a great favourite of this Government, whose aim has always been to drive the maximum wedge between all sections of the population, whether it be between the north and the south, manual and non-manual workers, young and elderly people or ethnic minorities. It would be helpful if we could have that point answered by the curiously quiet and subdued Secretary of State.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I will give way to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bruce *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: No, I shall not give way. The right hon. Gentleman can look after himself.

A large part of low pay is in retailing, and significantly the Retail Consortium—which employs a large number of low-paid workers—has reported to Ministers:

"the overwhelming majority of the retail trade favour the continuation of the wages council system, subject to reforms."

Even among small firms—they must always be the Government's last hope—the Government's fanaticism for abolition is not shared. This is the second time in three years that they have come back with exactly the same proposals. In a Department of Trade and Industry survey of 200 small firms, only 4 per cent. agreed—in answer to a prompted question—that wages councils were a

"burden" on their business. Only 1 per cent. mentioned wages councils in any context and of the 19 listed so-called burdens, wages councils ranked third from the bottom. If the right hon. Gentleman is really interested in lifting the burden on businesses he should concentrate on what is crippling them now—the soaring interest rates.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Has my hon. Friend noticed that only five Conservative Back Benchers —four if one omits the Minister's bag carrier—are present? Does he agree that that no doubt will be widely remarked upon in our free press tomorrow?

Mr. Meacher: I certainly hope that my hon. Friend's observation will be carried in the papers where we hope to read about it tomorrow. From a quick glance at our Benches, I would say that about 60 of my hon. Friends are present, which is 10 times greater than the attendance on the Tory Benches.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman has given way and is at last demonstrating that he is willing to take part in a debate.

I am having some difficulty following his argument because he has said clearly—I thought that he was trying to recant what he had said in previous debates—that we had taken young people out of wages councils and that their wages had gone up. I have always argued that wages councils keep wages down. If the hon. Gentleman has admitted that, how can he continue with his argument that people's wages will go down if the protection of the wages councils is removed? Surely logic and experience tell us that their wages will go up in a free market.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman is a little too eager. He is the victim of Government propaganda because it is the Government's document that states that the wages of young people have gone up. I do not believe that that document is worth the paper it is written on. There is not a shred of evidence behind it and I am sure that every allegation it makes is completely unsupported by evidence.

The Secretary of State has no support in this country or abroad. He is ditching Britain's international obligations. One of the articles of the treaty of Rome—we hear a lot about that treaty when it is convenient to the Government — aims:

"To promote improved working conditions and an improved standard of living for workers".

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will tell us how the abolition of wages councils will achieve that. Article 4 of the European social charter—it would never surprise me if the Government disavowed that charter—enshrines the right of people to receive

"fair remuneration sufficient for a decent standard of living".

How does paying people less than one third of the national average wage do anything but prohibit a decent standard of living? The International Labour Organisation has stated:

"almost all countries in the world have some form of minimum wage protection".

All European Community countries, without exception, either have a statutory minimum wage or national agreements reached within individual industries, which are binding at law and provide a statutory minimum rate.

National minimum wages also exist in the United States. That is rather surprising, as the Government are anxious to emulate the capitalist leaders of the western world—Canada, Australia and Japan. When top-rate taxes were much higher in Britain, the Tories insisted that for market reasons they must be brought into line with our competitors. Now when it comes to minimum wage rates, about which the rest of Europe is in step, the Tories say that for market reasons we must move out of line with our competitors. There is not a shred of logic behind that argument; it is just Tory self-interest.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): At the time of the removal of wages councils' protection of young people, Ministers, time and again, gave undertakings that the remaining wages council system would be in place indefinitely. A couple of years later they are now breaking their promises. Those Ministers are dishonourable and their word is worth nothing.

Mr. Meacher: I am sure that my hon. Friend is not one of those people who still believe that there is any credibility in Government promises. I doubt whether there are many people left in the country who still believe that. The abolition of the wages councils is not in the Tory manifesto, but, of course, they have done so many things that were not in that manifesto. Their abolition is not supported, of course, by the low paid, but nor is it supported by the overwhelming majority of our people. The right hon. Gentleman is not only going back on his promises, but is acting in the teeth of the views of the great majority of people.

The Government may not realise that their strategy may be blocked by the EEC. There is clear evidence that other member states will not be prepared to tolerate Britain using low wages as a form of hidden subsidy or tariff to give British firms an unfair competitive advantage. I know that the Germans in particular are strongly opposed to what they call "social dumping" by firms illegally paying low wages.

The Government in the lead-up to 1992 are trying to have it both ways. Of course they are behind the single market initiative because they believe passionately in removing obstacles to competition in the international market place. They have not faced up to the fact that, although in some areas that requires the removal of regulations, tariffs, protection and import restrictions, in other areas it requires a standardisation of such things as product standards, health and safety and environmental regulations. That is why the harmonisation of employment rights throughout Europe is also necessary to ensure fair competition. It is extraordinarily myopic for the Government, alone in Europe, to be so fanatical about competitive markets and yet to be so blind to the logic of their own position, which will undermine them.

Not for the first time, what is good for the Thatcherites is bad for Britain. If the Government ideologues succeed in deregulating the labour market, they will be launching diametrically the wrong economic policy for Britain.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: In a moment. I am glad to welcome the hon. Gentleman to the debate. The Government Benches are beginning to fill up—there must be six Conservative Members present out of 350. That shows their interest in this issue.

An unregulated market is based not on efficiency, productivity, quality or design—all the things that the Government talk about—but on wage cutting. In such a

[Mr. Meacher]

market no individual firm dare risk investing in training or re-equipment for fear that a competitor will steal a march by offering a lower price base on low wages. The Government's policy is a recipe for stagnation, low morale, low productivity and technological backwardness. That is precisely what the Government's and the Chancellor's low-tech no-tech economy is headed for. Forcing down wage rates is not improving efficiency, but escaping from it. On that point I shall quote the words of a former Minister with responsibility for labour affairs who said in this Chamber:

"It was formerly supposed that the working of the laws of supply and demand would naturally regulate or eliminate that evil . . ."—

payment below a living wage—

"But where . . . you have no organisation, no parity of bargaining, the good employer is undercut by the bad and the bad employer is undercut by the worst".—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1909; Vol. IV, c. 388.]

Those are not the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) nor the words of Frank Cousins or Ernie Bevin; they are the words of the Prime Minister's exemplar, Winston Churchill. I might say that there are many people who would welcome him back in exchange for the Government.

Mr. Brazier: I am glad that there is one more hon. Member on our Back Benches than there were on the Opposition Back Benches when we were debating cold weather payments. However, the hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point. He asks what is the logic of the Government's policy of deregulation in regard to the economy as a whole. Surely the logic of deregulation is that it has led to unemployment in this country falling over the past five years, while it is still rising in other parts of the EEC, when our average wages are rising rapidly.

Mr. Meacher: The trouble with Government Back Benchers is that they are victims of the Government's propaganda. They do not seem to realise that unemployment is still twice as high as it was on the last day of the Labour Government. The Government's low-pay policy is completely inconsistent with the objectives that they like to profess. The Secretary of State continually talks about getting people off benefit, but a policy of wage cutting pushes more people into dependence on benefit, whether it is housing benefit or family credit.

This year, according to the public expenditure White Paper, the Government are proposing to budget £409 million for family credit. That is a substantial subsidy, by any standards, at the taxpayers' expense for the lowest-paying firms. I hope that the Secretary of State will touch on some of those matters when he replies to the debate. Is he not ashamed that the Government are subsidising inefficiency in that way?

The Secretary of State is always preening himself on reducing unemployment. That is what misled the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). However he is increasing unemployment by actively encouraging wage cutting. Workers are also customers. By cutting their pay and their capacity to buy goods and services, he is undermining employment. It is time that the Government and the Secretary of State took it on board that one man's pay cut is another man's job loss.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): Now that the hon. Gentleman is talking about employment which is a central part of the debate, will he confirm that the work force—people in employment in this country—is at an all-time record high and is far in excess of anything achieved in 1979 by the last Labour Government?

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman is saying that the numbers of people in work as a proportion of the total number who want work is higher than it was in 1979. That is a most extraordinarily illiterate statement. The percentage in work is still substantially lower than it was in 1979. If the right hon. Gentleman is also a victim of his own propaganda, God help this country.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman clearly does not understand the point, or if he understands the point, in his typical way he is evading it. There are more people—almost 26 million people—in jobs in this country. Does he accept that that is an all-time record in this country? For once let the hon. Gentleman be frank.

Mr. Meacher: The right hon. Gentleman is ignoring the real issue which is the proportion of people who want work who are able to get it. That is what counts. If the number of people in the country grows, it is not surprising that the number of people in work grows. The question is whether it is as high as it was in 1979 in proportion to the total number of people wanting work. It is not. It is substantially lower. As several of my hon. Friends have said, a very high proportion of the extra 1 million jobs that have been created, about which we hear so much, are part-time, low-paid and insecure jobs. In the coming recession later this year those will be the jobs that go first.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is my hon. Friend aware that Strathclyde in Scotland has lost 40 per cent.—146,000—of its manufacturing jobs since 1979? What a record for the Government to be proud of.

Mr. Meacher: My hon. Friend is quite right. It is extraordinary that the Secretary of State should seek to defend his position when the Government are so vulnerable on this matter.

The Chancellor likes to tell the House that people need incentives and that is why he gives tax breaks to the affluent and the well-heeled. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House why the rich need to be paid more to work harder while the poor need a pay cut to make them work harder? I shall be happy to give way to him.

The latest news is that the Government are targeting the low paid for the Budget. One might have been forgiven for thinking that they had been targeting them for the past 10 years. There are now 9·9 million adult workers in Britain paid below the European decency threshold—an increase of 2 million under the Tories. Pay rises for the highest paid one fifth of men in the work force have been 50 per cent. greater than those for the lowest paid one fifth. The poorest paid one fifth of male manual workers now earns less, relative to the average, than in 1886 when the figures were first collected. Relatively, they have never been poorer than they are today. Things have not improved since Lord Gowrie resigned as Minister of State four years ago because his £33,000 a year salary could not provide a decent civilised existence against the cost of living in London. Presumably he is the most celebrated victim yet of the Government's pay policy.

At least Ministers are now conceding that the Tory trickle-down theory of economic growth is not working. That reminds me of the line of the Beatitudes which says: "It's the rich that get the prunes and the poor that get the shits."

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I take offence at the language being used by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and I should like you to bring him to order for using such language in the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): There is so much background noise in the Chamber that it is very difficult for the Chair to hear hon. Members' comments.

Mr. Meacher: I know that the hon. Lady is a very sensitive and dainty person. Therefore, I shall make the same point about the Tory theory of trickle-down economic growth by saying that it is the rich that get the prunes and the poor that get the runs.

It is hypocritical for the Secretary of State and the Chancellor to talk about raising tax allowances as a Budget for the low paid when at the same time the Government have frozen child benefit for the second year running and are now proposing further cuts for the low paid by threatening wages councils. Nor does the Chancellor, whose concern for the low paid has been about as touching as Marie Antoinette's for the starving masses, seem to be aware that tax cuts will do almost nothing for the low paid because they trigger an automatic reduction of family credit and housing benefit leaving them no better off. I am sure that the Secretary of State does not know about that, because it is a social security matter and he has very little interest in social security.

The Prime Minister stated in memorable words on the steps of Downing street in 1979,

"Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error may we bring truth"—

although in the event that turned out to be written by Bernard Ingham—

"Where there is doubt, may we bring faith, where there is despair, may we bring hope."

With the exception of the unemployed, there must be few sections of the population for whom discord, doubt and despair has been doubled and redoubled more than for Britain's army of low-paid workers. Privatisation, endless social security cuts, market-rigging subsidies for lower wages, the abolition of the fair wages resolution, renunciation of international treaty obligations underpinning minimum wages and now the abolition of the wages councils have all been used ruthlessly by the Government to drive low wages even lower. It is a one-sided meanness and vindictiveness in our increasingly two nations country and that is why we shall be repudiating it strongly in the Lobby.

6.59 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and add instead thereof:

'noting that since this Government came to power personal disposable income has increased at every level in society and that the lowest paid have had proportionately higher increases than many other groups, considers that the best way in which the Government can help the low paid is by creating the conditions for more jobs by breaking down the barriers to employment and encouraging labour market flexibility; and welcomes the Government's decision to consult about the abolition of Wages Councils.'.

As the debate is about low pay, I shall be dealing with the issue of wages councils, but first let me pick up two points made by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

The hon. Gentleman mentioned international comparisons of minimum wages. It is, of course, true that a number of other countries have minimum pay arrangements; it is equally true that minimum rates in countries such as the Netherlands have not been raised since 1983. In the United States they have not been raised since 1981. Various Common Market and OECD reports have drawn attention to the need for Government to consider the impact of minimum wages on jobs.

The number of prosecutions carried out by the wages council inspectors has seldom reached double figures in any year under any Government. For the record, however, the ratio of prosecutions to establishments underpaying has been higher since 1979 than during the last Labour Government. That is another fact that the hon. Gentleman got wrong.

If the hon. Gentleman wishes to quote Winston Churchill, the best and most revealing quotation that he could give is Churchill's observation that the false doctrines of Socialism, if ever seriously put into practice here, would reduce this island to chaos and starvation.

I draw little comfort from the hon. Gentleman's speech, but its most extraordinary feature was not what it contained but what it almost omitted but then glossed over. The hon. Gentleman rambled on about the Council of Europe measure on low pay, which has one distinction: it is not accepted by any European Government that I know of. As my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) pointed out, the hon. Gentleman paid no serious attention to the reduction in unemployment in this country; yet the most effective contribution that any Government can make to improving incomes is surely the creation of conditions for more jobs.

If a Government are serious about tackling low income, they must be serious about creating jobs. Achieving more jobs means removing the barriers and obstacles to employment. That has led the present Government to tackle, for example, the industrial relations problem left by the Labour Government of which the hon. Member for Oldham, West was a member, who exported British job after British job overseas and left the country in chaos.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Does the Minister realise that, according to figures provided by the Library, by the end of last year in Wales, Scotland, the north-west, the north and the west midlands there were more than 800,000 fewer jobs than in 1979, and that the extra jobs created in Britain are mainly part-time jobs in the south-east?

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept that, but I was about to deal with precisely that point.

If the hon. Member for Oldham, West wants European comparisons, surely European comparisons on employment are the most relevant. If he was serious about low incomes, he would welcome the reduction in unemployment. He would welcome the fact that the unemployment rate has fallen faster here in the past two years than in any other major industrialised country. According to standardised figures, it is below both the European Community average and the rate in countries such as

[Mr. Fowler]

France, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain—and that in, for instance, Canada. He would also welcome the fact that as many new jobs have been created in this country over the past four years as have been created in the rest of the European Community countries combined, and the fact that more people are now in employment in this country than at any time in history. That includes 1979, and takes no account of those undergoing training. The work force now totals nearly 26 million.

Anyone who is seriously concerned about low incomes will see the importance of those dramatic improvements. Unemployment is clearly the chief factor in low incomes, and more employment is the best and surest path out of lower incomes. Our number one aim must surely be to produce the pay cheque rather than the dole slip.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It is difficult to believe what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, given that since 1979 there have been 19 or 20 changes in the way in which unemployment figures are calculated. [HON. MEMBERS: "24."] I am told that there have been 24. It is going up all the time.

Despite that, the right hon. Gentleman must accept that unemployment is still twice as high now as it was in 1979 when his Government were elected. So that we can proceed objectively and rationally, is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to allow the International Labour Organisation to conduct an independent inquiry into the various changes so that we know once and for all whether the Government are telling the truth or giving us a pack of lies?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman knows that there are two ways of counting unemployment. The first is to count those drawing unemployment benefit, which is the way in which not only the present Government but their Labour predecessor did it. Another way is by means of the labour force survey, in which 60,000 households are surveyed.

The latest labour force survey will, I hope, be published in a month or two, and I ask the House to wait for its publication. Past labour force surveys, certainly the one last year, have shown that the figures that we have published as the unemployment count, far from overstating the improvement, have, if anything, understated it. It would be wise for the House to wait for the survey's publication before jumping to any conclusions and to see whether it confirms a real and dramatic fall in unemployment, as has been the case in previous years.

The hon. Gentleman and his party lose a good deal of credibility up and down the country when they try to challenge what everyone else recognises as a real improvement. It is entirely legitimate for the hon. Gentleman to argue that the improvement should be greater and should continue, and I shall come to that point, but to deny that there has been an improvement at all is simply to make his position untenable.

Mr. Meacher: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he is directly misleading the House? The facts are completely contrary to what he has said. The labour force survey for the latest year for which information is available —1986-87—shows a fall of 80,000 in unemployment, while the fall in the unemployment benefit count for exactly the same period, given monthly by the Government, was 240,000. In other words, the Government's unemployment benefit count exaggerates three times the much better and, indeed, standardised international definition of the fall in unemployment. Rather than a fall of 1 million over the past two and a half years, there has been a fall of about 300,000.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman, in his hysterical way, has got it wrong again. We have tried to point this out to him, but he never listens. The unemployment total in the labour force survey is below that in the count of unemployed claimants.

I urge the hon. Gentleman, in his own interests, to wait until the new labour force survey is published and then to come back if he believes that the figures that we are publishing exaggerate the position. I do not believe that they do or that any serious commentator or politician in this country will consider that to be the position.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: That is why it is of such fundamental importance that the unemployment rate in this country is now down to just over 7 per cent.—a fall of almost 2 per cent. over the past 12 months—that the reduction has benefited all regions and that the steepest falls have been in areas where the problem has hitherto been worst, such as the west midlands, the north-west and Wales.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose*——

Mr. Graham *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: If Opposition Members are concerned about low pay and poor people, surely they are concerned about the position of unemployed people, particularly the long-term unemployed. Do they have no conscience? Are they not concerned? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am finding it exceedingly difficult to hear what the Minister is saying.

Ms. Short: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that Opposition days are precious to us. We put down a motion to debate low pay. The Secretary of State is filibustering and making all sorts of pretentious claims about the unemployment figures, but he is not talking about low pay. Is he in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is a very short debate, and I know that the hon. Lady is hoping to catch my eye. Bogus points of order only waste time.

Mr. Fowler: The reaction of some Opposition Members reveals their stance on unemployment and their embarrassment that unemployment is coming down. That is what I find so disturbing.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: The number of long-term unemployed has come down by about 450,000. That must be good news for anyone who is concerned about people on low incomes, and there is every reason to believe that unemployment can come down further. There are 700,000 vacancies, so the opportunity exists for a further fall in unemployment. It was precisely for that reason that we introduced the employment training programme to train long-term unemployed people so that they could take the jobs which, fortunately, are now available. In spite of opposition,

employment training has got off to a good start and, after 20 weeks, there are now 125,000 people under training on the scheme.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West did not support the programme for long-term unemployed people. He did not even support the position of the leader of his party on a programme for the long-term unemployed. If he has to choose between party politics and the position of the poor and unemployed, he chooses party politics every time.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Member for Oldham, West is not only a weak man; he is a weak politician.

Great progress is being made both in reducing unemployment and in training unemployed people.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: There is no evidence that the standard of living of people in this country has dropped over the past 10 years; quite the contrary. The evidence is that it has increased at an appreciably faster rate than was achieved by the last Labour Government.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West has quoted some surveys. Let me take two surveys which have infinitely more weight than anything that he put forward. The first in an analysis of households with below average incomes carried out by the Government's statistical service and published last summer. It shows that households of all income levels have had increased living standards under this Government. It shows that there was a 6·4 per cent. increase in the real net income of the average household between 1981 and 1985 and that, for the poorest 10 per cent., the increase was 8·3 per cent.; in other words, it was above the average. The survey goes up only to 1985, but it is clear that, as unemployment has fallen, so the position has improved.

The evidence of the new earnings survey is even more significant. Between 1979 and 1988, the real earnings of male workers increased by an average of 2·6 per cent. a year. That compares with an increase of only 1 per cent. a year under the last Labour Government up to 1979. There was a 32·9 per cent. increase in female earnings between 1979 and 1988 compared with only 16 per cent. between 1974 and 1979. Again, that is a higher annual average.

In addition, a survey carried out by my Department and published in the *Employment Gazette* shows that, between 1973 and 1979, a third of all male occupations in this country had not a rise but a fall in real earnings. That is the record of the Labour Government of which the hon. Gentleman was a member. Since 1979, the real earnings in almost every male occupation have increased. I am not, therefore, inclined to take lectures from the hon. Gentleman on ways to improve the position of lower paid workers.

When the hon. Gentleman was in government, he served in an Administration that made many of the lower paid even more lower paid. That is the record. In opposition, he has tried to sabotage a training programme whose aim is to find solutions for thousands of people living on what we would all agree are low incomes.

Ms. Short: I am sure that the Secretary of State knows the difference between an average and a distribution of that average and that he is capable of disaggregating the figures. He will know that we have had some economic growth in Britain every year since 1945, so to claim an annual rise in living standards is not significant. However, if he disaggregates the growth in average earnings, he will see that the lowest paid 20 per cent. are relatively worse off and that there is a growing divide in our country. That is the issue that we wish to discuss tonight.

Mr. Fowler: The figures that I have quoted show that the position has improved unquestionably over the past nine or 10 years and has improved much faster than under the last Labour Government. The hon. Lady may not like that evidence. She was not a member of that Government and no doubt does not take a great deal of responsibility for their actions, but that is the position.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Fowler: I must make progress.

I am not prepared to take lectures on wages councils from the hon. Member for Oldham, West. The House will understand that we are in the final stages of consulting about the future of the wages councils. Opposition Members might have rather more to complain about if, before the consultation period was over, I came to the House and announced a decision. Let me explain why we believe that consultation was necessary.

By any analysis, the wages council system has changed fundamentally since its inception in 1909. Two thirds of the workers whom it now covers are paid above the minimum rate. Wages councils cover only one tenth of the work force. It is essentially a system for retailing, catering and, to a lesser extent, clothing manufacturing. Retailing and catering together account for about 90 per cent. of the workers who are covered.

The system is not comprehensive and it is also—by common consent—full of anomalies. It covers laundries but not laundrettes, the selling of cooked meat, but not that of raw meat. Not only have circumstances changed since 1909, but there have been developments since legislation was introduced in 1986 to exclude young people under the age of 21.

There is no evidence that the removal of the right of those under 21 to take their cases to wages councils has led to lower pay for them. There is every reason to believe that it has encouraged their employment. *[Interruption.]* I shall give the hon. Member for Oldham, West evidence on employment in a minute. Since young people were excluded from wages councils regulation in 1986, employers have been more willing to employ them. They have also enjoyed greater freedom to fix pay levels and that has contributed to the dramatic decrease in youth unemployment. Unemployment among those aged under 20 has fallen during the past two years from 21 per cent. to just above 12 per cent. Some young people have enjoyed opportunities which would not have existed had regulation continued, and their earnings in general have not fallen away.

In hotels and catering the weekly earnings of full-time male workers under 21 have risen from £96 in 1986 to £105 in 1988—an increase of 9 per cent. Females in the same industry aged under 21 have enjoyed a pay rise during the same period from £87 to £97—an increase of 15 per cent.

In retailing, the earnings of full-time sales assistants have risen from £90 to £107—an increase of 19 per cent. There is no evidence of a reduction in the earnings of under-21s since the wages council system was introduced.

Economic and social conditions have been transformed since the wages council system was introduced. Average

[Mr. Fowler]

pay is higher and average hours worked each week have fallen by between 10 and 15 hours. The great majority of people who are covered by the wages councils work part time and many contribute a second income to the family.

The greatest difference since the introduction of wages councils is that there is now a comprehensive framework of social security benefits—not only out-of-work benefits, but in-work benefits. The system of in-work benefits provides direct help for people on low incomes. Family credit——

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Fowler: No, I shall not give way again.

Family credit is a generous replacement of the old family income supplement. It is a viable and worthwhile benefit that makes a substantial difference to the income of working families. Expenditure on family credit in its first year of operation is estimated at £420 million. That compares—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) waits, he will hear some answers. That compares with an expenditure of £180 million in the final year in which the family income supplement system was in operation.

The amount of money devoted to low income families who are in work has more than doubled since the family credit system was introduced. A quarter of a million families now receive family credit—25 per cent. more than received family income supplement.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Fowler: No, I shall not.

The average weekly award under the family credit system is more than £25—nearly double the £13 of the average family income supplement award. That is evidence that families most in need are claiming benefit.

We continue to encourage the take-up of this new benefit. It has been in operation for only 12 months. Last summer I issued a leaflet which was distributed amongst jobcentres to explain family credit and other in-work benefits. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Oldham, West wants to argue against in-work benefits—it will be a new stance for his party—will he explain why the last Labour Government did nothing about them? Family income supplement continued throughout that Government's period in office.

Circumstances have changed not only since the inception of the wages councils system but since the last consultation period in 1985. For those reasons, it is right to review the role of the councils and to consult on the proposal that they should be abolished. Decisions will be taken after the consultation period.

The Opposition's attempts to link the proposed abolition of the wages councils with an increase in poverty founder on the facts. Most employees covered by wages councils are part-time workers, and about two thirds contribute a second income to the home. The size of that second income affects the standard of living of the household, but such families are not normally defined as living in poverty. Families without opportunity of employment encounter the greatest difficulty in achieving an acceptable standard of living. That is why the Government are concentrating on creating conditions in which employment can grow and unemployment be reduced.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Fowler: I shall not. I have given way on many occasions.

Mr. Nellist: Not to me.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman may be right.

The Government can best help by creating conditions in which more jobs are generated and removing unnecessary barriers to employment. One that is still to be overcome is the shortage of skills in the labour market. Those goals form the background to our training proposals.

The Government have tackled income barriers that stand in the way of people taking jobs in the first place. The Government have made a serious start on raising the tax threshold by increasing personal allowances by more than 25 per cent. They have restructured national insurance contributions to make lower paid jobs more attractive to employers and employees. Since 1985, national insurance contributions have been levied at the two lower rates of 5 per cent. and 7 per cent. By raising income tax allowances and by cutting the standard rate of income tax the Government have ensured that the average liability to income tax and national insurance of the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers has fallen by 19 per cent. in real terms during the 1980s.

Another effect of having to finance Government expenditure by high taxes was that, after paying tax, people became better off when claiming social security than they were when employed. That is why the Government are determined to control spending and cut taxes. We are determined to ensure that people are better off in work, and that is why we have introduced family credit.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Fowler: I am close to finishing.

Opposition Members have expressed concern about a widening of the distribution of income. They should remember that the standard of living of every part of the income distribution has increased absolutely. Real personal disposable income, both in total and per head, is higher than at any time under the last Labour Government. The test is whether the incomes of the poorest have increased. They have. That is more important than changes in relative distribution of income. The Labour party's lurid caricatures do not square with the facts. The truth is that the majority of families are better off than they were in 1979. The incomes of couples with children have increased in real terms and the incomes of single parents have also increased. A strong growth in real earnings is important because it represents real and quantifiable increases in the material welfare of people.

Over the past 29 months or so, unemployment in this country has come down month by month. We have seen the biggest reduction in unemployment since the war. We have also seen the creation of a record number of new jobs. That is the Government's record, and it is a record that brings undoubted benefit to everyone in this country.

7.31 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): Despite the protestations of the Secretary of State, in the past 10 years, the divide between rich and poor has widened hugely. Methinks the Secretary of State doth protest too much. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has told us that, since 1979, the number of adult workers falling below the Council of Europe's decency threshold as specified by the European social charter has increased from just under 8 million to 9·9 million. Over the same period, pay rises for the highest paid fifth of men have been 50 per cent. greater than those for the poorest fifth. The poorest fifth of manual workers earned only 64 per cent. of the average in 1987, compared to 69 per cent. of the average in 1886. Meanwhile, the highest paid now earn more, relative to the average, than at any time since 1906. I do not remember the Secretary of State challenging those figures. Perhaps he will when he winds up, but I doubt it.

The problem of low pay has worsened, and progress towards equal pay for women has stopped. The average earnings of women full-time workers is two thirds that of men, and the gap between the earnings of young people and adults has continued to widen. People between 18 and 20 years of age earned just 60 per cent. of average adult pay in 1979. There is also growing regional inequality, which the Secretary of State did not tackle. Even in the south-east, nearly one in four adults earn low wages despite working full time. In the rest of Britain, the figure is about one in three and that applies to regions such as Wales.

We can blame deliberate Government policy, including the 1983 abolition of the fair wages resolution and the 1986 weakening of the wages councils' minimum wages system. As a result, some groups of workers have experienced actual cuts in weekly wages. The Secretary of State says that unemployment is the key to low pay. I would say that the Government have created the conditions for unemployment precisely for that reason. The number of people claiming benefit—to use a euphemism—may have come down, but there are still large numbers of people chasing jobs, which is good for low wages and profits, but bad for Britain in the long term. The Government seek to justify the encouragement of low-wage employment as a means of creating jobs, but the increase of 1·6 million in the number of people affected by low pay since 1979 is exactly matched by an increase in the numbers who are unemployed.

My reason for speaking today is to give one example of an area that is neglected entirely by Government policy. I shall describe an effect slightly different from that of the abolition of the wages councils. My point is that we have a shortage of many skills, such as those of hospital technicians. I apologise for giving a list, but it is necessary. Areas affected by a shortage of skills are microbiologists —of which I am one—haematologists, health physicists, audiology and radiology technicians, pharmacy technicians, pharmacists and ECG technicians. All those workers are low-paid, yet they are desperately needed. Senior pharmacy technicians' pay starts at £5,500—one third of the average wage in this country. Pharmacy technicians at the top of the scale receive £8,500. That is a pittance in anybody's book. How can one recruit people to those highly technical jobs with such pay? Their responsibilities are increasing. Microbiologists have been much in the news with salmonella, listeria and legionnaire's disease and without such technicians we should not be able to run the National Health Service—be it private or public.

I shall give one more example of the specific problem of recruitment. In the hospital that serves my area, ECG technicians are impossible to recruit. There should be five staff in the department, but there is only one full-time technician. She cannot even take a holiday because of low pay. People have come off the dole who are unable to survive on that pay. If pay is forced down in a professional sector such as that, how can we as a nation hope to compete in an increasingly technical world?

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): She works at Ysbyty Maelor Wrecam.

Mr. Jones: Yes, that is the hospital. Employment training is hardly the answer to that problem; genuine pay scales are. That is the blight of low pay in one specific area.

7.36 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): At the heart of the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was the Opposition's desire to eradicate differentials completely from the labour market and to have us all start the race at the same point in life and to end up at the same point. That is at the heart of their philosophy. If it is not their objective to achieve complete equality of income across the labour market, it is certainly their desire, through bureaucratic intervention and regulation, to prevent the correct differentials occurring between different sections of the labour market. Those differentials are, of course, directly proportional to the different skills, abilities and experiences that different individuals have to offer.

It is ridiculous for the hon. Gentleman to start making comparisons between the income of a Secretary of State and somebody on low pay. It is a ridiculous, emotive and nonsensical point to make.

Ms. Short: Why?

Mr. Janman: If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) thinks that in the real world a person doing an unskilled job should be paid the same as a carpenter or a fitter, or somebody in the professions, she is clearly living in a world of her own.

Ms. Short: We hear so many speeches from Conservative Members in which they talk about people's wages as though those people were not real human beings. It is important to ask Conservative Members whether they could live on £100 a week. Could they keep their families on that money? Imagine what it would be like, and just think what they spend. They should think about the pay of many people working in public services in our country; that is the point to try to make Conservative Members understand. We are talking about real family budgets and family needs, not some abstract economic theory.

Mr. Janman: I do not need any lectures from the likes of the hon. Lady about what it is like to live on a low income, given my own family background. I come from a low-paid, one-parent family, and I can assure the hon. Lady that I continually visit constituents who have to live on low incomes.

Ms. Short: Do something about it, then.

Mr. Janman: The hon. Lady is taking a flight into fantasy, as her party continually does, if she thinks that there is a broad-brush, simplistic answer to the problems that people on low incomes face in coping day by day.

If the hon. Lady considers the track record, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, of the results of this Government's policies and compares them with those of the previous Socialist Administration—and with all the previous Socialist Administrations in this country—she will see that this Government have a much better record of increasing the real living standards of people on low pay, people on average earnings and those with above-average earnings. The hon. Member for Ladywood and her hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West can make up the facts if they wish, but what I am saying is the truth.

We must ask what we mean by "low pay" and "poverty" because they are moving targets and always relative. If one raises the purchasing power of people on the bottom rung, the people on the next rung will want theirs raised to maintain the differential, and that mechanism will continue throughout the labour market.

As I said a moment ago to the hon. Member for Ladywood, I regularly visit many of my constituents. I operate a mobile surgery and take myself to my constituents instead of expecting them to come to see me. Because, inevitably, most of the people I visit tend to have problems—often derived from low incomes—I see what is happening at grass-roots level in my constituency. However, my observation, which proves that poverty is relative, is that sometimes when I go into a household which, on paper, has a low income, and look around, I see items that five or 10 years ago would have been considered luxuries.

Although I am not denying that there are genuinely people on low incomes in my constituency, as there are in many, if not all, constituencies in this country, there are cases in which people who are supposedly on low incomes or who are "poor" according to the figures of the Low Pay Unit have television sets, videos and hi-fis. That proves that the definition of poverty given by the Low Pay Unit is ridiculous.

Two centuries ago Adam Smith was much more accurate when he stated:

> "By necessaries I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people even of the lowest order to be without."

In other words, people always want to keep up with the Joneses. As people of a certain level in society have their income and standard of living raised, so everybody below that level will want to keep up with them.

Our record of expenditure on the social and welfare system is far better than that of the previous Labour Administration, but due to the definition of low pay, each successive expansion of the benefit system results in more people being defined as "poor" if one takes the ridiculous definition that the Low Pay Unit and other bodies want us to accept. On that definition, it is argued that 15·4 million people now live in or on the margins of poverty in this country. I am confident that, if the vast majority of our people were told that on those figures 29 per cent. of the population were living in or near poverty, their reaction would be that the figures were utter tripe—and utter tripe is exactly what they are.

The Low Pay Unit, the Labour party and other professional do-gooders, few of whom contribute to the wealth creation process in this country, do the genuinely needy a great disservice by blurring the real problems that exist and by carping on in their naive and unrealistic way about the genuine problems of poverty that have always existed under Labour, Conservative and Liberal Governments. It is ridiculous and naive to suggest that with one simplistic policy decision one could remove at a stroke the problems that will inevitably continue to exist in any economy and in any society. Indeed, around the world, far more people are living on the breadline in collectivist, totalitarian, Socialist societies than in fluid, free-market capitalist societies such as ours.

It is worth considering the change in purchasing power in this country. Although my figures relate to average earnings, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, as average earnings rise the real incomes of people on low wages also increase. I shall compare 1971 with 1987 in terms of how many minutes or hours somebody would have to work to buy certain key items that are important to ordinary family life.

In 1971, to buy one large loaf of bread one had to work for nine minutes; by 1987 it had fallen to six minutes. The 55 minutes worked in 1971 to buy 1 lb of rump steak had fallen to 41 minutes by 1987. Although there was perhaps a slightly different attitude to buying eggs in 1971, to buy 12 eggs in 1971 a male on average earnings would have had to work for 22 minutes; but by 1987 that had fallen to 15 minutes. It took 40 hours 30 minutes of labour to buy a car licence in 1971; which had fallen by 1987 to 23 hours 35 minutes. It would have taken 19 hours 55 minutes to earn the money to buy a colour television licence in 1971 but only 13 hours 41 minutes in 1987. The relevant figure for an average telephone bill fell from 50 minutes in 1971 to 35 minutes in 1987. That is clear evidence of a real increase in the standard of living of our people, both for people on average earnings and for those on lower pay.

There has been some talk about different countries and about people's relative incomes across the world. A couple of weeks ago, I was lucky enough to visit the Socialist shangri-la of Sweden—a country that is often held up as a model of Socialist perfection and as able to deliver higher living standards and good incomes on, from the Opposition's point of view, an impressive egalitarian stance. However, the wages in Sweden are so low that it is impossible——

Ms. Short: The hon. Gentleman must be joking.

Mr. Janman: Well, I am sorry to have to tell the hon. Lady that, on the figures quoted to me when I visited two Saab locations in Sweden, I was surprised, given Sweden's reputation, at just how low the wages of people working in the motor industry are. Given that taxation is so high, a husband has to have his wife going out to work in almost every instance in Sweden for the family unit to be able to have any income on which to live.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Only a few weeks ago the Select Committee on Employment visited Sweden for informative in-depth discussions. The hon. Gentleman talked about so-called poverty pay and drew inferences about Sweden, but I advise him that average wages there were quoted as £1,000 per month in our terms.

Mr. Janman: I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are not talking about average wages, but about low pay. The example that I was giving was for manual——

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Janman: I have already given way to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham); perhaps I may be allowed to answer his point.

The example that I was quoting was related not to average earnings but to the earnings of people in the lower income bracket doing unskilled assembly work in the motor industry. As I understand it, this debate is about low pay. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that the gross income of those people was no more, in terms of purchasing value and taking into account exchange rates, than that of workers in a similar industry in this country.

When the punitive taxation, the high marginal rates of tax, that Swedish workers have to pay in order to provide for the over-bureaucratic Socialist system that Sweden has to support is taken into account, I can say to the hon. Gentleman that, from what I saw, the standard of living of a person doing an ordinary manual job there is far worse than in this country—and it is far worse because of the punitive taxation and excessive employment protection legislation that effectively leads to fuller employment than is commensurate with labour market conditions at the time and that works through to very high prices.

So in Sweden, at the lower end of the labour market, wages are no more, in real terms, than they are here, yet the person is paying much higher taxation and much higher prices in the shops. When the hon. Member for Blackley goes back to Sweden he may like to take a look at the difficulties that employers have in paying any considerable differential between skilled and unskilled workers where there is very little difference at all. If they provide for any differential, because of the very high marginal rates of taxation it is all taken by the state, and the net income of the skilled worker is no more than that of the unskilled worker. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the skilled worker in Sweden is hit very hard by that punitive taxation system.

The best protection for the low-paid, and the best way of providing maximum employment opportunity, is not regulation, intervention and wage councils; it is low taxation. I should like to take this opportunity to ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to look hard at the possibility, in the next Budget, of making huge increases in the tax threshold. Already, 1·7 million fewer people pay tax than would be the case if there were still the same tax regime that we inherited from the Socialists in 1979. There is much more scope for reducing the tax burden on the low-paid in this country by making changes that would take millions more out of the tax system.

The other main matter of importance to the low-paid is also a matter for the Treasury, and that is a firm monetary policy to protect the low-paid from inflation. Inevitably, when we have high inflation rates—and from 1974 to 1979 they averaged 15·5 per cent.—it is the low-paid on fixed incomes who are worst hit, not the rich.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does the hon. Member not agree that, until we tackle the level at which people start to pay national insurance stamps, we will not actually lift them out of the low-pay group? We need to look at that in conjunction with the income tax system.

Mr. Janman: I am very grateful for that point. It supports the general direction of my argument, and I would certainly include national insurance in the definition of "tax". National insurance, which is there for a specific purpose, is, of course, an element of taxation.

Let me mention now the need to abolish wages councils. This topic was one of the core parts of the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, West. Before drawing some conclusions, I should like to quote from a letter I received from a small business woman, a constituent of mine, on this matter. I am afraid that this constituent was a victim of the Waffen SS wing of the Department of Employment, the wages councils inspectorate.

She writes:

"Dear Mr. Janman,

We are a small retail shop selling all types of fabrics and trimmings.

We recently had a visit from 'The Wages Council' and unfortunately we're not paying quite the full amount per hour to the part-time workers. The ladies who work here were quite happy with the arrangements we had with them, but that didn't count, because according to the inspector, 'We were breaking the law'. Whose law? In the end I felt like a criminal and that I didn't like."

[Laughter.] Hon. Members opposite may laugh, but the fact of the matter is that the existence of this legislation and the existence of these wages councils is jeopardising not only that business and the employment that my constituent is providing, but similar small businesses up and down the country. I do not know exactly how many there are, but I am sure it must be tens of thousands.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West may like to quote the CBI, but the CBI is essentially the representative of large corporate concerns, or big business, and I do not believe that it is going to be totally in tune with the sort of problems that many small businesses, particularly in the retail sector, are going to have. It is that type of business which, I am afraid, has to bear the brunt of the totalitarian instrument of the wages councils. My constituent's only crime was to pay a wage that her business could afford and that her employees found acceptable, and the alternative is no business for her and no work for the people she currently employs.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Could the hon. Member tell us how much this constituent of his was paying herself and exactly how much she was giving her under-paid workers, who, for all I know, may also have been constituents of his?

Mr. Janman: The hon. Lady misses the point completely. My constituent's exact payment to herself, which I suspect was not that large, and her exact payment to the people working for her, is not the point. The point is whether wages councils destroy job opportunities or enhance them. The fact of the matter, so ably illustrated by my constituent, is that they destroy jobs very successfully. The abolition of wages councils could free the labour market of this totalitarian and egalitarian distortion, and create up to 300,000 new jobs. I hope that this Government, who believe in the free market, will act and abolish these out-dated institutions.

Finally, I want to come to some conclusions on what the real issue in this debate is. The real issue, on which this Government have such a good record, is how, within the benefit system, we can genuinely make sure that people in this country, given their circumstances, are provided with a minimum income. The correct way of doing that is not to put a burden on businesses by way of wages councils, distort the labour market and destroy jobs; the correct way

[Mr. Janman]

of doing it—as we have been doing through family credit, which is now much more extensive, and far more generous, than anything we have seen from any Socialist Administration—is to target benefits on those on the lowest incomes and to take as many people as possible out of the tax net altogether, allowing them to keep their earnings and spend them as they wish, instead of people on low incomes still having to pay some of the highest marginal tax rates in the world. Those are the real issues, and I hope that on wages councils my right hon. Friend will act soon.

7.59 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The point that grieved me most about the speech of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) was the patronising way in which he treated people in relative poverty who—surprise, surprise—have a television set. It comes ill from a party that tries to preach choice to say that some people should have no choice in life, that they must make do with the basic necessities and that they cannot try to get something better or at least try to ensure that such small mechanisms as are available through the state to help them get something better should not be made available.

To some extent, I agree with the Secretary of State—Labour Front Bench Members would probably agree, too—that those in poverty from low pay are not all the people who are in poverty, although there is undoubtedly a strong correlation and a large overlap.

In his evidence to the Royal Commission on the distribution of income and wealth Professor Layard noted that:

"Of workers in the lowest 10 per cent. of wages, only one in five was in the lowest 10 per cent. of relative incomes."

There are undoubtedly some reasons for that. As has been said, many of the lowest paid are in second jobs, and their earnings help to raise a family income above the poverty line.

Ms Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wallace: I shall not give way. I wish to deal with this point.

On the other side of the coin, there are many families in poverty, particularly large families in which a working parent is on a reasonable wage, yet it is insufficient to meet family needs. However, that should not blind the House to the fact that the most recent figures of the Low Pay Unit demonstrate that about 4 million people live in poverty or on its margins as a result of low wages.

Poverty may exist for reasons other than low pay, and in the long term, measures such as the integration of the tax and benefit system can do more than a national minimum wage to tackle the problem of poverty. I am becoming increasingly sceptical about the national minimum wage. Research in the United States, where there is a national minimum wage, suggests that it is not as helpful as it might seem on the surface in trying to take people out of poverty. A study by Carolyn Shaw Bell concludes:

"no money sum of wages can be calculated to be a minimum wage that will provide an income above poverty."

Other surveys tend to suggest that job losses, which undoubtedly push more people into poverty, can result from the introduction of a national minimum wage. But it does not follow that such negative effects would flow from a targeted minimum wage of the type being administered by the wages councils. Pending the implementation of an integrated tax and benefit system, my colleagues and I believe that a reformed wages council system would be and should be an effective tool in tackling low pay while minimising any negative effects of a full-blown minimum wage policy.

My party opposed the 1986 reforms and queried how it could make sense, for example, to set a single overtime rate regardless of whether overtime was worked for an extra half hour at the end of a working day or for six hours on a Saturday. We were highly sceptical of the job creation potential arising from young people being excluded from the scope of wages council legislation. There is claim in the consultative document that

"the rate of youth unemployment has declined dramatically"

since 1986. No evidence was presented to show that that decline has anything to do with sectors covered by wages councils. Also, there is no claim that the rate of youth employment has gone up. That might have been a far more relevant claim if taking young people out of the scope of wages councils had the effect that the Government are claiming. That is the hallmark of the consultative document. It is full of bold and bald statements. For example, the very first paragraph refers to the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s." It states:

"Job growth in the 1990s will depend on pay arrangements which reflect a great deal of responsiveness to local labour market conditions; changes in product markets and technology; differences in performance, merit, and skills; the continuing profitability of the enterprise; and international competitiveness."

The White Paper suggests that wages councils are incompatible with such concepts and practices.

Speaking on the subject of low pay in a debate on 15 February 1984, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) drew attention to conclusions that had been arrived at by a group of Cambridge economists who had been asked by the Government to look at the effects of wages councils on the economy. That group of economists found

"no evidence of direct benefit from the abolition of wages councils. We found no evidence of any increase in economic efficiency, of any increase in total numbers of jobs in the industry and yet, at the same time, there was significant evidence of an extension of low pay".

Such quantitative research is more significant in a debate such as this—I do not doubt that one of his constituents went to the hon. Member for Thurrock—but it is more likely that there will be no real impact on job creation by the abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Janman *rose*——

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman spoke for well over 20 minutes.

There is some evidence that the volume of trade is far more important than pay in determining employment levels. Eighty six per cent. of workers in sectors that operate under wages councils are in markets in which there is no international competition. That is significant. It means that, therefore, all companies are operating within the same rules. It is not as though they have been disadvantaged by foreign competition.

It is difficult for me to try to find 10 or 15 minutes to have a haircut. I do not believe, therefore, that, after 1992, and the completion of the Channel tunnel, hairdressers or barbers in London or in Cornwall or Shetland will be in

competition with barbers in Calais, or even barbers in Seville. The argument that companies affected by wages councils would be competitively disadvantaged does not stand up.

Hon. Members must examine the Government's own admissions in the consultative document. They tell us that the 1986 legislation required councils determining minimum rates to consider the employment effects of their decisions in areas where workers are generally paid below the national average for their trade or occupation. In other words, since that became law, wages councils have been obliged to consider the employment effects. Yet the same consultative document complained that the 1986 changes had not had the desired effect because in the first year the average increase in wages council settlements was 8·6 per cent. and in the second year it was 6·3 per cent. The Government are not complaining because the figures are too low. Surely, having given regard to employment effects, the wages councils have decided that they have no effect on unemployment; or the wages councils have not been fulfilling their statutory duty. If that is the Government's allegation, they should have the guts to make it in a more forthright manner.

The Government have a blinkered approach, in spite of everything that has been set up to keep up the charade of consultation. The whole document has one conclusion—that the Government are intent on abolishing wages councils. Paragraph 16 refers to anomalies. There are anomalies in respect of people who work in laundries. They are covered if washing is done manually, but not if it is done by machine. The Government's attitude is to abolish the wages councils to resolve the anomaly. No Conservative Member has thought to say, "There is something wrong with the pay of those who work in launderettes. Should not the argument be to extend the scope of wages councils?"

The one statement with which I agree is that:

"The world of the 1990s will be very different from that of 1909."

Although I agree with that statement, I draw some different conclusions.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has already quoted Winston Churchill on the introduction of wages councils. The Secretary of State's response was pretty feeble. He could at least have tried to explain that away by saying that at that time Churchill was a Liberal. Nevertheless, ever since then, Conservative Administrations have followed the policies that the 1909 Bill introduced.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Can the hon. Gentleman name a single wages council whose minimum wage is generous or even average? Surely all wages councils have helped to ensure that low wages are perpetuated and institutionalised.

Mr. Wallace The hon. Gentleman misses the point. Obviously one would wish to see even higher wages, but if we abolish wages councils the chances are that wages will be driven even lower. Even the CBI, responding to the 1985 proposals, expressed fears about the abolition of wages councils because it foresaw companies undercutting companies and small businesses undercutting small businesses, leading to job losses rather than job creation, and implicit in that was the driving down of wages.

In 1909 Churchill saw wages councils as being a means of protecting those whom we believe to be the most vulnerable and most likely to receive low pay. The work patterns of the 1990s will undoubtedly produce employees who fall into that category, not least the young, those in part-time employment, home-based workers and the new army of low-paid cleaners employed by private companies to clean our hospitals and local authority premises. Rather than considering the abolition of wages councils, we should be considering their strengthening and extension.

Any hon. Member, particularly any Conservative Member, who doubts whether we still have vulnerable and low-paid people as we approach 1990 should read an article in the *Financial Times* on 14 October 1988 by Mr. Jimmy Burns. It describes the plight of a woman whom he cannot even name for fear that her employer would find out. That woman works at home in Birmingham as a seamstress for about 56 hours per week and receives £20 to £25. She was unsure of her employment rights and even who her employer was.

Mrs. Mahon: I can top that example. I am involved with a group of home workers who have been receiving as little as 24p an hour for packing Christmas cards for Woolworths. To date, Woolworths is refusing to see them, even though those workers have been trying to arrange a meeting for three months.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Lady underlines the point that we still have in our midst vulnerable people who, because of their position, can be exploited by means of low pay.

Just before the passage quoted by the hon. Member for Oldham, West, Winston Churchill said:

"It is a serious national evil that any class of His Majesty's subjects should receive less than a living wage in return for their utmost exertions."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1909; Vol. 1V, c. 388]

All Opposition Members would endorse that sentiment.

If one were to ask, as I think the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) tried to do, whether the abolition of wages councils would help improve the circumstances of those people to whom I and the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) referred, I could not agree that they would be helped in any way. The economic case for abolition has been asserted by the Government, but as a Scots lawyer I would not even be generous enough to give them the verdict of not proven. They have come nowhere near to backing up their assertions with any well-argued economic case.

The existence, even in 1989, of vulnerable low-paid workers is argument enough not only for the retention of reformed wages councils but for their extension, backed up by a well-resourced inspectorate so that their orders can be guaranteed. In that way we can try, albeit in a small way, to raise the level of expectations of pay of many people in Britain who are still paid a ridiculously low amount and who, if the economy is succeeding as well as the Government claim, deserve to share that much more in the benefits of it.

8.14 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rightly concentrated on the progress that has been made thanks to the economy's vitality under the Government's enterprise policy. The 30 per cent. real increase in earnings at the lower level is in stark contrast to the 1 per cent. or 2 per cent. real decline recorded in the Labour years in the 1970s. But what matters most is whether people believe their take-home pay is fair and, most especially, whether they believe the

[Mr. John Redwood]

stoppages out of their gross pay are fair, taking into account the need for public services and relative income levels within society.

One reason why there has been such progress in improving the take-home pay of people in the lower pay bands is that the Government have been prepared to cut taxes across the board and, in certain Budgets, to concentrate on cutting them in ways which help those at the lowest end of the income scale.

Ms. Short: We all know that the hon. Gentleman prides himself on being a great intellectual. Therefore, I am sure that he will confirm that the Government's tax take since they came to power in 1979 has increased. It has simply moved from income tax to VAT and national insurance. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that that is true and will confirm it.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Lady is missing the point. I am talking about incentives to work and the level of stoppages from pay. I am about to illustrate that there has been substantial progress, as she should know.

The standard rate of income tax has been cut from 33p in the pound to 25p in the pound. A new level of national insurance contribution has been brought in at only 5 per cent. on lower earnings—a big improvement on the position when the Labour Government left office. There has also been a substantial increase in the real value of thresholds before people start to have to pay income tax.

Those three elements create incentives to work. They create more jobs and enterprise in the economy. That is why there is so much growth in the economy which has enlarged the prosperity of everyone and has produced startling increases in real take-home pay after allowing for all kinds of taxation in the economy and its impact upon purchasing patterns.

I want to urge the Government to continue in two directions. First, I agree that we should not give up on deregulation. That is an important part of the enterprise policy. It is the way to create jobs or to avoid the destruction of more jobs—jobs that were destroyed by the policies pursued by the Labour Government.

Secondly, I want to see the Government pursue the policy, between the Department of Employment, the Department of Social Security and the Treasury, of cutting taxation, especially for those on lower pay, in the next Budget.

I want to illustrate my point by showing the current system and then sketching out some ideas for improving it still further. I preface my statement about the current position with the overriding comment that at every level of income, especially those affecting the lower paid, the position is so much better today than it was in 1979.

Mrs. Mahon: May I challenge the hon. Gentleman on that by citing an example of one group of 250 workers in my constituency who, because of the Government's privatisation policies in the NHS, lost one quarter of their pay when they were taken over by a private company and they also lost out on holiday pay, pension rights and sickness benefit. They had a reduction in pay of 25 per cent. and the work force was halved. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that they are not better off than they were in 1979?

Mr. Redwood: I would need more information on their rates of pay in 1979, their agreements, the nature of the incentive and bonus arrangements, and so on. However, the hon. Lady is straying from my point. I am talking about the tax system and the marginal rates of tax that hit people with different levels of income.

Under today's system, people earning up to £43 a week are not taxed. At £43 a week people start to pay a 5 per cent. national insurance contribution over the full range of their earnings. At £53·37 a week a single person starts to pay 30 per cent.—25 per cent. income tax and 5 per cent. national insurance. At £75 per week, the national insurance rate increases by two points, producing a new overall rate of 32 per cent. At £115 per week, one reaches the full rate, before reaching the higher rate of tax, of 34 per cent.

While those rates reflect an improvement on 1979, this year's Budget will give scope for more progress along the road of reducing the level of stoppages for the lowest paid. The best way of doing that, targeted most accurately at the lowest paid, is to raise the threshold at which national insurance is payable. The answer I received from the Treasury is most illuminating. I asked what would be the revenue costs of raising class 1 contributions from £43 to £55 per week. I was told that, given the way in which the rebate system worked, there would be no loss to the Treasury.

Another way of helping the lower paid that is often urged upon the House is raising thresholds and the level at which one begins paying income tax. That approach is not as well targeted because increasing the threshold helps people on high salaries more as they benefit from a reduction linked to the 40 per cent. tax rate rather than the 25 per cent. rate.

Another way of helping everyone, including the low paid, is to reduce the standard rate of tax. My own estimates and Treasury costings indicate that, this year, we could have £4,000 million to give back to taxpayers and still run a very prudent budget—by which I mean repaying more than £10,000 million of public debt, which is what we ought to do for other economic reasons.

Such an approach would give us scope to raise thresholds by between 7 and 10 per cent. If we raised tax thresholds by 10 per cent., it would cost only £2,000 million in 1989-90. It would enable us to cut the standard rate of tax by another 1p on the road to a rate of 20p in the pound, which I hope we shall reach in 1991. It would also leave us free to make a substantial increase in the national insurance threshold. Why not increase it to £70 or £75 per week? We could certainly raise it to £55 or £60 without creating any great revenue problems.

As for income tax, it is important to continue stressing that lower income tax is good for the economy as a whole, is good for incentives, and means that people at all but the lowest income levels can keep more of the money that they earn. Lower tax rates affect the pattern of part-time employment, and attitudes towards bonuses, promotion, and seeking better job opportunities. We wish to continue fostering an enterprising and prosperous economy in which people will take the opportunities that are now so visible across the width and breadth of the country, in the north as well as the south, the east as well as the west.

The type of scheme I have outlined would mean that people earning up to £50 or £60 per week would pay no tax or national insurance. Above that level, they would begin falling into the income tax net at a rate of 24p in the

pound. At a higher level still, they would begin paying national insurance at the rate of 5 per cent.—a combined rate of 29 per cent. The maximum rate, until they achieve the highest income levels, would be 33p in the pound—but that point would not be hit until they were earning well over £100 per week.

Such an arrangement would give people more incentive and have an impact on the labour market. It would encourage more people to enter part-time work. That is particularly relevant at a time when many women wish to return to work. They do not necessarily wish to be employed full time, particularly if their children are still at school, but are deterred from working for as many hours as they would like, or from working at all, by the impact of national insurance contributions and taxation on their take-home pay.

The changes I suggest would have pleasant consequences for the problems of the National Health Service. As many right hon. and hon. Members know, over the next 10 to 15 years, the Health Service will have to confront the problem of an insufficient number of male and female school leavers to enter nursing. Recent figures show that the Health Service will have to attract an unrealistically high proportion of school or college leavers. The nursing work force will have to expand by drawing on part-time labour among married women wishing to return to the profession, or who may wish to train for it for the first time. They should be welcomed, and that necessary process of adjustment could be helped by suitable changes in the tax regime.

The message is: so far, very good. There has been progress for the lower paid of a kind not seen in the 1970s. There has been progress for the enterprise economy as a result of our sticking to our guns and going for deregulation, freeing of the labour market, and lower taxation. Now that the economy has such enormous strength, as measured by the large public sector surplus, let us by all means have a prudent Budget—but one that serves the lower paid by taking more of them out of the tax net altogether and continues the progress made towards a still lower rate of taxation.

8.25 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The House must be struck by the growing disparity and the widening extremes between wealth and poverty that disfigure our society, and by the growing divide between those at the top who have too much and cannot possibly justify what they take out of society, and those at the bottom, who suffer deprivation to an extent that disgraces a modern economy.

I approach this matter not just in economic terms but as a question of morality. There is no economic justification for such contrasts of income, which do not reflect how hard a person works. I shall give an example that might appeal to the Secretary of State. Ex-Cabinet Minister Sir John Nott received—I shall not say earned—more than £870,000 in 1987. Presumably, this year the figure will be about £1 million. What contribution has he made to society to deserve that income? Are we to assume that he worked 20 times as hard as a Cabinet Minister? Does Sir John work 20 times as hard as the Secretary of State? If not, why is he paid 20 times as much?

It seems that what people take out of society bears little relation to what they put into it. Nowhere is that more glaringly obvious than in the case of the low paid. They live in poverty, yet often they are among the hardest working of all. They are fellow citizens who earn their poverty, and it is wicked that deliberate divisions of society are being deliberately exacerbated.

We have already seen the abolition of the fair wages resolution and of schedule 11 to the Employment Protection Act 1975. We have seen the low level of YTS allowances and the young workers' scheme, which actually subsidises employers to pay low wages—putting the young generation in a straitjacket of low pay. To all of that is added the attack on wages councils. The Government's official policy is to force down wages, to price the poor into jobs. It is no wonder that social divisions are growing wider. The poorest one fifth of wage earners earn less, relative to the average wage, than they did 100 years ago, whereas the better off enjoy a continued improvement.

Since 1979, income increases for the highest paid fifth of men have been 50 per cent. higher than those for the lowest fifth. The better off—and this will appeal to the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood)—have seen tax cuts lavished on them. Last year saw tax cuts for the rich and benefit cuts for the poor. Last year also, Hay Management Consultants, which is a division of Saatchi and Saatchi, reported that, on average, executives earning an average of £87,000 per year saw their salaries increase by more than 31 per cent. These ugly divisions disfigure our society. They create poverty amidst plenty.

The rewards of society are increasingly being unequally divided—and that has been particularly true since 1979. The low-paid need large increases if they are to return to the relative standing, in relation to the better off, that they had when the Government took office. But what will they get? The abolition of wages councils, which is bound to depress the wage levels of the low paid even more. That is a scandal and a disgrace. I suppose that the people who dream up such ideas go to church on Sunday.

The Opposition have had to give up their Supply day and valuable debating time to defend the weak and vulnerable at the bottom of the pile, who at present are afforded a measure of protection by wages councils.

From the consultative document, it is clear that the Government propose scrapping wages councils. We have been round this course before. The Government did exactly the same in 1985. Because of opposition from the Select Committee which examined the matter, from many employers, from many Conservative Members and from others, the Government backed off. They made changes instead. In the Wages Act 1986 they excluded young people and they restricted the wages councils to setting a single minimum rate and a single overtime rate.

Now, three years later, they are back with a second attempt to abolish wages councils. Why? It is for the express purpose of forcing down some of the lowest wages. What are these rates? They are set out in the consultative document. The lowest rate is £1·88 an hour, which I worked out as £75·20 for a 40-hour week; the top rate is £2·38 an hour. Is it not nauseating for Cabinet Ministers earning £1,000 a week to suggest that these poverty wages are too high? Yet the only purpose of abolition is to make it legal to push these pitiful rates down further. The consultation paper makes it clear in paragraph 14:

> "Moreover, a substantial proportion of workers covered by the councils—probably as many as one third—continue to be paid on the minimum rate. Such clustering of pay levels around a particular figure is evidence that council minima continue to be above the levels required to fill jobs."

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

That is the reproach and criticism of the consultative document. That is the Government's reason for scrapping wages councils. It is deliberate Government policy to depress these pitiful poverty wages even further. It is wicked and immoral.

The crude, loony Right, ideological argument against wages councils is that they are an institutional intervention in the labour market, raising wages above the clearing rate. But nearly all pay is determined by institutional intervention setting minimum rates. For most people it is called collective bargaining. Why should only the lowest paid, those in wages council industries, be singled out for such treatment? For example, the pay of admirals, generals and judges is set not by the law of supply and demand but by institutional intervention, no doubt with regard to fairness and equity. What of Members of Parliament? There is a huge supply queuing up which greatly exceeds the demand for 650 jobs. What would be the market clearing rate? It would probably be nil. Instead, the pay of hon. Members, like that of most other people, is decided by institutional intervention. How hypocritical it would be to single out only the lowest paid for this grotesque ideological extremism.

In 1985 a Select Committee investigated the matter thoroughly and recommended against abolition. There is no evidence that wages councils have caused unemployment or inflation. No one can say that the pay of workers in the wages council sector has risen relative to the pay of others. The reverse is true. I am sure the Secretary of State knows that the CBI said, in its recent review of the working of the Wages Act 1986:

"For the most part, the minimum rates set by wages councils and wages boards rose no faster, and in many cases slower, than average basic earnings . . . across the economy as a whole . . . statutory minimum rates declined from 58·9 per cent. to 57·5 per cent. of the average basic earnings for manual men across the economy as a whole between 1980-81 and 1987-88."

When the Select Committee examined the position, it could not find any clear or unambiguous evidence that scrapping wages councils would create more jobs. Wages are lowest in those parts of the United Kingdom where unemployment is highest, and vice versa. Wages are higher in successful industries. If low wage rates create jobs and economic success, why do our most successful competitors pay higher wages than we do? I studied all the evidence in 1985 and it is clear that there is no intellectual case for abolition. It would be a triumph of dogma and ideology over evidence, facts and common sense.

All this has to be seen as part of a package of measures to depress the pay of the poorest, including a requirement on local government to put contracts for services out to tender to private firms. The abolition of the fair wages resolution, schedule 11 and now wages councils will prevent local authorities from insisting that firms observe fair wages and decent employment practices. This will permit a spiral of wage cutting, with firms competing to see which can pay the lowest wages. We want competition right across the economy but on efficiency and levels of service, not on which firms can pay the lowest wages.

What happens if wages are forced down so low that workers feel that they can no longer tolerate their jobs? The Government have legislated for that. If a worker leaves, it will be considered as a voluntary action and he —or more probably she—will be disqualified from unemployment benefit for long periods. Therefore, the less-scrupulous employer can force down wages, knowing that many workers dare not leave. All the cards are being stacked against the poor, the low paid and those at the bottom of the pile. Instead of giving them a helping hand, the Government will push them down even lower.

Those on low pay are not the people who are causing problems for the economy. Instead, they need and deserve the protection of Parliament. In pre-Thatcherite times Parliament sought to give protection to those who could not protect themselves, such as people in wages council trades. Those people are overwhelmingly women, so this is a major women's issue. Often they are part-time workers; often they are from ethnic minorities; often they are in scattered small units, weak and vulnerable, with no union or collective agreements.

For a long time, under legislation brought in by Winston Churchill, Parliament sought a level beyond which the poor would not be exploited. The object was to safeguard weak employees, and equally important responsible employers who sought to maintain decent business standards from unfair competition based on wage undercutting. Everyone who works for a living has the right to a wage which safeguards health and human dignity. To carry out the destruction of wages councils the Government have had to denounce convention 26 of the International Labour Organisation. We are now virtually alone in the industrialised world. We are the only country in Europe without minimum wage protection.

It is sometimes said that wages councils are old fashioned and an anachronism, established to deal with the sweated trades, and that they are unnecessary in modern times. Alas, that is not so. The sweatshops of the east end of London employed successive flows of immigrants, at one time Jewish. We have had immigration more recently. Coming from the east end of London, I can assure the House that there are sweatshops there now. We are not talking about distant history.

Recently, we had the report of the Auld committee which was set up by the Government to study shops legislation. It strongly recommended the retention of protection for shop workers because

"of the strong likelihood of exploitation of some shop workers in the form of lower wages, particularly for unsocial hours, and possibly in the longer working week."

Although it was not asked to look at wages councils, the Committee volunteered some information. I remind the House that this was recently, and not when Winston Churchill brought in the legislation. The Auld committee, appointed by the Government,

"set great store by the preservation of the role of wages councils in fixing . . . holidays and holiday pay for the retail trade."

So there can be no doubt about the need for wages councils in modern Thatcherite Britain, especially for women, for part-timers, for home workers, or for those working in hotels, catering, retailing, clothing or hairdressing.

When we last considered the matter, the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), who is not in the Chamber, produced a pamphlet for the Bow Group which made a recommendation against the abolition of wages councils. He argued, among other things, that if the Government abolished wages councils, that would be construed as an excuse for the next Labour Government to introduce a statutory minimum wage. He made a good point, for one of the main duties of a new Labour Government will be to

bring in a proper statutory minimum wage and employment protection for this badly exploited section of the work force.

8.40

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) say that Labour Members were passionately interested in the problems of the low paid and were willing to give up their time to debate the subject. It is nice to see eight Members on the Labour Back Benches. At least they feel the need to be in the Chamber to debate a subject chosen by their party for debate today.

Ms. Short: There are more of us than there are on the Government Benches.

Mr. Bruce: I have always believed—even when I thought I was a Socialist—in a high wage, high productivity economy. *[Interruption.]* When I thought I was a Socialist I was very young; some of us grow out of such feelings. As a lad of 12 or 13 years working in the sweat shops, I thought that possibly the way forward would be via the wonderful mechanisms to which the unreformed Socialists on the Opposition Benches still cling, as though, like children playing with baubles, such mechanisms will achieve their aims. We are told by Labour Members that the present state of affairs facing the low paid has been in existence for years. Not one Labour Member is able to say that a wages council negotiated rate of pay is even an average rate of pay. They are all low rates of pay.

Ms. Short: Very low.

Mr. Bruce: Very well, very low rates of pay. I have to agree with Labour Members, and that is why, when I believe in a free enterprise, high wage, high productivity economy, I must consider what sort of mechanisms work and how we should go forward. How do businesses in a free enterprise economy start and develop?

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman will have heard the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) quote from paragraph 14 of the consultative document, which said:

"Such clustering of pay levels around a particular figure is evidence that council minima continue to be above the levels required to fill jobs."

That means that, without wages councils, wages would be even lower. Is that the outcome the hon. Gentleman wishes to see?

Mr. Bruce: I speak as a wet-behind-the-ears new Member. But for a dozen years I ran an employment agency and dealt with staff, some of whom had the so-called protection of wages councils and some of whom had not, and I can best answer the hon. Gentleman's question by considering which of those groups was better off.

Hopefully, all hon. Members believe that people in receipt of low pay need to be helped—*[Interruption.]* I dare say that many Labour Members believe that passionately, even if at present they are in the Tea Room.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) spoke about helping the low paid, and we must consider how to improve their situation. I am surprised that Opposition Members do not spring to their feet to declare that the 30 per cent. real increase in the wages of the low paid is good but that we need to do better. I could go down that road with them. But they constantly criticise a Government who, while they may not have done brilliantly for low-paid people, have achieved 30 per cent. more for them than the policies of the unreformed Socialists were able to achieve. Having achieved a 30 per cent. improvement, let us consider how we can further improve matters for this group of workers.

Hon. Members have quoted from documents prepared by employers' organisations. Who will now say, "We don't worry too much about the existence of wages councils because they do not make much of a problem for the wages market or artificially inflate wages"? I agree that they do not artificially inflate wages; one need only look at the rates of pay that they achieve.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The wages are depressed.

Mr. Bruce: Yes, they depress them. I have got through to the hon. Gentleman, who is occupying a position on the Labour Front Bench. He agrees that wages councils depress wages.

Mr. Wareing: Not at all.

Mr. Bruce: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I thought he was agreeing with me.

We must consider what wages councils have achieved and why employers think that they are not worth doing away with by the Government. The Government have not announced that they are abolishing wages councils, despite many of my hon. Friends and I urging them to do so. They have decided not to do away with them at this stage because they do not believe, from a philosophical point of view, that there is much to be gained from taking that step. They do not feel that the actions of wages councils are distorting the economy enormously.

I believe that wages councils are depressing wages and are institutionalising people in low-paid groups. That must be true because of the way in which wages are low under wages councils. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members have been saying all day that wages are low under wages councils, and then they defend wages councils for defending the low paid.

I had the good fortune of running an employment agency in Yorkshire for 12 years during a time when many people were being put out of work. Many of those with whom I was dealing worked in the aerated water industry —fizzy pop to us—and they were "protected" by wages councils. I know from practical experience about the way in which wages were negotiated for the temporary staff I was putting into those companies compared with temporary and permanent staff who were going into other companies.

Unfortunately, employers sometimes wear blinkers. They consider negotiations for a minimum wage that go on year after year knowing that all such negotiations tend to work on the basis of seeing what can be paid by an employer who is not making much profit. People get together in wages councils and say, "We cannot go too high because this company is not doing too well, so it cannot afford this or that." Accordingly, they allow a small increase, perhaps just ahead of inflation—but never much ahead of it—to reward and keep the work force.

An employer would come to me, aware of young workers' terms and conditions, and say, "We would like

[Mr. Bruce]

you to recruit people of a lower age because we can pay them a lower rate and you can quote a lower rate to us." That was an employer talking to an agency, negotiating freely on the basis of an institutionalised form of wage negotiation.

I contrast that state of affairs with one of my other large groups of workers, secretarial staff who worked for me in Huddersfield. When I first opened my employment agency in that town I had to pay my staff unacceptably low rates of pay; to be competitive, I had to go against others in the same town, though I was able to pay my staff perhaps 10p an hour more than my rivals down the road. By slashing my margins and being efficient and working hard, I was able to put these people out into the market place at approximately the same rates that employers were paying previously. I was successful in putting my rivals out of business.

What did I do then? Did I screw down the wages of my staff? No, I could go to my staff and say, "We can increase your wages that much more this year." As an agency, over two or three years, we increased our rates every three or six months. We moved the market place upwards. We could go to employers and tell them the going rates. We made more profit and our employees received more money. Those companies did not have as a reference point the rate specified by that nice wages council. They could not say, "Hang on a minute, the wages council says you should give them £1·50 an hour. How dare you give them £1·70?"

Mrs. Fyfe: While the hon. Gentleman was overwhelming his secretarial staff with a whole 10p an hour more than their low-paid colleagues, what was he paying himself?

Mr. Bruce: In my first year of self-employment, I paid myself nothing and my company lost £9,000. That figure comes from audited accounts. Although after 10 to 12 years I made a reasonable return, in the first year—which is what the hon. Lady was asking about—I lost money.

Mrs. Fyfe: On the assumption that the hon. Gentleman is not a philanthropist and had calculated that he would make a good profit eventually, what did he earn in the remaining years?

Mr. Bruce: In the remaining years, I made a substantial profit and sold out at an extremely good price to somebody who continued the business. I was, therefore, able to come to this place and manage on a modest salary for which I work extremely hard. I enjoy doing my job, however, and enjoy debating with the hon. Lady.

As a young person, I remember one of my first full-time jobs was working in the laundry industry. I also recall harshly having to negotiate my wages with my father, who was the manager of that business but not the owner. I was told that the rate that I was receiving was the right rate for a young person and that I should look at the rates published by the wages council. However, there were other people doing not such a good job as me. I was more productive than they were, but I was constantly being told, "Look, there is the rate on the wall. That is what you will get. Although you may be worth a great deal more, we are not going to deviate from the rates of the wages council." I do not believe that the wages council does anything other than institutionalise and give a lower norm for wages.

I believe that it is important how businesses start and how they go on. Again, I shall speak from my experience, because that is perhaps more valuable than all the theoretical arguments that we have heard.

Ms. Short: Other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Bruce: I know that the hon. Lady wants to speak. I certainly do not want to detain the House for too long.

I remember starting my business and having only a small amount of money. I was made redundant under the Labour party.

Mr. Nellist: We got something right then, did we?

Mr. Bruce: Absolutely.

I started my own business and I needed to recruit people. I had a limited amount of money with which I could recruit people and found that the best people available who were willing to work for the low wages I was able to offer tended to be graduate women who had been pushed by history into secretarial jobs and were interested in achieving a more executive role.

I do not believe that an employer, working with his employees and doing the best for his business, puts on blinkers—which the Socialists tell us they do—and tries to force down wages. As my company succeeded, so did my staff. I took people on at low wages—if there was a wages council for executive or secretarial recruitment staff, possibly they would have been illegally low wages—but within two years, when the company became profitable, the wages of those staff were doubled.

After five years the salaries which I was paying my people in Huddersfield were second to none, as were the incentives. We could recruit the best people for the job. I am glad to say that the vast majority of the people we recruited were still graduate women who had never had the opportunity of working and developing their abilities in a good business.

If we want to ensure that everybody has the chance of a job, it is essential that companies should be able to pay what they can afford and thereby develop their businesses. When one looks at the way wages have developed, one sees that, when low pay becomes institutionalised and formulated, as it is by the wages councils, that is the time when people get stuck with low wages, and there is not a high wage and high productivity economy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) has the amazing knack of getting Opposition Members to listen to his speeches. He made an excellent speech. He gave hon. Members a carefully researched list of how we can help precisely—through our taxation system and especially our national insurance system—to improve the lot of low-paid people. The threshold of national insurance contributions can be an effective method of helping the low paid without improving enormously the lot of those people who are on higher rates of taxation. I believe that his speech should be wrapped in glossy paper and sent immediately to the Chancellor for his consideration.

When the Labour Government put a national insurance surcharge on employers, that was a tax on jobs. It has been reduced slowly but surely during the Conservative Government. We have demonstrated that employers can create additional jobs. I believe firmly that to allow people to get back into employment and to help

them by way of low taxation and national insurance is an excellent way forward. I commend the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham to the House.

I have heard nothing from Opposition Members that could possibly help low-paid people. I believe that Opposition Members should stop talking rhetoric and consider the practicalities behind their suggestions. The Government have already improved low-paid people's take-home pay by more than 30 per cent. during their period of office and we have demonstrated the way forward. I am confident that the Government will introduce further measures and will tackle the problems of wages councils, which will ensure that in future low-paid people will have an improvement in their standard of living.

8.58 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): It was extremely generous and tolerant of you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) to tell us the story of his working life. I am sure that we all found it of interest, but whether it was relevant to the debate is another question.

I am sure that everyone would agree that the speech we witnessed tonight from the Secretary of State was remarkable. It was full of bluster, and it avoided the issue of low pay and the statistics that demonstrate, unequivocally and unquestionably, that there has been a massive growth in the number of people working for poverty wages since the Government came to power. The right hon. Gentleman made some extremely misleading claims about the levels of income and unemployment in our country. Before I talk in detail about low pay I want to put some facts on record.

We should have political differences in this Chamber and we should debate them honestly, but it distresses me greatly that Conservative Members deliberately fabricate facts and they know that they do it. They distort statistics and go from the handouts they get from Central Office. They know that the Government have followed a strategy of encouraging low pay. Those Conservative Members who have spoken may pretend that that is not so—some of them might be stupid, but others are dissembling. They know the Government's strategy and not to admit it openly is to be dishonest with the House and with people.

Reference has been made to the effects of tax and benefit changes since the present Government came to power. John Hills of the London School of Economics recently provided us with an analysis of the combined effects of changes in tax and social security during the past 10 years. His analysis, as quoted in *The Observer*, found:

"'the cuts in direct taxes have been entirely paid for by cuts in the generosity of benefits.' There has thus been 'a major redistribution from those on low incomes to the better off', with the bottom 50 per cent. of families losing an average of £8·50 a week, while the top 10 per cent. have gained nearly £40 a week per family. By comparison with what would have happened if the 1978-79 tax and benefit levels had been uprated in line with the growth of national income, Mr. Hills states, "the bottom half of the population has lost £6·6 billion, of which £5·6 billion has gone to the top 10 per cent. Indeed, £4·8 billion has gone to the top 5 per cent.'"

Such are the statistics when we talk about tax and benefit changes.

The other misleading statistics given at great length by the Secretary of State concerned levels of unemployment. We all know that during the famous general election of 1979 when we had those Saatchi and Saatchi posters saying "Labour Isn't Working", unemployment was 1·2 million—as calculated on the old method. At that time the Tory party said that unemployment was too high, and we agreed. The Government then took power and induced a recession in our country and the destruction of our manufacturing capacity from which we are only now beginning to recover in terms of investment levels. Because of the Government's ideological commitment to monetarism they destroyed, virtually overnight, 2 million jobs. Those jobs were largely held by males and represented relatively well-paid work in manufacturing.

Mr. Ian Bruce *rose*——

Ms. Short: We have had the story of the hon. Gentleman's life, thank you very much.

We have still not returned to the 1979 level of employment. The Government have suddenly ceased to talk about 1979, and 1983 has become the bench-mark. We have been told over and over again about the 1 million new jobs that have been created.

There is no doubt that since 1983 there has been some job creation, but there is also no doubt that there has also been an enormous distortion of the unemployment figures. The new jobs that have been created or generated since 1983 have been overwhelmingly low paid, part time and for women. Women want jobs and want more employment, but they do not want low paid, insecure employment. We are faced with a continuing decline in full-time, reasonably paid jobs for men and some growth since 1983—it does not take us back to 1979 employment levels—of low paid and largely part-time work for women. That is what the statistics tell us about the national economy.

Mrs. Mahon: My town is a typical example of what has happened since 1979. We have lost thousands and thousands of well-paid, skilled jobs in manufacturing. What we got in return was demonstrated by a survey last year of the jobcentres—jobs offering £1·20 an hour for cleaners and £1·75 an hour for looking after the elderly. A lot of the jobs on offer are temporary and are extremely low paid. That is what we have had in exchange for the jobs lost. I also saw the Secretary of State's nose grow by at least six inches when he was talking about the unemployment statistics.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend paints a picture of what is happening across the country, including the so-called prosperous south-east. The south-west has some of the worst low pay in the country in agriculture, tourism, and so on. I am putting those facts on record because we hear so many falsities and distortions from Conservative Members.

I do not know how the Secretary of State has the brazen cheek to make claims about comparative unemployment statistics. The labour force survey shows that more than 5 million people in our country would like a job if they could get one. Of course they are not all included in the unemployment figures. That has never been the case. The International Labour Organisation recommends a statistic to give us a comparison across the OECD. That shows that the last published unemployment figure was more than 3 million. The other statistics are the fiddled figures that the Government put forward.

[Ms. Short]

Although a great many jobs have been restored, we are still not back to 1979 levels of employment. There has been an enormous shift from the poorest to the richest through tax and benefit changes.

Since 1979, 2 million more people have become low paid in Britain. To our shame, 9·8 million workers in Britain, or 47 per cent. of those who are in work are low paid according to the Council of Europe decency threshold, which is the enormously generous figure of £3·80 an hour or £144 a week.

Tory Members do not understand that poverty is relative. Obviously the minimum levels of pay for the poorest people would not be the same in a poorer part of the world. Britain is the 15th richest country in the world, but we should have some decency between the top and the bottom so that all our citizens can participate in the dignity of belonging to society in the way in which they live and care for their families.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Short: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Government have been enormously successful. They set out to encourage low pay and they have succeeded by 2 million extra workers. Many people live on benefits, and the benefits are much less generous than they used to be. Many unemployed people wish that they were employed and millions of people work for their poverty in Britain today.

Is it just nastiness? Are the Government just vile? Do they simply believe in inequality for its own sake? Do they want to help their rich friends and trample on the others? Is that why they do it? Some of that is true. The Government have all those instincts, but that is not all. The Government have an economic strategy. It was called monetarism and it was about creating more economic efficiency, the supply-side miracle that we have not experienced but were told would create more incentives through those who are well off retaining more, earning more and becoming better entrepreneurs, with those who are less well off having less and having to work harder.

The Government deliberately took a whole series of measures to cut the wages of the poorest. They abolished schedule 11 to the Employment Act 1982 and got rid of the fair wages resolution and deliberately used the youth training scheme to lower the expectations of young people. There is no question about it. Had the YTS allowance been uprated by the old YOP levels, it would now be £57 a week. The Government provided subsidies to employers who took on workers on condition that they paid low wages. It was a subsidy not to increase wages but to force them down.

The Government attacked the wages councils and diminished their protection. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and I served on the Committee which considered the Wages Bill and heard the Government time and again promising to reform the wages councils and retain them. But now we have a consultative paper about getting rid of the wages councils. It is all a strategy to encourage low pay. It has been an enormously successful strategy and the Government have succeeded in increasing the number of low-paid workers by no fewer than 2 million.

I think that that is a nasty strategy, and that people are entitled to say whether they think it desirable. It is an outrage, a disgrace and a hypocrisy for Ministers who are part of that strategy and understand it well to pretend that they are not doing what they are doing. They have taken a series of deliberate and enormously successful steps to encourage low pay.

It is my view and that of most decent people, backed up by all the polling evidence, that an increasing proportion —an overwhelming proportion, indeed—of British people think that our country is too divided and unequal, and like the idea of a minimum wage. The present position is unjust and unpopular. The Government say, "Never mind that so many people are low paid. They can receive family credit and thus will not suffer poverty." But the take-up of family credit at present is about one third—it may be creeping a little higher—so two thirds of those entitled to it are not receiving it.

What is this subsidy? It is a subsidy from the state to inefficient employers. Employers who pay low wages tend not to train or invest, and experience a high turnover of labour. Of course Opposition Members support some such system until there is a decent minimum wage and there is no longer any need to subsidise low wages, but we do not consider it desirable in itself. Does the Secretary of State consider it desirable to subsidise the most inefficient employers in our land?

Beneath all the hoo-ha about the approach of 1992, we find that industrialists in Europe speak of one in three work places on the continent closing down as a consequence. We hear Britain's top industrialists saying that because Britain is less efficient and trains and invests less, as many as one in two work places may close down in 1992. The Government's low-pay strategy means not only inequality and injustice but enormous economic inefficiency.

The Secretary of State keeps pointing out—as though he were terribly clever and understood the position in a way that no one else does—that there has been an increase in participation in the labour force since his Government came to power. That increase has come about because over a long period there has been a growth in female participation, in this as in other countries. A high participation rate, however, is not a measure of high economic development. Some of the poorest countries in the world have even higher participation rates. In the more efficient countries far more people tend to be in education for far longer than in the less efficient. The Secretary of State is unwise, indeed foolish, to keep boasting about our high participation rate. It is a reflection of the low proportion of 16 to 18-year-olds in full-time education, and of the low levels of training and retraining in the course of working lives. I wish that the Secretary of State would understand that.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): My hon. Friend has interestingly and correctly challenged many of the statistics that have been given. Would she care to comment on the misleading impression given in the consultative document that very few employers actually underpay—that is, pay rates even lower than wages council rates? The Government claim that, according to the inspectors, only about 3 per cent. of workers are underpaid. If they read their own new earnings survey, they would see that 10 per cent. of female shop assistants are paid less than £2·10 per hour, against a wages council minimum of £2·33 per hour.

Those shop assistants are being robbed in every hour that they work. Why is the Conservative party so uninterested in such disobedience of the law?

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend is right. Conservative Members are hypocritical about law and order. They do not give a damn about breaches of the law in respect of health and safety at work or the wage councils. They do not enforce the law although they know the statistics. Conservative Back Benchers have criticised the Government, even making a Nazi parallel, because a wages inspector dared to call on an employee in Thurrock. Conservative Members are hypocritical about law and order and decent standards of employment.

The country is becoming increasingly aware that the options are low-paid work, short-term schemes or unemployment. In addition, the Social Security Bill demands that people must prove on a weekly basis that they are actively seeking work, regardless of the number of jobs available in their locality. A new provision states that people cannot in future demand the rate of pay that would be offered by a decent employer in their area. The Social Security Bill is another ratchet in the process of encouraging low pay. If we do not get rid of the Government in the meantime, no doubt we shall come back in a year or two's time to say that there are another 1 million low-paid people in this country and that more than half the work force are low-paid.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): My hon. Friend will be interested to know that a phenomenon that has not been seen for many years in Sunderland is now returning. As the shipyards are running down towards closure, 40 people are now sent by the jobcentre to stand in the road at 5 o'clock in the morning, allegedly to go to Teesside to the ship repair yards, where there is no negotiation with trade unions and the skilled rate is £133 a week. A bus arrives and a chargehand gets off and says, "We want five burners this morning. The rest of you, go home." If the other 35 learn the lesson and do not turn up the next day, they are technically not available for work. That is the position in today's Britain.

Ms. Short: My hon. Friend describes a situation that we increasingly recognise. There has been a tremendous growth of casual and temporary work with a decline in the standard of employment protection that people can expect. The Government think that that is clever, but it is not, because we cannot have efficient organisations unless we have a stable work force with decent employment conditions, democratic work practices and high training and investment levels. That is the only healthy future for the British economy. This short-term, nasty strategy of encouraging low pay is unjust, bad for the low paid and damaging to the future of our economy. People will pay the price in the future and the Government will live to regret their strategy.

9.17 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]* Anyone who has been in the Chamber for the whole of this debate will know that I slipped out earlier only for a few minutes. I have been in the Chamber considerably longer than most Opposition Members.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): That is a Tory untruth. Everyone knows that it is untrue.

Mr. Paice: If that is an untruth, I should be interested to know what is a truth.

In this debate, Opposition Members have shown again that they do not understand the relationship between pay, jobs and standards of living. They have shown that they know nothing about running a business or about the relationship between costs and sales. If sales go down because costs and prices have gone up, jobs go down. Ultimately, that means fewer people in work and less prosperity. There is a fundamental point that it is sometimes difficult to get across. I often wish that I could speak in block capitals so that the Opposition could understand. Every job has a value that is reflected in the price of its end product. If there is no sale because the price is too high, the job will disappear.

Lord Wilson—often reviled by the Labour party, but at least he won four general elections, which is better than its last three leaders—said that one man's pay increase was another man's price increase. We must understand that.

As my hon. Friend said——

Mr. Nellist: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Paice: Yes. I am not as rude as some Opposition Members.

Mr. Nellist: Given that statement by Lord Wilson, what are the consequences of the wage increases awarded last year to Lord Hanson of 167 per cent. and to Lord King, chairman of British Airways, of 270 per cent.?

Mr. Paice: Those salary increases would have been approved by the boards of those companies. They would have taken the decisions on the basis of the effect they would have on the price of their companies, end products, such as flight tickets. It is the responsibility of each business to take such decisions, not the Government's.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): What would the consequences have been if those companies had gone bankrupt through bad management?

Mr. Paice: The result would have been not just one or two, but hundreds, probably thousands, of lost jobs.

We have heard about the importance not just of gross pay but of take-home pay. Conservative Members have referred to the need to improve the latter, and to the great strides that have already been made.

The decency threshold has been mentioned. It is a European concept that has not been approved by Europe, let alone this country. The decency threshold is 68 per cent. of the national average wage, which rings close to what the Low Pay Unit describes as poverty—an income 40 per cent. above the benefit level. Both statistics suffer from the same fault—they are self-perpetuating.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Paice: I shall not, because I must wind up.

Both statistics are self-perpetuating. If the benefit rate or the average wage increases, so does the percentage. By the very nature of averages, there will always be people below them, so the Low Pay Unit is also self-perpetuating.

I am sometimes worried that the Opposition pretend to be an alternative Government. This evening they have

[Mr. Paice]

shown that they fail to understand the meaning of running a business. I hope that the House will throw out this absurd motion.

9.23 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Secretary of State was nettled by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and lost his temper to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner). He forgot to explain that it was his Government who despatched more than 2 million jobs after 1979, before they began fiddling the falling rates of unemployment, of which they attempted to make much this evening. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) countered with effective European figures. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) spoke with the authority of a distinguished Select Committee Chairman. He described the debate in moral terms, and rightly used the word "wicked". My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) put the facts on record.

This debate was preceded by desperate Government filibustering that was flagged by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and her concern for the scandalously low pay rates in parts of the Pontypridd constituency. The proportion of women in Mid Glamorgan who earn less than £100 a week is 17·5 per cent. The proportion of men earning less than £130 in Mid Glamorgan is 15·7 per cent., which may be one reason why there is no Minister from the Welsh Office to answer the debate tonight.

The Government claim that there have been a number of requests for the abolition of particular wages councils. But in the non-food wages council, for example, several members of the employers' side have expressed a wish that they should continue, including the booksellers, the Drapers Chamber of Trade, the National Association of Retail Furnishers, the Footwear Distributors Federation, the Radio Electrical and Television Retailers' Association and the Menswear Association. Even the threshold, as it is made out to be in Europe, is problematic.

In my constituency, a man earns £157 a week but receives only £133 per week net. He pays £10 a week for a lift to work, £27 weekly rent, £2 weekly car insurance and £5·63 weekly for a bag of coal. He tells me that he feeds the slot meter about £14 a week. His wife turns off the immersion heater at weekends, when a coal fire heats the back boiler. That family has much less than £100 per week before it pays for food, leisure and holidays. My constituent's wife buys stewing beef at £1·63 a pound, white loaves at 47p, pasteurised milk at 27p per pint and eggs at £1·07 a dozen. All of that mounts up quickly. My constituent's pint of beer now costs 91p. Holidays, new clothes and nights out rarely happen.

In my constituency, female cleaners earn the equivalent of £71 a week for 40 hours. It is little wonder that recently there was a one-day strike as they earn £1·78 an hour. In Clwyd enterprise zone, there are companies that pay £70 to £80 a week to grown men and the female cleaners are employed by a contract cleaning company that undercut its rivals to gain the contract and cannot afford to pay the girls. That is what privatisation is about, as a distinguished trade union official told me.

In that context, what a shabby speech the Secretary of State made. It was a miserable spectacle to observe a British Cabinet Minister who earns a small fortune arguing for what is, in effect, the depression of wages that are already low. His speech had the true whiff of Thatcherism. We know that some Ministers can jet off to Barbados with a first-class British Airways ticket costing £2,316 and, if they wish, can hire a private plane to islands such as Mustique. But those on low wages groan under the weight of higher rents, higher rates, higher water rates and higher electricity and gas bills. None of the speeches made by Conservative Members showed any comprehension of the problems faced by ordinary people on low wages.

I want to give some facts about low pay in the Principality. First, average earnings for men are lower in Wales than in any other region of Great Britain. The incidence of low pay among men is more severe in Wales than in any other region. One in four men in Wales earns less than the decency threshold of £150 per week set by the Council of Europe. Dyfed and Powys counties are at the bottom of the league of male earnings for all the counties of Great Britain. Low pay is a massive problem for women. More than 80 per cent. of women in Wales in manual jobs are low paid and one in five women working full-time in Wales earns less than £100 a week, including one third of those in manual jobs. In my own county of Clwyd, two out of three women working full-time are low paid and one third of those working full-time still earn less than £100 per week.

The problems of low pay in Wales have deteriorated, and the disparity between Wales and the south-east has widened. The proportion of men earning less than £130 per week in Wales is 15·8 per cent., which puts Wales at the bottom of the league—nobody would be surprised if I said the south-east was at the top. I imagine that that is another reason why no Minister from the Welsh Office will answer tonight's debate.

The proportion of women earning less than £100 per week in Wales is 19·8 per cent. I know that the county of Powys shares bottom place with Cornwall in the league table of male earnings in all the counties of Great Britain. According to the 1988 new earnings survey, Dyfed has the lowest level of male manual earnings of any county in Great Britain.

Mr. Redwood: Will the hon. Gentleman remind the House why he and his hon. Friends voted against the tax reductions which have been of great benefit to the lower paid as well as others?

Mr. Jones: The speech made by the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) was delivered with all the passion of a tired funeral director. It was the sort of speech that I would expect of somebody who formerly worked for Rothschild, who was a fellow of All Souls college and who worked in the policy unit at No. 10 Downing street. None of us was impressed by the hon. Gentleman's over-long speech.

Women in Wales are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market. Six out of 10 women in Wales are low-paid and half work full-time for less than £130 per week. One

in five still work full-time for under £100 per week. Average earnings for women are lowest in Clwyd, at £137 per week, which is £13 less than the decency threshold.

Mr. Janman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: No, I have no more time.

Mr. Janman: I have a genuine question.

Mr. Jones: I wish that the hon. Gentleman had made a genuine speech. I am not giving way to him; time is running out because of the length of his speech.

Over two thirds of women working full-time in Clwyd are low-paid and nearly one in three still earns less than £100 for a full week's work.

The Wages Act 1986 severely weakened the powers of the wages councils to set legal minimum rates of pay for over 100,000 workers in Wales. Over 20,000 young people aged under 21 have been removed from the protection of the wages councils. It is a sad fact that, in 1987, the only office of the wages inspectorate in Wales was closed and the responsibility was transferred to offices in Bristol and Manchester. I imagine that that is another reason why there will not be a Welsh Office Minister at the Dispatch Box tonight.

With the Government planning to abolish wages councils 80 years after they were first introduced to protect workers in sweated trades, about one in eight employees in Wales—over 100,000 workers—are covered by legal minimum rates of pay set by the wages councils. Those people work in 18,000 establishments across the country, in shops, bars, restaurants, cafes, hotels, hairdressers and clothing manufacturers.

The 1987-88 hourly rates of pay set by the wages councils are modest. In the case of clothing the rate is £1·99 per hour; hairdressing, £2·05 per hour; hotels and restaurants, £2 per hour; pubs and clubs, £2·16 an hour; and retailing, the princely hourly sum of £2·33—another reason, I guess, why no Welsh Minister will be coming to the Dispatch Box tonight to reply to this debate.

So, abolishing wages councils and the wages inspectorate, which attempts to enforce the minimum rates, will mean workers at the very bottom of the earnings league having no redress against unscrupulous employers who pay poverty wages. A wise and prudent Secretary of State, a wise and prudent Government, would consider retaining the wages councils system, restoring the powers and coverage lost as a result of the Wages Act 1986, establishing new wages councils in areas that have grown up in recent times—for example, the contract cleaning business—and increasing the numbers employed in the wages inspectorate to ensure effective enforcement of the law. Then they should tighten the rules governing prosecution.

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is not giving way.

Mr. Jones: They should set penalties high enough to be an adequate deterrent to employers considering underpaying. In addition, a wise and prudent Government would consider publicising in the media the industries covered by the wages councils and their current minimum rates and conditions.

My right hon. and hon. Friends from Wales are deeply concerned that tens of thousands of our fellow citizens do not share, and have no present hope of sharing, in the prosperity of our society. When billions of pounds have been given in tax relief to the richest of British society, and when the North sea still yields billions of pounds to the national Treasury in oil revenues, it is not unreasonable to urge Her Majesty's Government to think again in the interests of the lowest paid and most vulnerable of our communities.

We believe that our case has moral force. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood was right to emphasise again and again in her speech that one of the biggest issues facing our nation is the growing divide between those on low wages, who are under-privileged, and the many millions who are getting quite a lot of the best things available in our modern society. In his speech tonight the Secretary of State made no attempt to address this very real issue. His speech was evasive. It was the speech of a Cabinet Minister who lacked the imagination to understand the predicament of ordinary people trapped on low wages. From no Tory Members did we hear any sympathy for, or understanding of, the families on low wages who are attempting to bring up young children, realising that they are not benefiting from the many good things in life that are now available.

This debate touches as much upon the quality of life as upon the standard of living of the low paid. The family on low wages does not receive the perks of subsidies or expenses. It is really what we might call basement living. It is the harsh world of making ends meet, and this is a Government who do not care about those who are getting a raw deal.

At the heart of this debate is proof of a greatly divided society of debt and of the temptation of petty crime. The Government appear to be interested only in the south-east of England, northern Europe, and the consequences of the Channel tunnel for the south-east of Britain. Hon. Members know that the Opposition speak for the common people and that the Government are only about the comfortably off. We are asking for social justice for the low paid. We say to the Government, for pity's sake, desist. We demand that these unjust policies are abandoned.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): Obviously, I will deal as best I can with the points that have been made by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is presently engaged abroad, promoting the interests of the Principality. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales has been with me for almost the entire debate and has also worked closely with me. I understand the pressures that the Pontypridd by-election places on the hon. Gentleman, but I must make that explanation in response to his somewhat uncharacteristically ungenerous remarks about my hon. Friend.

Many hon. Members have made important contributions to the debate. In the time available, I shall answer as many points as I can.

Certainly, this argument cannot be won solely by bandying around a stream of statistics. Far more important are the positive things that we have done to help those who actually are in need.

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

At least two points are crucial to the debate. First, by any definition, there will always be those in society who are lower paid than others, or those who have lower household incomes than other people. Attempts to change that are doomed to failure, and for a good reason: it is impossible to do so. In a society of millionaires, anybody on £500,000 a year would be counted poor. Secondly, it must surely be true that, as a rule, a job is better than no job, and low pay is better than no pay. That is what the Opposition have conveniently chosen to ignore, and that is what the Government are putting right.

Our record in encouraging the creation of more jobs, helping more people back into work, and laying the foundations for a successful and growing economy cannot simply be pushed aside as irrelevant. Furthermore, despite everything that Opposition Members have said, the Government do not ignore the lower paid, the less well off or those households that live on the margins of economic viability. All the evidence bears out that proposition to the hilt. Since the Government took office, employment opportunities have increased by leaps and bounds. Jobs are increasingly available, and so is the training that helps people to get them.

The real blight is not the blight of low pay; it is the blight of no pay at all and the depression and despondency that can go with it. For all their protestations, Opposition Members do no service to the people of this country by crying out for measures that would ultimately deprive many people of the pay that they now have.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: I shall not give way. I have been here for the whole debate. If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I want to press on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) referred to wages councils, and so did the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and other hon. Members. Some points must be reiterated. The first should be self-evidently true, but it is apparently not so to the Opposition. It is that the situation in 1909 was vastly different from what it was in 1986, and from the present position.

To listen to Opposition Members, one would think that the wages council structure as we now have it has achieved precisely what they want. But everything that we have heard from Opposition Members has demonstrated that the present system does not work. Therefore, the idea that the structure of the wages councils in some way deals with low pay simply does not wash. Even Opposition Members would have to concede that.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Nicholls: If my hon. Friend will allow me, I will not give way. I shall certainly give him due credit. My hon. Friend also made the point that the present system simply does not work.

My right hon. Friend has made it clear that there is a consultation period and we cannot know what the result of that will be. Some of the consequences of the present system really should be looked at by anyone who has a genuine interest in the fate of the low paid.

On average, since 1986, the yearly increase in the rates awarded by wages councils has been about 8·6 per cent. I urge Opposition Members to imagine what it must be like to be running a business and to be told that the least skilled in that business must be paid an increase of, for the sake of argument, 8·6 per cent. It does not stop there. Differentials are completely eroded because that figure must be paid throughout the business. Therefore, the idea that simply paying percentage rates to the lowest paid has no knock-on effect is simply wrong.

Several hon. Members, typically including the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), have said that there is widespread evidence that employers are underpaying.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Of course they are.

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman bawls out from a sedentary position, "Of course they are", but the facts do not bear that out. It is clear from visits made by wages inspectors—the numbers of which have been constant under both Labour and Conservative Governments—that about 97 per cent. of workers covered by wages councils are paid the correct rate. Opposition Members seem to be completely prosecution-minded and say that that is not enough and they want to see more prosecutions. I should have thought that the Opposition would be more concerned about doing something to ensure that the present structure of wages councils was abided by.

If an inspector finds that due to a genuine misunderstanding—*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but we are talking about the real world, not the world of their fevered imaginations. If the inspectors find that an employer has underpaid because of some misunderstanding about his duties, and he makes it clear that he wants to comply with the law, what would be the point in saying that there should automatically be a prosecution?

As 97 per cent. of people who are covered by wages councils are being paid the correct amount, for the Opposition to maintain that the law is being widely flouted simply will not work. That shows that the system does not work in improving low pay, but that is another matter.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland made several points about wages councils and he referred to the debate on 28 April 1909 on the Trade Boards Bill. As Liberals are wont to do, he sought his inspiration from events that took place the best part of a century ago. He was apparently harking back to the golden days of 1909 when the system worked correctly. However, if he looks at the speech which followed that of Sir Winston Churchill, he will not find great approbation being given to the system. A Mr. T. F. Richards says:

"we regret exceedingly that we are not in the schedules. I certainly should have liked to see the boot and shoe industry in the schedule".—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1909; Vol. IV, c. 394.]

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that people in 1909 were satisfied with the structure of wages councils, he is not correct.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: No, I shall not give way. Time does not permit.

Wages councils simply do not have the effect that Opposition Members would have us believe.

Let me deal now with something that we have not heard much about. The hon. Members for Newham, North-East

(Mr. Leighton) and for Ladywood rather let the cat out of the bag. The cat that they released was the Labour party's policy. If I am wrong I shall give way immediately to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), but I do not think that he said one word about the Labour party's policy on the low paid. They cannot intend to maintain the wages councils in their present form, because they do not work. Labour party policy is for a national minimum wage. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Oldham, West dissociates himself from that policy. One knows that, at times, he has trouble with particular aspects of Labour party policy. However, he is on record as saying as recently as 5 October 1988 that:

"a top priority for the next Labour Government must be a national minimum wage."

I do not know why the hon. Gentleman did not mention that, because it goes down well with his right hon. and hon. Friends. Perhaps he forgot that it was in the Labour party manifesto. I remind him—and one must hand it to Labour for their optimism—of what it said:

"We will implement a comprehensive strategy for ending low pay, notably by the introduction of a national statutory minimum wage."

Apparently, that is the policy which a Labour Government would operate. The hon. Gentleman told the House nothing about that. If he wonders how it goes down with some of his right hon. and hon. Friends, a number of them have shown already that they go along with it. However, there is a problem for the Labour party when it comes to a national minimum wage. I will intrude for a moment or two on some of the Labour party's private griefs. Presumably the hon. Member for Oldham, West will take account of comments by his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—that great economist—who writing as recently as 1987 in his book "Choose Socialism" observed:

"If the law requires employers to pay a statutory minimum rate, and if workers in more highly paid industries negotiate to preserve their relative position, there can only be one possible outcome. The low paid remain low paid at a higher rate of inflation."

Just in case the message has not sunk in, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook added:

"The real danger comes from the pretence that a national minimum wage could be introduced cheaply or easily."

Other Opposition Members could have told the hon. Member for Oldham, West about the fallacies in his thinking. He might have discussed them with his hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who could have explained the problems that a national minimum wage can cause. I refer to an article by the hon. Member for Birkenhead in *The Times*, in which he wrote:

"The higher statutory minimum wage has the drawback that it increases employers' costs. If implemented . . . it will lead to significant increases in unemployment and a big jump in the rate of inflation."

Even if we do not agree with the analysis of the hon. Member for Birkenhead, at least he speaks in debates with great authority. His article went on:

"I calculate that the higher minimum wage target could result in a loss of more than 400,000 women's jobs, a 4·4 per cent. rise in the total wage bill, together with a 2 to 2·5 per cent. rise in prices."

In case the hon. Member for Oldham, West is still not convinced about the efficiency or otherwise of a national minimum wage, he can do no better than talk to a former Minister of State for the Department of Employment who, when rejecting such policies, commented:

"blanket provision across the board, by its failure to discriminate, will not tackle the pockets of poverty which undeniably exist. It is better to have a discriminatory approach in the provision of social security benefits, perhaps supplemented by fiscal policies."—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1977; Vol. 927, c. 164.]

If the hon. Member for Oldham, West is wondering which Minister of State that was, I can tell him that it was none other than his right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), speaking from this Dispatch Box in 1977.

We can well understand why the Labour party's preferred policies, set out in their manifesto and endorsed by the hon. Member for Oldham, West, received not one single word of praise from the Front Bench today but had to be let out of the bag by other Opposition Members.

What would be the effect of a national minimum wage? It would destroy jobs by increasing wages without increasing output. Employers' costs would increase, competitiveness would lessen, the total number employed would drop, and differentials would be artificially compressed—causing pressure to restore them, which would add to wage costs and erode competitiveness.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Nicholls: Out of misguided gallantry, I give way to the hon. Lady.

Ms. Short: Can the Minister explain why every other country in western Europe can afford a national minimum wage and Britain cannot? Has he seen the study by Cambridge Econometrics which examined every sector of the economy where there is low pay and showed in detail that a national minimum wage is not only affordable but creates greater efficiency?

Mr. Nicholls: The reason why other countries can get along with a national minimum wage is simply by ignoring it and refusing to uprate it. That is how they cover that side of the argument.

There was also reference to the European decency threshold. Listening to Opposition Members, one would think that it was a law or a policy adopted by every other country in the European Community and that only this country failed to abide by it. Let us look for a moment at what the so-called decency threshold is. It was suggested by a committee of independent experts in the Council of Europe which thought that it should be 68 per cent. of the national average wage, but it has never been endorsed by any member state, nor does it appear in the European social charter. It has not been endorsed by the governmental committee on the European social charter, and the charter does not refer to a percentage of average earnings regarded as an acceptable minimum. In other words, the idea that Europe has set a decency threshold is complete and utter nonsense.

Again it illustrates the fallacy which Opposition Members have shown throughout the debate in believing that what matters in the interests of the poor is the gap between rich and poor. Of course, the poor cannot live off the gap. The poor are not interested in the distance between themselves and those who are earning a great deal more; they need to know what is in it for them. They need to know the relative strength of their position.

If the hon. Member for Newham, North-East wants to know what has happened to the lower paid in recent years, may I tell him that for a single person earning 50 per cent. of average male earnings, the real take-home pay has increased by 27·9 per cent. during the lifetime of the

[Mr. Nicholls]

Government. For a married couple with one earner and two children, earning 50 per cent. of average male earnings, take-home pay has increased by 22·7 per cent. Those are the figures which matter. Those are the figures which the working poor can rely on. To say that it is the gap which matters shows a total lack of understanding.

The debate was supposed to be about the blight of low pay, but for too many of our citizens the legacy of the Socialism of the 1960s and the 1970s was the blight of no job in the 1980s. Through the policies and efforts of the Government that blight has steadily receded. The debate has served to remind us that even now there is waiting in the wings a party which has learnt nothing from the past and which promises for the future merely the fruits of its own blinding ignorance. For the sake of the low paid and of those who are still without a job, Labour's miserable inadequacy has to be exposed. With their customary incompetence the Opposition have given us that opportunity. It was said of the French kings that they had learnt nothing and that they had forgotten nothing. The Opposition have gone one better. They have shown us that they have learnt nothing and forgotten everything. That is what the Opposition offer us today.

One appreciates the demands that the Pontypridd by-election have imposed on the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, but let me remind him of the facts. If he had cared to tell us about the position in his constituency, he could have said that in just the last year the rate of unemployment has fallen by no less than 30 per cent. The hon. Gentleman failed to tell us that. If he is so concerned about average real earnings in Wales, why did he not tell us that during the period of the Labour Government the average earnings of male employees in Wales rose by a miserable 4·6 per cent. and that under this Government they have gone up by 15·9 per cent? Surprisingly the hon. Gentleman did not mention that. Again, if he looks at some of the other figures, he will see that they show a massive increase in expenditure in Wales. Why did the hon. Gentleman not remind us that the Welsh Development Agency's budget for 1989-90 is £130 million, 15 per cent. higher than in the previous year?

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 275.

Division No. 71] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat

Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 246, Noes 181.

Division No. 72] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
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Hunter, Andrew
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Irving, Charles
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Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
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Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
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Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
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Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
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Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
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Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek

Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Mckay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

'That this House, noting that since this Government came to power personal disposable income has increased at every level in society and that the lowest paid have had proportionately higher increases than many other groups, considers that the best way in which the Government can help the low paid is by creating the conditions for more jobs by breaking down the barriers to employment and encouraging labour market flexibility; and welcomes the Government's decision to consult about the abolition of Wages Councils.'.

European Community Documents

10.27 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the motion that we are about to consider to be considered under Standing Order No. 102(5) when the Standing Committee which met to consider the document did so only yesterday and the *Hansard* report of its proceedings reached the Vote Office only this morning?

As Standing Order No. 102(5) provides that you can select for debate any amendment tabled by any hon. Member, does it not undermine the rights of Members if they do not have, until the day in question, the report of the Committee's proceedings? That might appear to be rather a niggling point, but it is an important one which I hope you will consider.

The Euro instruments on machine safety were unanimously recommended for debate by the Select Committee in its November report on the basis that this was one of the most ambitious plans for the internal market and that it could increase substantially the costs of industrial firms. In its January report, it explained that it would automatically require the amendment of two major Acts of Parliament.

We know that the Council of Ministers effectively settled these matters in December 1988, but the Committee did not even consider them until yesterday, when there was no debate, apart from a two-minute speech by the Minister, who apologised for their having already been settled in Brussels.

If, Mr. Speaker, you do not agree that the motion is out of order, can you not declare it null and void under Standing Order No. 41, which deals with irrelevance? Why should the time of the House be wasted on silly motions to approve or disapprove when sovereignty has gone and the decision was made in Brussels in December? This makes nonsense of our consideration of European legislation. May we have a decision on the motion, or else do away with it entirely, instead of wasting the time of the House, the Clerks and yourself?

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to put to you additional factors for the consideration that I hope you will give this matter.

Unlike the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), I do not think that the fact that this was decided in Brussels before debate is strictly relevant to the central point. If on the Order Paper there appears a motion on a document that was sent to Committee by resolution of the House under the appropriate Standing Order, surely there should be at least an interval of a day between the appearance of the *Official Report* of the Committee's proceedings and of a motion in the House. That would enable hon. Members to table amendments to it for discussion the following day.

I do not dissent from what the hon. Member for Southend, East said about the importance and unusual nature of this matter, but, whatever the content of the Committee's resolution, my point stands.

Mr. William Cash (Staford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. A resolution of the House of 1980 declares that in all possible circumstances there should be a debate before the adoption of a common position on a

[Mr. William Cash]

matter of this sort. If that is not strictly adhered to, our difficulties when considering matters vital to the future of industry in this country will increase. I should be grateful if this could be given further consideration in the appropriate quarters.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) for missing his first few remarks after the Division. Although our views about membership of the Community may vary, I echo my hon. Friend's remarks—he may look surprised—and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), the Chairman of the Select Committee on European Legislation.

Whatever our views, procedures must be correctly followed. The House needs the essential elements of a scrutiny procedure to be effective. Recently, and for all sorts of reasons, there has been a disturbing increase in the number of decisions taken by the collective institutions of the Community before matters have been properly considered by the House. That must be put right. It behoves us all to get it right. Hon. Members are worried, and we seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I have not had much time to consider this matter, but, in view of the remarks made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, it would perhaps be better if the Government did not move the motion tonight so that I can look into it.

Mentally Ill People (Community Care)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

10.34 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I am grateful for the chance to raise this subject. I hope that the heat and light engendered by the publication of the NHS review yesterday will not deflect attention for too long from Government action on community care following the Griffiths report.

What is community care? My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary may be interested to know that a seminar of 80 hon. Members held in the House last July gave at least 80 answers. The evidence of the Department of Health and Social Security to the Select Committee on Social Services in 1984-85 gave a catch-all definition:

> "Its objective is to enable an individual to remain in his own home wherever possible rather than be cared for in a hospital or a residential home."

That definition, whose blandness is due, no doubt, to the fact that it has to encompass a wide variety of patient and client groups, is almost meaningless for mental illness and especially for schizophrenia, which fills more hospital beds than any other illness and to which I intend to devote this debate.

We know the facts about the incidence of mental illness, but they will stand repetition. Even if one knows academically that one in six people will need professional help for a mental health problem during a lifetime or that one person in 100 suffers from schizophrenia, one does not realise it until it hits one's friend or family or oneself.

Community care for the mentally ill is not new. Since 1962, there has been active encouragement of the development of local alternatives within the community to the large Victorian hospitals. The anti-psychotic drugs, introduced in the mid-1950s, helped many patients to live almost normal lives in the community. Proof of that is that in the mid-1950s the psychiatric hospital population stood at about 150,000 and it is now about 60,000. A more significant figure is that there are 200,000 admissions and discharges to and from psychiatric hospitals each year.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I wonder whether my hon. Friend is aware that nine out of 10 hospital admissions for people suffering from schizophrenia are readmissions. Does she agree that districts should, therefore, review, slow down or even stop the closure of mental hospitals until at least adequate alternatives have been found? I should be interested in my hon. Friend's comments on that.

Mrs. Shephard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I know that he takes a keen interest in the subject. I shall be dealing with the question that he has raised. The point about readmissions for schizophrenic patients is that it is the nature of their illness that causes them to relapse. I hope to deal with that matter later.

Mental illness is costly. The Government spend about £1·4 billion on it every year and to that we must add social security payments, the cost of social services provision and a huge drugs bill. The psychiatric drugs bill amounts to about a quarter of the national total. Can we be sure that we are obtaining real value and the best care for patients

and their families from such a substantial sum? Is the 10 per cent. of it that is devoted to community care enough if we mean what we say about its importance?

In its report last April, the Public Accounts Committee asked some searching questions about community care. It pointed out the need to ensure in any review of the policy that not only should there be adequate provision for individuals, but that care should give value for money. It said that, although community care had been an official policy for years, there had been no systematic monitoring of the way in which it was working. It said that the operation of joint planning and its financing was still not satisfactory. I have often said, in the House and elsewhere, that in joint financing every pound is handled 12 times by a combination of committees and procedures, and one has to assume that that reduces its value to the individual patient. One of the Committee's most significant points was that, while improvements in planning and efficiency were being required of health authorities, they were not and could not be of local authorities and that sometimes resulted in an uneven match between the closure of large hospitals and appropriate systems of local authority care.

The overall picture in the report was not of a service lacking in resources, but of a service in which resources have to be used in a way that is difficult to manage because of budgetary conventions and without clear policy guidelines and information about the effectiveness of the policy in the first place. I hope that when the Government issue their response to the Griffiths report those questions will be considered, and in no area more urgently than schizophrenia.

We know that some areas of the country have developed effective services in the community for the mentally ill. In my constituency, the West Norfolk and Wisbech health authority has a substantial budget of £3·5 million with which to help its mentally ill patients. There are 60 acute beds with 26 for long-stay patients, a further 88 beds for the elderly mentally ill and 140 day places, some of which are run successfully with the voluntary sector. Future plans involve drop-in centres and a sensible use of section 117 with the social services.

Monitoring the effectiveness of the services is being carried out in another part of my constituency by the Norwich health authority, with a research project, mounted with the university of East Anglia. I know that the Department of Health is conscious of the lack of information with which to evaluate community care and mental illness services in general. As the Minister's predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said to MIND in her speech in November:

"we need a clearer picture of what is going on at a local level. During this year and next we will be looking closely at what we have on the ground. Particularly from the point of view of the patient."

I am delighted that that question is being vigorously tackled in the Department and feel sure that much good practice will be discovered to help areas where provision and practice are not so good.

However, I believe that in all areas there is one group of patients which the system is at present failing. They are either avoided or they are not offered adequate support when not resident in hospital. The problems that they and their families encounter have been given useful publicity by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship and the campaigning group SANE, which stands for Schizophrenia: A National Emergency, which rightly recognises that much public education as well as better organised services are desperately needed.

The problem of who should treat small groups of severely ill patients who, as part of their illness, do not recognise the need for medication and who, if they do not take that medication outside hospital, present severe problems for themselves can be tackled. I shall propose a number of solutions—I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister is relieved to hear that.

However, I should first like to give some examples of such patients and their families. They illustrate that for those patients, no matter how good the community care network, discharge from hospital can lead—and all too often does—to relapse due to lack of medication, to breakdown, often in harrowing circumstances, and to their eventual readmission to hospital.

One mother wrote to me about her schizophrenic son:

"Like most schizophrenics he will not go voluntarily to hospital. So when his social worker finally decides that he is 'a danger to himself' his removal to hospital involves his GP, his psychiatrist, his social worker, and at least one police officer. At this stage his home has deteriorated into almost unbelievable squalor . . . What is needed are section orders that can run for much longer than 6 months and/or community treatment orders whereby those who need continuing treatment to keep them stable can be compulsorily treated at home."

Another letter states:

"I wholeheartedly support . . . efforts to put into place a Community Treatment Order. When our daughter gets treatment early in the episode it can last as little as 3 weeks. When neglected she gets into all manner of troubles and can be as long as 8 months in the recovery."

Those two examples, from many hundreds that I could have chosen, illustrate that the problem for that group is agonising and that it is at least as agonising for the families, who have to live with the notion of their relative becoming a hostile stranger and with the gnawing uncertainty of what will happen when he or she leaves hospital. The scale and nature of the problem faced by those people has been highlighted by an excellent series of articles in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* by Marjorie Wallace and in a number of programmes on television.

What can be done? I have three groups of suggestions. The first is non-controversial; the second is financial so my hon. Friend will make up his own mind about whether it is controversial; and the third is very controversial as it involves changes in mental health law and has implications for the patients' civil liberty.

First, there should be increased public awareness of the problem. MIND, the National Schizophrenia Fellowship and SANE have done invaluable work in giving publicity to schizophrenia. The public needs to be educated about the fact that the illness can strike suddenly, without warning and in any family. A public that is educated will also be educated about ways to help. There should also be a code of practice to be used in conjunction with the Mental Health Act. I hope and believe that this is in course of preparation in the Department of Health, and it is eagerly awaited.

There is no excuse for any group of patients ever to be disadvantaged because of faulty co-operation between agencies or professionals, yet this is precisely what can happen to people with schizophrenic breakdown in the

[Mrs. Shephard]

community. We need clear guidelines, personal accountability by professionals, and monitoring standards, and I hope that the code, when it appears, will provide all of these.

There needs, too, to be much more information about what actually happens to individual patients on discharge. I have said already that, although everyone pays lip service to the concept of community care, we have no idea if different forms of it are effective.

I understand that SANE is hoping to launch a survey, to be conducted by Professor Jones of York university, which is to follow 1,000 patients discharged from seven hospitals. The survey will trace where and when breakdown occurs, if it does, and will be able to offer thoughts on what has been good practice. SANE is raising a sum of money to offer towards this research. I believe that it hopes to meet my hon. Friend or his colleagues in the near future, and I hope that its request that that sum be matched will be considered favourably.

Those who plan services must recognise that both sufferers and their families want asylum and hospital admission to be part of the range of services to which they can have speedy and hassle-free access at times of breakdown. Support for the families might even prevent breakdown in a certain number of cases.

My second set of solutions concerns finance. The Government are spending huge sums of money on the treatment of mental illness and on community care. The cost of keeping large, old-fashioned hospitals open is a heavy burden on any budget, while the funds that would be released by closure could help in both revenue and capital terms. I am not arguing that these large, old hospitals should be closed before the alternatives, including asylum, are in place, but the peculiarities of health and local government year-on-year budgeting make the co-ordination of closure and replacement provision almost impossible to achieve.

I have great hopes of the review in that it itself suggested a number of flexible ways in which health authorities might look at their budgeting, and that that flexibility, which perhaps could involve mortgaging against assets, or borrowing against assets, could be applied to this area where it is much needed. The arrangements for bridging and for dowries for patients that were introduced in 1983 were of great help, but they were hardly the mechanism one would choose if one were setting up the system from scratch. I think the funds are there but are locked up, and they need to be unlocked for the benefit of patients.

Finally, there is the more controversial suggestion, which enters the difficult moral sphere of civil liberty. It seems clear to me that what is needed, now that much care of the mentally ill and, therefore, of schizophrenic patients will take place in the community, is a recognition of that fact in mental health law. It is true that a sensible application of sections 2 and 3 of the Act, which could be made clear in the code, would help matters without a change in the law.

It is also true that more extensive use of section 7 guardianship, which as yet has hardly been tried by the local authorities, would also give help without a change in the law. But many schizophrenic patients and their families argue for something stronger, some form of amendment to the Act that will allow for compulsory treatment within the community. Indeed, amendment will be needed in any case since, under the Act, compulsory treatment is allowed only in hospitals, and in future many patients will be in hostels or other residential facilities.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has, I believe, considered community treatment orders. So has NAHA. The advantages of a community treatment order include the fact that community treatment is available as an alternative to detention in hospital, and the order can provide a legal framework to encourage compliance in the matter of medication and thus prevent breakdown and readmission. There can be no doubt that such an order would do an enormous amount to increase the confidence of families having to care for schizophrenic patients, in that they would know that at least breakdown due to a lack of medication would be avoided. On the other hand, many would argue that such an order goes against the very idea of civil liberty.

The Mental Health Act Commission makes two further suggestions for amendment of the Act, both of which I hope my hon. Friend will consider carefully. They concern the power of guardianship.

In section 7 the power to require the patient to attend at places and times specified for the purposes of medical treatment is not accompanied by a specific authority to convey. The disadvantages of that are obvious and need not be illustrated. Clearly, if guardianship is to be regarded as a serious alternative, the patient must be conveyed to the place, but as the law stands there is still an omission. The power to convey could get the patient to the place —as a horse can be led to water—but unless a power were added to require him to take the medical treatment as prescribed by his responsible medical officer it would be of little use conveying him anywhere.

In any eventual legal solution—I am confident that there will have to be such a solution to reflect the change in practice which is being encouraged—I hope that the interest of the patient and his family will be paramount, and not those of warring professional groups. That sentiment, indeed, goes for the whole debate. The plight of schizophrenic patients and their families through the nature of their illness is too acute to be ignored, and I hope that the Government's eventual consideration of the Griffiths report will include specific solutions for them. They should not be forgotten.

10.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard) for raising this important subject. I consider it one of the most important with which I have to deal at the Department, and my view is clearly shared by many hon. Members on both sides of the House.

My hon. Friend has spoken with authority, based on what must be a unique combination of experience as a member of a local authority social services committee, chairman of a health authority and a Mental Health Act commissioner. She has made several very pertinent observations, and some practical suggestions, to which I shall respond as positively as I can.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall take a few seconds—as this is the first opportunity for me to do so —to pay tribute to the former Member for Kettering, Mr.

William Homewood, who has recently died. He lived in Market Harborough, worked in Corby and represented Kettering between 1979 and 1983. I am sure that many other hon. Members on both sides of the House will wish to send best wishes and condolences to his widow. His work in the House will be long remembered.

Ever since the early 1970s it has been common ground that, as resources allow, health services for those suffering from schizophrenia and other forms of mental illness should be locally based rather than focused on the traditional, old-style mental hospitals with which we are all familiar. The aim is for a comprehensive range of local hospital and community services, associated with appropriate social services provision and voluntary sector facilities, to meet local needs. I think that all hon. Members agree with those principles.

As those local services are developing, the number of beds in the older hospitals are being reduced, and some of the hospitals are closing. Locally based services have been developing. For example, in the 10 years to 1986, the number of day hospital places in England increased from 11,000 to nearly 19,000, and day centre places from nearly 5,000 to over 9,000. I emphasise, however, that hospital closures should be occurring only as a consequence of the development of better alternative forms of provision. The closure of hospitals per se is in no sense a primary aim of Government policy.

While, I believe, virtually everyone supports this policy in principle, there are genuine concerns about how it is being implemented in practice. For example, the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, an organisation that we much respect, believes that there is a danger that the total number of hospital beds has already fallen—or soon will fall—below the level required for patients needing full-time care. In the last year or so, two new organisations —Schizophrenia: A National Emergency, or SANE, and Concern—have been established to express broadly similar worries.

As my predecessor made clear in her speech to last year's MIND annual conference, there is no going back to the old days of hospitals with 2,000 or more beds and wards of 60 patients. Equally, we are determined that the move to locally based services should be properly planned and implemented, so that those needing treatment can receive it in the setting appropriate to their circumstances, whether as out-patients or in-patients.

We take the concerns expressed by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship, SANE and Concern very seriously. My officials maintain close contact with all three, and I hope to meet representatives of all three very shortly.

During the current year we shall be examining the position in each of the 14 English health authority regions, and I hope to visit as many as possible to discuss the point that my hon. Friend has raised—the transfer of patients from the old mental illness hospitals into the community, and how our policies are working out locally.

We shall be talking to the regional health authorities, seeking a social services perspective from the social services inspectorate, and linking directly with voluntary organisations who represent sufferers and their relatives. Our aim is to gain a fuller understanding of how national policy is being implemented.

My hon. Friend referred to relevant research on the follow-up of patients being sponsored by SANE and undertaken by Professor Kathleen Jones of York university. We know of that research, and next week my officials will be meeting SANE and Professor Jones to discuss the research proposed. I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall be following that meeting with great interest and care. I know of the request for funding under section 64, and I shall certainly give it sympathetic consideration. The House may wish to know that the Medical Research Council spends about £4 million per annum and the Department of Health about £1 million per annum directly on research into mental health matters.

My hon. Friend referred to finance. That is, of course, important in order to develop new services before older hospitals close, but there is considerable scope for using more effectively the massive sums already tied up in services, particularly the capital value of the older mental hospitals, which often occupy 100 to 200 acres of land. The obvious problem with such disposals is that local services must be built before a closure is effected.

My hon. Friend suggests bridging finance to release capital from old mental hospital sites destined for closure, so that adequate provision can be made for care facilities in the community now. I am sympathetic to that plea and I can give my hon. Friend an assurance that the Government will be exploring actively how that can be achieved better, possibly with the co-operation of the private sector.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend, and others interested in the matter, to the White Paper on the NHS review. It contains an interesting section about our approach to working with the private sector in order to release the capital value of sites, such as those of larger mental hospitals, that are in due course to close, and trying to release them earlier so that we can accelerate the construction of facilities in the community. My hon. Friend already knows that each region can use bridging finance for closures. For example, the East Anglia regional health authority has long been practising that policy.

My hon. Friend has also drawn attention to the possible contribution of legislation. Before I respond on the possibility of orders for compulsory treatment in the community, which would require new legislation, I want briefly to refer to the position in respect of a relevant piece of legislation already on the statute book, but not yet activated—section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

My hon. Friend will be aware of the importance of that Act in strengthening and extending legal provisions for disabled people and reinforcing their rights in society. That, of course, includes mentally ill people. Section 7 will require health and local authorities to assess the needs of people discharged from hospital after treatment for a mental disorder of six months or more, and officials from the Department are currently involved in a series of meetings with representatives of both health and local authorities, identifying the processes, procedures and costs that will make up the requirements under this important section of the Act.

I am taking a personal interest in those discussions, and I can assure my hon. Friend that we treat the matter seriously. Section 7 is not far from the forefront of my mind. I appreciate the significance of the notification to local authorities and the need to ensure that care is followed through and given to those discharged from mental hospitals.

Despite all efforts, it may be that some mentally ill people will refuse further treatment after they leave

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

hospital, even if that is considered essential by the treatment team responsible for their care. Legal measures to enable compulsory treatment to be given in the community have been suggested as one way forward with a small group of patients, and there have been discussions within such organisations as the Mental Health Act Commission, of which my hon. Friend will know, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and MIND. This is a complex area. Important civil liberty issues arise and there are strongly-held views on all sides about the applicability of compulsory treatment orders once a patient has been discharged from mental hospitals into the community and the extent to which an individual can be compelled to undergo treatment.

Officials from my Department are listening to the debate with close attention, but to date no firm proposals have been put to us and little research is available from this country as yet. No changes in this difficult area would be considered without full consultations with all those concerned with mental health. This debate has assisted that consultation in no small measure.

My hon. Friend also drew attention to an extension of the powers of guardianship contained in the Mental Health Act 1984. I concur with my hon. Friend that there is no legal authority under the Act's guardianship provisions to convey a person anywhere, and nor is there a power requiring a person received into guardianship to take medication. The introduction of such a power is one of the options put forward by the Mental Health Act Commission in the debate on whether there would be a power compulsorily to treat people in the community. That is a suggestion worthy of serious consideration, and I shall certainly reflect on my hon. Friend's remarks. I know that my Department's officials will pay particular attention to her comments on that subject.

My hon. Friend referred to the code of practice. We are working on the code of practice required under the Mental Health Act 1984 and I intend saying something definite on that subject very shortly. My hon. Friend may press me as to what "very shortly" really means. As far as I am concerned, it means within the coming months. It is most important to get the code of practice right, and I would much prefer to take an extra week or month doing that rather than rush into publication.

Even more important than treating those who fall ill is seeking to prevent illness. Much action on prevention must await scientific advances and a better understanding of the origins of the major mental illnesses. However, enough is known already for it to be realistic and urgent to place greater emphasis on services promoting good emotional and psychological health among children and adolescents, and on ways of reducing the risk of relapses for those who have suffered from the major disabling conditions such as schizophrenia. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) referred to that aspect in his intervention. He is right to draw attention to the fact that, sadly, those who are readmitted for the second or third time are those who have, by definition, suffered in the past.

This is not the moment for me to elaborate on our plans for that area, but I simply register the fact that, henceforth, prevention will be a key element of Government mental health policy. My predecessor played a valuable role in highlighting the importance of health promotion and the prevention of ill health in respect of physical disabilities. I see it as my task to extend her work into the field of mental illness, and to deal with its prevention.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West raised the question of the need for increased public awareness, and the House will be interested to know that the Health Education Authority has submitted proposals for the coming year that include the development of a mental health programme. One of its aims is to raise public awareness.

Before concluding, I must make reference to the deep interest that there is in all parts of the House in community care issues in general and in Sir Roy Griffiths' report in particular. Community care is a subject to which the Government attach great importance. It is of vital concern to the many thousands of people throughout the country who themselves need care, or who help provide it to their friends and relatives. We are fully committed to playing our part in ensuring that their needs are met. That is why we have taken time fully to explore the various options before us, and to take careful account of the numerous representations that we have received.

We have not as yet reached a final conclusion, but we are actively engaged in working out our plans for the future of community care. I assure the House that the Government are mindful of concern that action should not be unduly delayed—we share that concern. For that reason, and as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health told the House last week, and repeated earlier this week, we hope to be in a position to bring forward our own proposals in the near future.

In conclusion, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue of services for those with a mental illness, and for her balanced and practical approach. I hope that the House will, in turn, welcome what I have said in response.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 2 February 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second Time on Monday 6 February at Seven o'clock.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (HULL) BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 9 February

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL *(By Order)*

INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL *(By Order)*

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND VICTORIA BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 7 February.

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 9 February

PENZANCE ALBERT PIER EXTENSION BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Tuesday 7 February.

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 9 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Shotgun Licences

1. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many shotgun licences are issued currently to young people below the age of 15 years; and if he will make it his policy to raise the basic age to 16 years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Information on the number of shotgun certificates held by persons below the age of 15 is not held centrally, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In relation to shotguns, there are no specified age restrictions, but age is one factor which the chief officer of police concerned may take into account in deciding whether to grant a certificate. We have no plans to introduce a statutory age limit.

Mr. Speller: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful answer, but is he aware that at present it is an offence to sell or hire a shotgun to anyone under 17, or to make a gift of a shotgun to anyone under 15? A youngster under 15 may not purchase a shotgun and may not carry an assembled shotgun in a private place. Is he aware that in the west country a shotgun is a tool of trade for many people in the agricultural profession? I do not suggest any change, but is it not logical to have a base limit so that we can clean up a particularly uncertain part of the law?

Mr. Hogg: We have no plans to make further changes. As my hon. Friend has already made plain, there are a number of existing safeguards which we think are sufficient.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that as youngsters can fire a shotgun only under the careful supervision of an adult, they should be taught to use guns early, and therefore learn the importance of safety from an early age?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a very important point, with which I agree. As he has made plain, persons under the age of 15 can use a shotgun only under the supervision of someone who is 21 or older.

Private Security Firms

2. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance his Department issues to chief constables about the use of private security firms in roles previously filled by police officers.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): My Department issues no such guidance to chief constables.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Secretary of State worried about creeping privatisation of many traditional police functions? Is he aware that chief constables are deeply worried that there is no proper control on that burgeoning industry and that many cowboy operations have been set

up? We now have the Guardian Angels. Will he urgently consult the police and provide a properly regulated framework?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would object to the contracting-out of some police services, such as cleaning and catering in suitable cases. I do not know of any forces that contract out or are made to contract out to private security firms. However, the hon. Gentleman is perfectly right. The Association of Chief Police Officers has sent us a report on the private security industry. It has expressed some anxiety, but we still believe in the principle of self-regulation by the industry—it would be difficult to proceed in any other way. We are examining with the police the reports that ACPO sent.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the potential use of private security firms to police our streets arises from the fact that the public do not believe that there are enough policement on the streets? My right hon. Friend's announcement of extra officers for most forces in England and Wales was welcome, but it has left many chief constables disappointed. Will he assure the House that he will pursue with vigour further increases in police establishment over the next two or three years?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend will have been pleased about the increases for north Yorkshire, about which he and others made representations to me. My hon. Friend follows these matters and will know that my announcement of an additional 1,100 officers for England and Wales related to this year only. I have announced that there will be substantial increases—further record totals on top of record totals—in future years. The details and amounts of those increases will depend on the discussions that we shall have with police authorities and chief officers.

Mr. Hattersley: Is the Home Secretary aware, and, if so, will he confirm, that the Police Federation has been officially informed that tenders are being invited from private security firms to provide security at docks and ports? Does he regard private security firms as appropriate for this sensitive task, and are they likely to do it as well as the police?

Mr. Hurd: That is not a matter for me. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] No, the policing of docks and ports is not a matter for the Home Secretary, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. I was speaking within my competence, as the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) asked me to. I shall look into the accuracy or otherwise of what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I welcome the valuable contribution that security firms make, but will my right hon. Friend consider the representations made by a number of people in the industry for a compulsory system of licensing, registration and adequate monitoring and back-up facilities to raise standards where they are too low?

Mr. Hurd: We believe that self-regulation by the industry, which, as my hon. Friend knows has made significant advances, is right. It would be extremely difficult to define someone who is offering a security service and to put that into law.

Police Records

3. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to protect the confidentiality of police records.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is for individual chief officers of police to decide the measures needed to protect the confidentiality of police records.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Minister aware that private security firms cannot wait to get their hands on the police national computer? Does he agree that it would be dreadful if that happened? Is he aware that the police are worried, because not only criminal convictions but highly sensitive criminal intelligence are held on the computer? Will the Minister stand up and fight privatisation of the computer records and stand for what we want from police services—a mixture of accountability and security?

Mr. Hogg: We have no plans to privatise the police national computer.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Will my hon. Friend confirm that private agencies are not necessarily less secure than public ones?

Mr. Hogg: That is true, but the information held by the police is confidential.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister confirm that it is possible for any detective above the rank of detective constable to obtain, within five seconds, from terminals located in every police station, information from the police national computer, including that about unspent convictions, which can be and is passed to security firms and the Economic League? Will he urgently investigate the possibility of introducing a scheme whereby any police officer requesting information from the police national computer is required to record the reason for the inquiry?

Mr. Hogg: The information held by the police is confidential to the police and is disclosed only in tightly drawn circumstances. An unauthorised disclosure of information by a police officer would certainly give rise to disciplinary procedures in appropriate cases and might constitute a breach of criminal law.

Broadcasting

4. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received following the publication last November of his Department's White Paper on broadcasting.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): We have received many representations on our proposals from the broadcasting industry, from hon. Members and from individual viewers and listeners. We should welcome any further comments during the consultation period, which ends on 28 February.

Mr. Taylor: Will my hon. Friend urge the BBC to take seriously the suggestion that it experiments with subscription rather than the current, rather incongruous and outdated licensing fee which may, in any event, not be payable by those who opt to receive only satellite television?

Mr. Renton: I note what my hon. Friend has said. The BBC is, of course, already experimenting with subscription

and is using its night hours to download technical knowledge to doctors, a service for which they are starting to pay. My hon. Friend is right. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has made it clear that the licence fee is neither immutable nor immortal and will become increasingly difficult to justify in the 1990s. When there are many more channels available, why should somebody pay a licence fee to receive only two channels? That is a matter which the BBC must take seriously.

Mrs. Clwyd: Why does the White Paper mention children only in terms of what they must be protected against, rather than what services they might expect or deserve? Surely, when the Government are talking about quality and choice, that must apply equally to children and adults. Why have children been excluded from the White Paper?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Lady is not quite right to say that they have been excluded. She will notice that there is a specific duty on Channel 4 to continue to produce and supply high-quality educational programming. It will be up to the Independent Television Commission, when bringing in bids for the new franchises and setting the quality menus for those franchises, to decide whether there should be a prescription on Channel 3 or Channel 5 also to include educational programming.

Mr. Hind: What will my hon. Friend's attitude be to Members of Parliament who are involved in consortiums bidding for independent television franchises or the terrestrial channels? Will he give an undertaking to inform the Leader of the Opposition should any of his Front Bench become involved?

Mr. Renton: That question needs serious consideration. I agree with my hon. Friend. If the Labour party sacks a senior shadow Minister every time a satellite channel is born, its Front Bench will soon look even more threadbare than it does at present.

Sunday Trading

5. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received from interested parties on ways to amend the Shops Act 1950.

13. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in response to his request for views on the reform of Sunday shopping.

Mr. Renton: Since I last answered a question on this subject from my hon. Friend the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on 21 July 1988, we have received a number of specific proposals for amendment of the present law, which we are now considering, and 87 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading and 1,344 against.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister aware that there is some statutory deregulation in the majority of EEC countries? May I assume that it is the Government's intention to reflect the views of EEC countries or will they diverge from the way that the EEC is proceeding on Sunday trading?

Mr. Renton: No. The point is that a number of district councils have been told in the courts that their requests for injunctions against Sunday trading will not be granted until the European Court has taken a decision on whether our Shops Act 1950 is against EC law in terms of restriction of trade. The issue about the Shops Act is not that it is a general restraint on trade, but that it is anomalous, out of date and full of provisions that are now generally unenforceable. I noted that the hon. Gentleman voted against our Shops Bill last time and I suggest that when he next goes shopping on Sunday, he buys an old-fashioned tin of humbugs. When will the day come when Labour Members who shop on Sundays vote with us to deregulate?

Mr. Stanbrook: Is my hon. Friend aware that most members of the British Retailers Association, which represents the retail industry in this country, do not want deregulation between 12 noon and 6 pm on Sundays and that the employees of the small number of large firms that want deregulation certainly do not want it?

Mr. Renton: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. Two recent polls taken by MORI and Gallup show that approximately two thirds of those polled on the general question whether they would like more shops to open legally on Sundays voted in favour. I appreciate my hon. Friend's strong feelings on this subject, but I suggest that since our 1986 Bill there has been a general move in favour of a compromise that will enable us to modernise the present provisions, while preserving a different rhythm of life on Sunday.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I apologise to the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts), whose question was linked.

Mr. Watts: It remains my view that deregulation is the only satisfactory course for us to follow, but does my hon. Friend agree that in the light of the recent public opinion surveys to which he has referred, all of which show a substantial majority in favour of a measure of relaxation, a realistic compromise should be sought as a matter of urgency—perhaps based on limited hours of opening on Sunday afternoons?

Mr. Renton: In general terms, I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Over the past two or three years there has been a general move—even among those who voted against deregulation last time—towards the view that a compromise is needed. It is difficult to find a compromise that will have general backing and achieve consensus among the different parties, but that is precisely what we have been trying to do in all the consultations that we have undertaken in recent months.

Mr. Duffy: Does the Minister recall his recent correspondence with the Sheffield chamber of trade, which endorses the REST proposals of the National Chamber of Trade—the recreation, emergency provisions, social gatherings and travel proposals? Those proposals are intended to iron out some of the anomalies, but, in the main, to preserve Sunday and keep it special. Can the Minister tell the House of a single chamber of trade that has come out broadly in favour of Sunday trading?

Mr. Renton: I know that the REST proposals suggest a very careful revision of the exempt list—dividing shops into very tight categories and allowing only those that sell 80 per cent. of their turnover in those categories to open.

I think that those proposals would be very difficult to enforce. I note the hon. Gentleman's support for them. Last time, he voted against our Shops Bill. I hope that on the next occasion he will abandon his party Whip and vote with us for a compromise on regulation.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that a greater anomaly arises when the courts, which are supposed to uphold the law of the land as made by Parliament, set it aside waiting for an extraterritorial decision?

Mr. Renton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is simply not the case. The DIY stores in particular have pleaded their case under an article of the treaty of Rome holding that our present Shops Act is a restraint of trade and against imports from the Community. We believe that that is the wrong ground on which to fight, because the argument has nothing to say about the anomalies in our Shops Act. Treasury counsel will be briefed to defend the British position in the European Court and we expect decisions to be reached this year.

Mr. Anderson: Is it not clear from the events of the past weeks that a co-ordinated campaign is being conducted by well-heeled commercial interests in collusion with the Government for fundamental change and that the Minister's favoured option of a six-hour period on a Sunday is but a tactical staging post on the way to total deregulation.

Mr. Renton: No, Sir.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my hon. Friend continue to bear in mind that, as he said in the first part of his answer, many thousands of people outside the House and, indeed, a substantial number inside it, still wish to keep the peace and quiet of Sunday? Will he bear in mind that unless a compromise is very carefully drawn up there will be some fairly solid opposition in the House to the abolition of our Sundays?

Mr. Renton: My hon. and good Friend reminds me of precisely the point that I was making earlier, against the background of a law that is increasingly seen to be shot with anomalies, about the difficulties of finding a compromise that will bring together all those who recognise the impossibility of the present law. But as I said, this compromise must respect the fact that many want to see a different rhythm of life on Sundays.

Mr. Corbett: Can the Minister clarify what he said to my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien)? Is it now his advice that local authorities should seek to avoid prosecution for alleged breaches of the Sunday trading laws until the issue is settled by the European Court, or will he rather insist that our national laws are enforced, unless or until they are changed?

Mr. Renton: I have already dealt with that point twice. But can the hon. Gentleman clarify why the new member of the Opposition Front Bench, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), who presumably finds it in order to shop in Edinburgh on a Sunday, finds it necessary to vote in Westminster on a Monday against our doing the same?

Motor Vehicles (Theft)

6. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the most recent figures for thefts of motor vehicles in England and Wales.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): In the 12 months ending September 1988 the total number of recorded offences of theft or unauthorised taking of motor vehicles was 371,800. This represented a fall of 6 per cent. compared to the corresponding period in 1987.

Mr. Harris: I welcome that fall, but does my right hon. Friend agree that auto crime of this sort still accounts for about 40 per cent. of all recorded crime, and does he think that the British insurance industry could do more to encourage motorists to make their cars safer, for example by giving a reduction on their insurance premium if they fit some anti-theft devices?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend has put his finger on a very important point. The British insurance industry and the Association of British Insurers are already doing a lot to encourage motorists to fit better security devices, by giving them better advice. On the other hand, I hope that increased competitive pressure within the British insurance industry will perhaps lead to more opportunities for motorists to shop around to get the sort of insurance premiums that recognise the fact that they take care of their motor cars.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that in Forest Gate, in the London borough of Newham, we have the highest incidence of car theft in, I think, the whole of Europe? In parenthesis, I might tell him that we also have in Newham the highest birth rate in London, so I assume that I know what everyone is doing in the back seats of those cars they have stolen.

Given the serious problem that we have in Newham, will the Minister give an undertaking that a major campaign will be launched in the borough to prevent car theft?

Mr. Patten: I shall not comment on one part of the hon. Gentleman's question. The possibility of a campaign is certainly something that the hon. Gentleman would wish to bring to the attention of the Metropolitan police. For example, a recent six-month campaign in the Northumbria constabulary area brought about a substantial reduction in car thefts by targeting. I think that it can be done.

Mr. Mudd: Is my hon. Friend aware that although his Department wrote to a Manchester firm on 16 December, that firm is still advertising the availability of skeleton keys at £30 a set, capable of opening 95 per cent. of all foreign and British cars, including those with high security locks? Not only does the firm continue to trade, but it is canvassing for trade by picking buyers spasmodically and at random from the Yellow Pages. Will my hon. Friend do something to curb this abuse of security?

Mr. Patten: The Department is continuing to look into it at the moment.

Mr. Hattersley: On the subject of figures that are calculated and kept on the police national computer, why did the Under-Secretary of State tell the House a moment

ago that there were no plans to privatise the national computer when the Home Secretary himself wrote to me on 20 January telling me that there were?

Mr. Patten: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said. My right hon. Friend will undoubtedly place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Drugs

7. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in securing greater international co-operation against the illegal drug trade.

Mr. Hurd: Effective international action is crucial to our efforts against this trade. In December, with 42 other countries, we signed a new United Nations convention providing a comprehensive framework for international co-operation against illicit trafficking. In the past year we have signed eight important bilateral drug co-operation agreements, and more are under negotiation. I exchanged the negotiated text of an agreement with the Spanish Minister of the Interior on Tuesday, dealing in particular with the confiscation of assets. Under our chairmanship, a ministerial meeting of the Council of Europe's Pompidou drug co-operation group will take place in London in May. I believe it will underline our strong commitment to combat drug misuse throughout western Europe.

Mr. Pawsey: I thank my right hon. Friend for that typically helpful and comprehensive reply. Does he feel that the international community could do even more to curb drug abuse? My right hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues in the United Kingdom have tackled the problem with substantial vigour. I am thinking particularly of the way in which we can now confiscate the profits that come from drug abuse. Will my right hon. Friend again pursue other countries to try to bring them more on side to adopt some United Kingdom practices?

Mr. Hurd: We are certainly setting the pace on this with the agreements that I mentioned. Confiscating the assets of convicted drug traffickers, alongside long terms of imprisonment, is just about the most effective means of enforcement. With the Pompidou group, when the European Ministers meet under my chairmanship here in May, we shall ram home that point.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Home Secretary take the earliest opportunity to discuss this matter with the Administration of President Bush and their new appointee in charge of drugs, bearing in mind the necessity to combat drug traffic from Latin America, in particular, through the United States?

Mr. Hurd: I have written to Dr. Bennett, to whom the hon. Gentleman referred, and I have already had a talk with the new United States Attorney-General. The hon. Gentleman is entirely correct.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend try a scheme that has been effectively used by the Americans? Passengers flying from countries that are designated by Customs as at risk from drug trafficking should be given a piece of paper warning them quite clearly that, upon entry into the United Kingdom, they are likely to be searched from top to bottom and that if they are carrying drugs they had better get rid of them at once.

Mr. Hurd: The phrasing of the notice suggested to my hon. Friend might need a little attention, but I will look at his helpful suggestion.

Mr. Darling: When does the Home Secretary expect to share with the House the outcome of his ministerial discussions? In particular, he is discussing not only the international drug trade but freedom of entry into this country and freedom of movement in this country and in European Community states. When will he make a statement about his discussions with the Trevi group of Ministers, rather than keeping his thoughts to a cosy little group without answerability to the House?

Mr. Hurd: The cosy little group includes all readers of *Hansard*, as the hon. Gentleman would perceive if he looked at the record. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has written to me about the matter. I have no objection to discussing it further. I am pleased with the way co-operation is going both on immigration and on drug matters.

Mr. Gow: Does my right hon. Friend believe that the number of specialist Customs officers at ports and airports is sufficient to meet the growing drugs menace?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend knows that the number of Customs officers is not a matter for me. I believe that the view of the Customs is that by concentrating their efforts more narrowly on drug trafficking, they can do what is necessary with the resources that they have. I shall pass on my hon. Friend's implication to Ministers in the Treasury.

Gaelic Broadcasting

8. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of BBC Scotland and Scottish Television to discuss the future of Gaelic broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: This is a subject on which I had a number of discussions with interested parties from Scotland during the course of last year. I shall be visiting the independent Scottish television stations within the next few weeks.

Mrs. Michie: Is the Minister aware that the technology of the multi video distribution system will not cope with the topography of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and that, therefore, new local franchises will not be able to supply additional services to Gaelic speakers? Why does not the White Paper accord equal status to the Scottish and Welsh languages, particularly as many Scottish programmes have better viewing ratings than does the Welsh Sianel 4 channel?

Mr. Renton: I agree with the hon. Lady that, given the mountainous terrain of much of Scotland, MVDS or microwave television is not likely to be helpful in bringing television to those parts of Scotland not reached by channel 5. As regards her comparison with the Welsh national channel, I must point out to her that about 20 per cent. of the Welsh population speak Welsh and that only about 2 per cent. of the Scottish population speak Gaelic. At the end of the day it is up to the broadcasting

authorities to decide whether there is sufficient demand for more Gaelic programmes and, if so, how they will cope with it.

Mr. Stewart: I welcome my hon. Friend's announcement of his forthcoming discussions in Scotland. Does he agree that there has been an expansion of Gaelic broadcasting but that it is not of interest solely to people of the Highlands and Islands? Is he aware that an experimental bilingual school south of Glasgow is successful and that many people in the central belt are interested in Gaelic broadcasting?

Mr. Renton: I understand that. Indeed, it is said that more people south of Glasgow than in the Highlands and Islands are interested in Gaelic broadcasting. At the end of the day it must be for the broadcasting authorities to decide whether there is sufficient demand for there to be more hours of broadcasting in Gaelic. As my hon. Friend will know, the Government have tried, not least through educational grants, to encourage the development and teaching of the Gaelic language.

Mr. Ron Brown: Because of the language and politics of Scotland, would it not be appropriate for more resources to be allocated to Lallans as well as Gaelic, remembering that Lallans is the main language of Scotland? In any case the Scots are the largest ethnic group within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: I am married to a Scot so over the years I have tried to understand the language and the politics of the Scots. I have also had discussions with the group Communn Na Gaidhlig who have told me much about the need for Gaelic programmes. However, we should not try to push down people's throats programmes in a different language to what they want.

Metropolitan Police (Racism Claims)

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning allegations of racism in the Metropolitan police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No record of the number of such representations is kept. The Government fully support the many initiatives taken by the Metropolitan police to tackle racism. There is no place for racial prejudice in the police service.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Minister aware that despite his bland assurance and the efforts of the Metropolitan police, allegations of racism in the Metropolitan police reach as far afield as Orkney and Shetland where my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) had a complaint from a constituent whose daughter was working in London? Can the Minister tell us when we can go out about the capital without seeing non-white members of the community being picked on by the police? At present, black people are stopped far more often than white people, particularly for suspected motoring offences.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman's comments will be deeply resented by ordinary Metropolitan police officers who are working extremely hard to improve community relations.

Sir George Young: Can my hon. Friend tell the House what increase there has been in the number of London police from the ethnic minorities since 1979?

Mr. Hogg: Without notice, I cannot tell my hon. Friend the increase, but at present there are 421 officers from the ethnic minorities, including a number of or above the rank of inspector. It is extremely important that we increase the number of recruits from the ethnic minorities, and the Metropolitan police is doing its best to achieve that.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Minister realise that to treat the question put by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) so casually will help none of us? Has he forgotten that when an essay was set by one of the lecturers at the Hendon police college a few years ago literally every essay written contained evidence of racism? Does he not believe that there is a problem and that we must all come to grips with it?

Mr. Hogg: The question of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was a gratuitously offensive criticism of the Metropolitan police. I treated it with the respect that it deserved.

Crime Statistics (Lincolnshire)

10. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the figures for reported crime in Lincolnshire for 1988.

Mr. John Patten: From January to September 1988, the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in Lincolnshire was 25,171, which represents a fall of nearly 5·5 per cent. compared with the same period in 1987, which is 2 per cent. more than the equivalent figures for the whole of England and Wales. That is good news out of Lincolnshire.

Mr. Leigh: These figures are a most welcome vindication of Government policies and commitment to the police. Will my hon. Friend stress that crime prevention is not simply the responsibility of Government but starts at home, that public involvement is needed and that we need to build on excellent schemes such as the neighbourhood watch schemes?

Mr. Patten: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. What has contributed to the rapid fall of crime in Lincolnshire is the growth during the past 12 months of the number of neighbourhood watch schemes from some 400 to some 700 and, equally, the introduction of six juvenile crime prevention panels made up of active citizens helping the police in its task.

National Indentity Card

11. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received the reports from the chief constables on the introduction of a national identity card; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: I have now received a report from the Association of Chief Police Officers in response to my request last year. The ACPO paper does not reach conclusions on the general merits or recommend a particular scheme. The view of the police is that there would be some advantages, together with some disadvantages, for the police in a system that required the

carrying of identity cards and their production on request but that a voluntary scheme would have few advantages for them.

I shall also take into account, of course, other views which have been expressed, including those of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. In the past year I have received some 350 letters on the subject from hon. Members and from the general public, most of which have expressed support for some form of national identity card scheme.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for such a comprehensive reply. Can he tell the House when he will be bringing forward the Government's proposals for a national identity card, as the idea is clearly popular with our constituents and with many organisations, including many of the registrars general of births, deaths and marriages?

Mr. Hurd: There has been widespread discussion on this matter. My hon. Friend is right. The House will have an opportunity to discuss the matter at greater depth when it considers the private Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). I would need some persuading that a compulsory system, with all the bureaucracy and police time involved, would be worth while. Indeed, as I have just reported, the police have said that they see few advantages for them in a voluntary scheme, although I do not rule out at this stage that there might be other advantages worth exploring down that road.

Mr. Rees: ACPO cannot speak for Northern Ireland and nor, for that matter, can the Home Secretary. Have there been any consultations on this matter with the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland?

Mr. Hurd: I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has the matter under review.

Boundary Commission

12. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many counties in England have been looked at by the parliamentary boundary commission since June 1987 with a view to altering parliamentary constituency boundaries; how many preliminary reports have now been published by the commission following its visit to those counties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hogg: Since June 1987 the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England has completed a supplementary review of European parliamentary constituencies and an interim review of two United Kingdom parliamentary constituencies in Suffolk. The commission has also published draft proposals in a review of the constituencies of Buckingham and Milton Keynes.

Mr. Madel: Can my hon. Friend assure me that as the boundary commission continues its work it will pay particular attention to projected rises in population due to new house building? Can we have an assurance that when parliamentary constituencies in England are next changed all major changes will come into effect at the same time?

Mr. Hogg: It is desirable that the latter should happen, if possible. With regard to the figures, the commission has to operate within the existing statute law which requires the commission to have regard to existing electorates.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagemens for Thursday 2 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Martin: Looking forward to the visit of Mr. Gorbachev to this country, will my right hon. Friend confirm that she will not be begging his consent to the wise defence policies pursued by her Government, unlike the mendicants seeking consent to their policies in Russia?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his own point very effectively. It seems as though the Opposition want a defence policy labelled "made in Moscow". We shall insist on keeping our own independent nuclear deterrent. May I remind the House that Trident will be a smaller proportion of the Soviet strategic weapons than Polaris was when it was instituted many years ago. That is so even after the proposed 50 per cent. reduction in overall strategic weapons.

Mr. Kinnock: Do the changes that the Prime Minister proposes for the National Health Service mean that she will use the service herself?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman always mystifies me because he is quite prepared to purchase a private house, but not prepared to purchase private health care. I should have thought that he would realise that those people who pay for the National Health Service and then pay again for private health care are helping the National Health Service.

Mr. Kinnock: If the Prime Minister is telling us that there are people who can afford private care, can she tell us why such people should get a tax subsidy to do so?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. Gentleman is referring to tax relief for the elderly. There must be many older than I in this House—there are a number of them on the Opposition Benches—some of whom are quite well enough off to pay for their own health care. With regard to tax relief for the elderly, there are now 5 million people who have private health insurance. All of them may be despised by the Labour party, but they are making their own provision. As they come up to retirement they may well find two things—first, that their company made the provision under a general company scheme, which was therefore cheaper and, secondly, that as they reach the age of 60 the premiums go up because the need to use the service is greater. We therefore thought it right to give tax relief at that stage so that people can continue to use the scheme privately and by so doing bring more benefit to the National Health Service.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the provision of new consultant posts as outlined in the health White Paper will contribute in great measure to the reduction of the excessive workload undertaken by junior hospital doctors?

The Prime Minister: The consultant posts envisaged in the White Paper will, I hope, help to reduce the waiting lists where they are longest and most difficult. They will also give more hope to a number of junior doctors who are very anxious to have a clear career structure and need more possibilities of promotion. We are very anxious that junior doctors should not have to work too long hours, and we have a working party on that. My hon. Friend will know, however, that on average junior doctors are already working fewer hours than they were 10 years ago.

Mr. Ashdown: Does not the Prime Minister accept that the independence of public bodies and the use or abuse of a Prime Minister's privilege of patronage are matters of major public concern? Will she tell the House why she refused to answer the question I posed last week, asking her to list the appointments and salaries in her gift? Is it because there are too many or because she is afraid of revealing too much?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows that there are a considerable number of appointments. To list all of them would cost far too much—*[Interruption.]* Of course it would. The hon. Gentleman knows full well, as does the Labour party, that each and every Department has a list of members. He also knows that quite a number of such positions are filled by ex-Labour Ministers.

Mr. Sumberg: In the light of the Second Reading of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Bill and the need to promote a genuine free labour market, will my right hon. Friend enact similar legislation to protect those contemplating employment in satellite television?

The Prime Minister: I am only too anxious that as many hon. Members as possible—particularly Conservatives—get on satellite and other television. We have such a good story to tell that I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will go out and proclaim it. I can understand why the Labour party is fearful of some of its Members doing that.

Mr. Charles Powell

Q2. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister when she expects Mr. Charles Powell to end his term of service in her office.

The Prime Minister: In due course.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Prime Minister recall that a Select Committee, chaired by a distinguished Conservative Privy Councillor, asserted that Mr. Powell was in a position to tell her about Sir Leon Brittan's role in the Westland affair on 7 January 1986? Did Mr. Powell really fail to tell her before the inquiry report was issued?

The Prime Minister: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman has nothing to add to his questions and speeches. I have nothing to add to my answers.

Engagements

Q3. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Labour leaders in Manchester have confessed that during the past two and a half years £14,000 of public money has been given to Mr. Viraj Mendis and his supporters? Does she agree that that highlights the disgraceful way in which many Labour-controlled local authorities are run?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the people in Manchester will now be able to see clearly how their money is being spent. I understand the viewpoint of many people who complain about our procedures because it took so long to refer the gentleman back to his country of birth.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Prime Minister accept that we in Northern Ireland would welcome the introduction of a national identity card? Does she agree that any responsible citizen in the United Kingdom would have no objection to carrying such a card, but would be proud to co-operate with those interested in looking at it?

The Prime Minister: Many people might like a national identity card, but that is different from compelling all people to have one. That would be a significant step and we should have to consider the matter carefully before embarking on such a course of action.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Is my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister aware that the Minister of State, Department of Health, and the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department have stated that a human foetus can now be assumed to be viable at 24 weeks rather than at 28 weeks as laid down in the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929? If they are right, should not that Act, which is a Government measure, be amended to make abortions after 24 weeks illegal?

The Prime Minister: I think that what my hon. Friend has described is the generally held medical view. I believe that I am right in saying that the practice in most hospitals is to adhere to the 24-week figure. I share the view of a number of Members that if a Bill which was introduced last Session had contained the 24-week figure right from the beginning it might have got through.

Q4. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fatchett: I am sure that the Prime Minister will agree with me that the arrangements for kidney sales at the Humana Hospital Wellington are an absolute scandal. Will she tell the House why, when her Government were asked four years ago by the Labour party to introduce legislation to prevent that vile trade, her Minister said no and her Government have subsequently taken no action?

The Prime Minister: I think that the sale of kidneys or any organs of the body is utterly repugnant and that most people would take that view. We are considering the position to see whether legislation will be necessary.

Q5. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the apparent lack of enthusiasm by the Soviets for bilateral nuclear arms control completely vindicates the Government's policy of adopting a unified NATO response to arms control?

The Prime Minister: On arms control, we should negotiate at the appropriate negotiating table. With regard to intercontinental ballistic missiles, that is sometimes between the Soviet Union and the United States, but we have rightly kept the independent nuclear deterrent out of negotiations because it is a matter for us and for France. I should point out that, as my hon. Friend knows, France is far more robust about an independent nuclear deterrent for France than British Socialists are about such a deterrent for Britain.

Ms. Ruddock: Will the Prime Minister tell the House why the arguments that have led her Government to support a total ban on chemical weapons do not apply to nuclear weapons?

The Prime Minister: Because nuclear weapons have kept the peace for the last 40 years. I should have thought that even the hon. Lady would know that. It is clear from history—from world war 1 and world war 2—that neither conventional nor chemical weapons were enough to prevent the start of a war. If we ever went back to a position where we had only conventional weapons, a war could start and the race would be on as to who could produce a nuclear weapon first.

Mr. Allason: Is my right hon. Friend aware that two weeks ago the Association of Chief Police Officers conducted an exercise with a view to the introduction of a national emergency centre with a free 0800 telephone number and that the exercise was considered a success? Will she now give her support to the introduction of that system on a national scale?

The Prime Minister: We first have to see precisely what lessons we can learn from that exercise. That is one of the matters that will be considered.

Ms. Short: Is the Prime Minister aware that elderly people throughout the country who cannot afford to benefit from tax relief for private medical care are frightened that they will receive second-rate care under her new proposals? Given that there would be no point in buying private medical care unless it were better, are they not right and what can she say to reassure them?

The Prime Minister: The elderly people in this country, the overwhelming majority of whom use the National Health Service, have profited enormously from the Conservative Government by the vast increase in resources devoted to health—from £8 billion a year to £24 billion a year—by the increase in the numbers of doctors and nurses and by the fact that both those groups of people are properly paid under Conservative Governments whereas they were not under Labour.

Mr. Burt: Bearing in mind that in recent years a growing number of trade unionists have helped the nation by taking advantage of having private health care, may I ask my right hon. Friend to agree that the likely effect of the proposed reforms, with tax relief for the elderly, will be to make more former trade unionists follow their example?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the number of people who think it right and proper, when they can afford to do so, to join a BUPA scheme will increase because a number of people will negotiate with companies for their own employees and work forces to be covered either by BUPA or by Hospital Plan.

Mr. Alton: Arising out of the reply that the right hon. Lady gave to her hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), is she aware of the case of the Carlisle baby who was aborted last year at 21 weeks' gestation and struggled for three hours before being placed in a black sack and incinerated? Does she not agree that that child and the 174,000 children aborted in this country last year deserved the most basic right of all—the right to life?

The Prime Minister: The facts and views given by the hon. Gentleman are not always agreed with by the medical profession. Some of them are sharply contested. The figure of 24 weeks mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) is, as far as I am aware, agreed by almost all people as being a more proper figure to be included in legislation than the previous figure of 28 weeks, and I regret that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) did not include it in his Bill.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 6 FEBRUARY—Timetable motion on the Water Bill.

Motions on the Adoption Allowance Schemes and Adoption Allowance Schemes (Scotland) Orders.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at 7 o'clock

TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY—Opposition day (4th Allotted Day). Until about 7 o'clock there will be a debate entitled "Congestion and safety in transport". Afterwards, there will be a debate entitled "The Government's failure properly to support science and scientific research". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motions on the Local Authority Social Services (Designation of Functions) Order and the Access to Personal Files (Social Services) Regulations and the Access to Personal Files (Housing) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY—Debate on a motion to take note of the White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality" (Cm. 517). Details of the relevant Home Affairs Committee reports will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Precept Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Inner London Education Authority) Order.

THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY—Debate on a motion to take note of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm. 601).

Motion to take note of EC documents on credit institutions. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

FRIDAY 10 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY—Until 7 o'clock, private Members' motions.

There will be a debate on a Government motion on agriculture.

[Debate on Wednesday 8 February: Relevant Home Affairs Committee reports. 3rd report, Session 1987-88 on the future of broadcasting (HC 262); 2nd special report, Session 1987-88 the Government's reply (HC 737)

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Relevant European Community documents:

(a) 4794/88	*Credit institutions: regulatory framework*
(b) 9224/86	*Credit institutions: "Own Funds"*
(c) 4339/88	*Credit institutions: "Own Funds"*
(d) 6033/88	*Solvency ratio for credit institutions*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 15-iii (1988-89), para 3
(b) HC 21-xxix (1985-86) para 11
(c) HC 43-xix (1987-88) para 10, HC 43-xxxv (1987-88) para 8, HC 43-xxxviii (1987-88) para 4 and HC 15-ii (1988-89) para 2
(d) HC 43-xxxviii (1987-88) para 5.]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that statement. When shall we have a debate on the Fennell report into the King's Cross fire, as it is almost three months since the report was published? When can we expect a debate on the proposals to phase out student grants and replace them with loans to students? When can we expect the Government to respond to the report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts on child care, a subject of particular importance to children and of almost equal importance to mothers in this country? Will he report on any progress that has been made in talks about establishing a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs?

When can we expect the Government to present a Bill to prevent the buying and selling of human organs? The Government promised in 1985 to consider special legislation to outlaw this repulsive trade, which was brought into this country by American private hospitals. So far, the Government have only issued letters and given the occasional slap on the wrist. If it will encourage the Government to introduce a Bill, I promise that the Opposition would facilitate the passage of any measure which effectively outlawed this filthy trade.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman has asked me five questions about next week's business, one or two of which I think he has asked before. I am not sure that I can be much more helpful, but I know that it is a busy day for the hon. Gentleman. He will be appearing on television tonight, and I hope that his career will not be in jeopardy as a result.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about the Fennell report, as he has done before. I recognise that he wants a debate on it. I cannot promise him a debate, but I should have thought that some of the points he might want to make would be relevant to the debate on Tuesday. I realise, however, that that is not a substitute.

The period of consultation on student grants is not yet over, and again I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future. The Government will be responding in due course to the Select Committee report on child care, but I have no news of when that response will be available.

On the question of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee, as I said last week, I am due to see two of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends to discuss the way forward, and I do not believe that it would be wise for me to make any more statements until I have had a chance to hear their views.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying that the Opposition would facilitate any additional legislation that might be necessary to deal with the totally abhorrent business of buying and selling kidneys and other human organs. The Department of Health is looking at this matter urgently, and will no doubt make a report in due course.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Would my right hon. Friend give thought to the possibility of a debate on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Does he not agree that there must be something wrong with the law whereby, if the MMC gives approval to a bid, the bid must go through and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has no power whatsoever to stop it—despite the fact that the DTI inspectors looked at share dealings in Consolidated Goldfields and it has now been agreed that the Minorco bid should go forward? If, indeed, the investigation into share dealings reveals that there has

been insider dealing, presumably the bid will have to be unscrambled. Surely there is something wrong with the law if we allow it to go forward, then find that there is something wrong with it and have to unscramble it.

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend knows, the purpose of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission legislation is to deal with matters other than the questions that are the subject of the DTI investigation. It just happens that both are there at the same time. As a result of the MMC determination my right hon. Friend has no powers under the Fair Trading Act. With regard to the inspectors' investigation, I do not believe we should judge anything until we have the inspectors' report.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Would the Leader of the House be a little more specific about the unnamed debate on agriculture on 13 February? Is he aware that since most of the matters relating to agriculture come from Brussels, the Select Committee on European Legislation at this time of the year normally looks at the price proposals, takes evidence from the Minister, and reports to the House, and there is then a debate? In view of his oft-repeated wish, and the wish of the House, that there should be more effective scrutiny of EEC matters, would he now give an undertaking that the debate on Monday week will not concern the EEC price proposals or matters relating thereto?

Mr. Wakeham: What I will do is tell the hon. Gentleman that I will write to him about the debate. I would not want to go ahead with it if he did not think this was a satisfactory time for it. It is arranged provisionally for a week next Monday, so we have time to consider the points that he wants to make.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend recall that late last night an EEC directive, which had reached a common position without debate in the House, was to be considered? My right hon. Friend was good enough to withdraw the motion on the Order Paper about that directive because there had been no debate before the position was adopted, and it appeared that we would have no debate last night. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is increasing concern in this House about debates before common positions or directives are adopted? Will he take appropriate steps to ensure that that does not happen in future?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that the recent history as my hon. Friend recalls it is quite accurate. I believe that the matter was put down for debate. Unfortunately, the Opposition Member who was due to take part in it did not turn up. Therefore, there was not a very prolonged debate. The matter came before the House and there was some dissatisfaction about the situation. I agreed not to move the motion on the Order Paper, so that discussions could take place. It was no fault of the Government that the debate did not take place.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): May I first of all sympathise with the Leader of the House on the widespread media reports that he is due to be dismissed —*[Interruption.]* Well, representations can no doubt be made to the Prime Minister on his behalf. When is the Companies Bill due to come to this House? Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind the fact that the amendment carried in the Lords against the Government, which in effect will mean that no donation could be made to a political party without the shareholders' approval, should not be changed in any way? Does not the Leader of the House recognise that the way in which the Tory party is run, internaly and financially, is so murky and disturbing that reform is absolutely essential?

Mr. Wakeham: On the first of the hon. Gentleman's comments, it is an interesting subject for speculation whether there is any conceivable circumstance in which he might have a job from which he might be dismissed. That circumstance is very unlikely. On the second question, the Companies Bill is before the other place, which has its procedures and will deal with the Bill. It will then come before this House and we will have plenty of opportunities to discuss it.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people in the middle east believe that this country has a special and historic responsibility to take initiatives to find peace in that region? Following the recent visit of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the region, and bearing in mind the forthcoming visit of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commomwealth Office, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House give careful consideration to an early debate which would be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House to allow us an opportunity to comment on the fast-moving and critical situation in that area?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to the efforts of my colleagues in the middle east, an area where traditionally we have has considerable influence. I recognise the need for a debate in the not-too-distant future. I cannot promise a debate at the moment, but I will bear it in mind.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Can the right hon. Gentleman promise the House a debate on the Government's apparent continued determination that Britain will be represented at the funeral of Emperor Hirohito by the Duke of Edinburgh—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, no."]. It is not a matter for groaning. The mail that I have received about that is greater than about any other topic since I have been a Member of this House. The country is outraged about what is happening, as more and more revelations emerge about the way in which our troops were treated during the last war. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that the Prime Minister's reply to me in essence was that we trade with that country? As it is to be a working funeral, perhaps a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry can make a statement to the House.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. and learned Gentleman seems, in his concern about this issue, to be distorting the position, which has been set out clearly by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. It would not be right for me to add to anything that he has said.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): In view of the front-page story in today's *Daily Telegraph* about a possible Government package on Sunday trading, will the House have a chance to debate that subject before the

[Mr. David Nicholson]

Government reach firmer conclusions? Will the House have an opportunity to debate the recent White Paper on the future of development plans?

Mr. Wakeham: With regard to a debate on Sunday trading, there are more ways of initiating debate in the House than through me. I have no plans for a debate on that subject at present, but I shall listen to any suggestions from my hon. Friend. Nor have I any immediate plans for a debate on the development plan issue that he raised.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House organise a debate about the PCW fraud, involving Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon, who conveniently have been in the United States for more than five years, which is beyond the extradition period? In that time the Government have done nothing whatsoever about the affair. Was that cover-up primarily to provide protection for those in the Lloyd's insurance market and those in high places at the Bank of England, who have managed to protect those two people? Will the Leader of the House tell us the views of the Government and the Attorney-General now that that £40 million has been taken? Can we have an assurance that the Government will take some steps to make sure that action is taken on that matter?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's twisted mind sometimes allows him to ramble a little. The position is very simple. If there is evidence that can be brought before a court of law, the authorities responsible for prosecution in this country will bring that evidence and will dispose of it. It is not a matter for the Government to bring prosecutions.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Since on at least one morning next week it is likely to be snowing, raining or freezing, how is my right hon. Friend getting on with providing some protection for our constituents who wish to visit this place and who are likely to have to stand in the rain, the snow or the frost?

Mr. Wakeham: I guess that my hon. Friend is referring to the matter that he has raised with me before. As I said then, it is being considered by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee. When it has deliberated, we will be able to take the matter further.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): In view of the long time since the report came out, and the importance of the issue, is it not time that the House debated the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure?

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, I have promised a debate on that, and I hope to arrange it in the not-too-distant future. However, I think it is important that the many interests involved have a chance to study what the hon. Gentleman will recognise is a complex and difficult subject. Many Government Departments are involved in those matters, and at the moment I am seeking their views on the report. It is an important report and I should like us to have an informed debate after proper consideration.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend noted early-day motion No. 250, which refers to the recommendations of the Trade and Industry Select Committee, and urges that petrol prices continue to be displayed in gallons rather than only in litres?

[That this House notes the recommendation of the Trade and Industry Committee that petrol prices should continue to be displayed in gallon as well as litre term on boards visible from the roadside; notes that the Price Marking (Petrol) (Amendment) Order 1988 will remove this requirement with effect from 23rd January; and calls for a debate on the Order.]

As it has been signed by no fewer than 202 hon. Members on both sides of the House, will he arrange an early debate on the subject?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that a number of my hon. Friends have asked for a debate on that subject. Since last week, I have had discussions with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. In the light of those discussions, my right hon. Friend has today written to my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mr. Warren) in his capacity as Chairman of the Trade and Industry Select Committee and suggested discussions on how best to proceed.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham North-West): May I take the Leader of the House back to the matter of private Bill procedure? What is the delay in our having a "take note" debate on the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure? It would be only a "take note" debate and would not require any Executive decision. The Leader of the House knows there is a great deal of feeling on both sides of the House about the way in which the private Bill procedure is used—for example, in the most recent cases on the siting of the second London terminal for the Channel tunnel and the building problem that the Government will have to face concerning the fast route through Kent. There is no reason at all for extending consultation; the right hon. Gentleman should let us have that "take note" debate now. If he will not let us have a debate on a report that has already been produced, when will we receive the report on televising Parliament? It is not fair that the Leader of the House should treat us like this.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman is pushing at an open door. I am trying not to delay a debate on the private Bill procedure report but am doing much by collecting the views of Departments so that I can make an informed speech to the House. The hon. Gentleman may like to have debates in which knowledge and information are not purveyed; I prefer debates in which some information is given. I am with the hon. Gentleman in wanting that debate as soon as it can practicably be arranged. *[Interruption.]* There is no need for him to get excited about it—I am on his side. I will be happy when the report of the Select Committee on televising the House is written and it reports to the House. We are proceeding as fast as we can.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): When may we expect a debate on the National Health Service White Paper? Given the interest in Health Service debates, and the fact that many hon. Members are unable to speak in them, will my right hon. Friend allocate two days for it?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is pushing his luck a bit; he has not got one day out of me yet. I recognise the need for a debate, but hon. Members would do better to study carefully what my right hon. and learned Friend the

Secretary of State for Health proposes in the White Paper. It is an important and comprehensive review, and I should wish us to debate it when that period of study has elapsed.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): The Leader of the House was not present during Home Office questions, so he would not have heard the Home Secretary's statement that he knew of no police authority that had contracted out services. Leicestershire education authority employs private contractors—private police officers—to patrol its schools. Bearing in mind the fact that, on Monday, the Home Secretary announced the allocation of additional police officers, and the grave concern in Leicestershire that only 27 of the 89 officers requested have been approved, will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on this important subject? Will he have a word with the Home Secretary and tell him that it is not on to release important material by press release? The best way for him to announce allocations is to make a statement to the House so that he can be questioned on it.

Mr. Wakeham: Even though I was not here, somehow I seem to know what my right hon. Friend said. He was talking about police forces, and what he said was correct. The hon. Gentleman is raising a matter that he should take up with the local education authority.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Is my hon. Friend aware that today is the first anniversary of the P and O dispute at Dover? Might it not be an appropriate subject for debate, given that pickets and demonstrators have abused their position over the past year and, as part of that abuse, have thrown beer at an eight-year-old child, reducing her to tears, and have been involved in furthering the dispute?

Is my right hon. Friend aware that residents around the port of Dover are still suffering and that employees are still being intimidated on their way to work? In the debate, would it not be appropriate to state that the police have been exceedingly reasonable—some would say overly reasonable—to pickets and demonstrators? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be appropriate to include in the debate the fact that, over the past year, Labour Members of Parliament have been on the picket lines encouraging disgraceful acts of intimidation?

Mr. Wakeham: Subject to you, Mr. Speaker, it would seem that the subject raised by my hon. Friend would be appropriate to Tuesday's debate on transport.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Given the undoubted and welcome increase in charitable giving over the past few years, does the Leader of the House think that it would be a good idea to have a debate on charitable giving so that we can deploy our case and listen to the arguments and excuses of Conservative Members, who try to defend the unlawful channelling of charitable funds to the Conservative party?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman makes statements that cannot be backed up and that are wholly unjustified. He is perfectly right to draw the House's attention to the substantial increase in charitable giving. A great deal of it is due partly to the increased prosperity under this Government and to the better fiscal climate created by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will recall that, last week, I asked him a question about the way in which the Manx Government and island were run and he agreed to write to me. I want to thank him for his courteous and kind letter about the swindles of people in this country that have been carried out in the name of the Manx Government—perhaps even by the Manx Government. Does my right hon. Friend agree that there should be some concern about the legalised swindle of the charges made by the official receivers and liquidators in a £42 million case? Of that, £12 million has been found, of which the liquidators have paid themselves £6 million.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend did not say whether that was an extension of his Isle of Man question or another question, but he raises an important point. I cannot find time for a debate on it immediately, but it may be a subject on which my hon. Friend can try for an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Now that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has concluded its investigations into the sleazy business of telephone chat lines, which has been speculated on widely over the past few days, will the Leader of the House provide time for a debate on the topic?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to see what his views are, and I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's suggestion in mind.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, since Labour took control of Ealing council fewer than three years ago, there has been a plague of rats in the borough, which is a serious matter? It is not helped by the fact that the roads were not swept for three weeks over Christmas and that some have not been swept for two years. The refuse was not collected for a few weeks either. Residents in the borough are having to pay an extra 35 per cent. in rates for reduced services and a plague of rats, so could we have an early debate on seeking means to force Ealing council to improve its services to the people —and at a reasonable price?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his own point. I wish that I could offer him an early debate on the subject. However, I know his ingenuity, and I have no doubt that he will find a way to make his point effectively.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): When we have a debate on agriculture on 13 February, will the Leader of the House ask his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture to make a statement on the allegation on Scottish television last week and in the press this week that there has been a cover-up by the Ministry on radiation levels in two parts of Scotland, one of which—Tinto hill and Carstairs—is in my constituency? Will the Minister answer those allegations and give an explanation on 13 February?

Mr. Wakeham: I suspect that that matter falls within the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there has not been a cover-up, and I shall see that someone writes to him with the information he seeks.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Can my right hon. Friend promise the House an early debate on the future of the national dock labour scheme, which has

[Mr. John Marshall]

effectively destroyed jobs and killed the competitiveness of scheme ports and runs counter to the principle of economic deregulation of which he and I are proud?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that my hon. Friend and others feel strongly on the matter. It featured quite extensively in the debate on the Employment Bill, which will be returning to the Floor of the House. I cannot promise my hon. Friend additional time to discuss the matter, but I recognise its importance.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Will the Leader of the House accept that there is growing public disquiet over the apparent link between aluminium in water and Alzheimer's disease, which is also commonly referred to as senile dementia? That concern was made far worse by the disaster at Camelford in Cornwall, the ill health that people are still suffering and the fact that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), has admitted that there are dangerous levels of aluminium, exceeding EEC drinking water regulations, in many parts of the country, including the north Yorkshire villages of Boltby and Sutton under Whitestonecliffe? Will the right hon. Gentleman allow time for the House to debate that important matter of public disquiet?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise time now, although, if there is a statement or announcement to be made by my right hon. Friend, I shall certainly find time for that, and I shall refer the matter to him.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that an amendment to the Employment Bill currently before the House might be the way to bring about the abolition of the national dock labour scheme? Is he aware that the number of registered dockers has dropped from 78,000 to fewer than 9,500, and that those of us who represent portside constituencies are concerned that, with the species of registered dockers, are dying our ports in our areas, and that action is long overdue?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's concern. I do not know that I should speculate about the effectiveness of amendments that he may or may not table, but I note his point.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Would the Leader of the House care to consider the insulting and ignorant reply that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? Is he really unaware that it is the Attorney-General who has masterminded the abysmal attempts over the past five years to extradite Peter Cameron-Webb and Peter Dixon in connection with the Lloyd's fraud in which £40 million was stolen? The Attorney-General keeps telling me that he cannot get the co-operation of the Swiss authorities. Does the Leader of the House believe that he has the right to be complacent when two people who have stolen £40 million are rubbing lotion into their private parts on sun-kissed beaches in the southern hemisphere?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not being complacent about anything. The Attorney-General has his responsibilities as a Law Officer of the Crown and they are different from his responsibilities—and mine—as a member of the Government. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend has discharged his obligations to the best of his ability and that, if it were possible and right to bring charges in court, he would have done so; but it is not for me to comment on that.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, while the Government's statistics published under the Animals (Scientific) Procedures Act 1986 are most welcome, they do not cover certain very important areas, such as the severity of the pain caused to animals under live experiments over a length of time? Does my right hon. Friend accept that these gaps exist, that corrections have already been made in the published statistics and that it is an issue that is not only important to many people but causes great anxiety to people in this country? Therefore, please may we have a debate early on in the Session so that these statistics—the first set of statistics—can be discussed, and suggestions put forward for their improvement?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course it is an important subject, and I recognise my hon. Friend's concern about it but it is also important that we should not exaggerate the position. Unfortunately, there was a small error in two of the tables in respect of safety studies. The total number of procedures under the heading "safety studies" should have been around 244,000 instead of 247,000. The figures were correctly given in subsequent tables. This is an extremely complex analysis. Corrected figures will be published in the 1988 statistics in the middle of this year and we are grateful to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and, indeed, to my hon. Friend for pointing out the error.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House consider initiating a debate next week on the machinery of government? We could then discuss the need for guidelines for the employment of parliamentary advisers to the Government, who have been something of a heterogeneous collection since 1979. They have included Peter Shipley, a former member of the National Front, who apparently escaped the scrutiny of special branch, Peter Luff, who is employed by a company that is being investigated by the Department of Trade and Industry which he is advising, and Sir Jeffrey Sterling of P and O, who is apparently meddling in the Department of Transport although ostensibly he is at the Department of Trade and Industry.

Why does only the Prime Minister have the guts to reveal the staggering amount of money paid to these people, while every other Department which employs Tory advisers at a cost to the taxpayer of millions of pounds refuses to reveal the exact amounts? The Prime Minister alone is prepared to accept that she is paying her Tory chums hundreds of thousands of pounds a year.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman pursues his own course. Special advisers—not unknown under the Government of which he was a member—are appointed under well laid down procedures properly controlled under the arrangements for the Civil Service, and I do not believe that there is call for a debate on the subject.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Why is the Leader of the House positively and vigorously obstructing a debate on the Procedure Committee's recommendations? Who is winding him up? Why is he doing it?

Mr. Wakeham: As I am not, the second part of the question does not arise.

Point of Order

4.6 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend, I sent you a request, saying that I hoped to catch your eye during yesterday's debate on low pay. I had not asked to speak for some months, other than on behalf of the New Building Sub-Committee whose report I presented some weeks ago. I asked permission to speak yesterday as the senior Member sponsored by the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, which has 400,000 members, quite a number of whom are on low pay, and because I am also connected directly with the wages councils. When I approached you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret that I am not prepared to debate with any hon. Member why he has not been called.

Mr. Powell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Looking for the pecking order, you told me that it might not be possible for me, as an Opposition Whip, to be called——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think it would be very unwise for the hon. Gentleman to pursue private conversations that he has had with me. If he has a complaint, I suggest that he comes to see me about it. I shall gladly deal with it, but not on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Powell: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: But not on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Powell: It is a genuine point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wants to take issue with me, I shall certainly take issue with him publicly.

Mr. Powell: All right, Mr. Speaker, that may be so, but it is an important point of order. We accept responsibility in the Whips Office, but we do not want to be denied the opportunity to speak because we are in the Whips Office. You, Mr. Speaker, should be well aware of that, having been an Opposition Whip in the past. We do not expect to be denied the right to be called. I seek your ruling on whether Opposition Members who are Whips will be called on issues directly affecting them and on which they wish to make representations. The Liberal Chief Whip was called yesterday, yet Opposition Whips were refused.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to debate that matter with the hon. Gentleman. Every hon. Member is dealt with fairly, but Opposition Front Bench spokesmen should not expect to have the same precedence in debate as Back Benchers, who have a pretty rough life.

Orders of the Day

Official Secrets Bill

Committee [Progress, 25 January]

[MR. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair*]

4.8 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I am sure that you will agree that this is wholly appropriate to the Committee consideration of a Bill. When we came to the end of our deliberations last week, the Minister of State was pressed from both sides of the House to state the position of solicitors who might be consulted by men and women who believed—or, more important, had been told—that they were the victims of improper actions by the Security Service, The Minister of State gave what we believed to be a considered reply, which appeared in column 1109 of *Hansard* for 25 January. He said that the passing of such information to solicitors would be covered by what he described as "legal professional privilege." I have now received a letter from the president of the Law Society saying that that statement is simply untrue. *[Interruption.]* I revise my judgment: the letter says that it is inaccurate.

With your permission, Mr. Walker, I shall read what the president of the Law Society says about the position of men and women who seek advice from a solicitor having been told that they are the subject of improper activity on the part of the Security Service:

"It is not only members of the security services who would have difficulty in seeking legal advice: the difficulty appears to apply to any person who can commit the various offences under the Bill relating to unauthorised disclosure."

According to the president of the Law Society, men and women who may regard themselves as illegally treated by the security services are prohibited by the Bill from taking legal advice.

I do not wish to pursue the matter at any length today, as we have a fundamentally important debate ahead of us. I simply ask the Minister of State to assure us that, having given advice which appears in *Hansard* but which is categorically wrong, he will take the first chance he gets to correct that advice.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) raises an issue of which I am not aware. He has not given me prior notice of the letter, nor have I had a copy of the letter from the president of the Law Society. If the right hon. Gentleman would be good enough to let me have a copy, I shall consider in detail what the letter says.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): The Committee will recognise that these are not matters for the Chair, but for debate.

Clause 1

SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to move amendment No. 91, in page 1, line 9, after 'authority' insert 'or justification'.

The Chairman: With this, we may discuss the following amendments: No. 1, in page 1, line 10, after 'relating to' insert 'the lawful activities of'.

No. 2, in page 1, line 10, at end insert 'activities'.

No. 90, in page 1, line 13, at end insert—

'(1A) For the purposes of subsection (1) above a disclosure is made with justification if the person making the disclosure has reasonable grounds for believing that it is necessary to make it to indicate the existence of crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect of public duty or a threat to public safety.'.

No. 81, in page 1, line 27, after first 'the' insert 'lawful'.

No. 19, in page 2, line 24, after 'the' insert 'lawful'.

No. 94, in page 5, line 23, after 'if', insert

'other than for the purposes of consulting a solicitor in relation to any unlawful activities of the security or intelligence services'.

New clause 1—*Public interest defence (No. 1)*

'It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this Act to prove that disclosure or retention of the information or article was in the public interest in that he had reasonable cause to believe that it indicated the existence of crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect in the performance of official duty or other misconduct.'.

New clause 4—*Public interest defence (No. 2)*

'.—(1) It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this Act to prove that the disclosure or retention of the information, document or other article was in the public interest insofar as he had reasonable cause to believe that it indicated the existence of crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect in the performance of official duty or other misconduct.

(2) In the case of a Crown servant or government contractor charged with an offence under sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 or 8 of this Act subsection (1) above shall only apply if he has taken reasonable steps to comply with any established procedures for drawing such misconduct to the attention of the appropriate authorities without effect.'.

New clause 5—*Public interest defence (No. 3)*

'(1) It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this Act to prove that the disclosure of information, document or other article for which he has been charged was in the public interest, having regard both to any damage actually caused by the disclosure and any benefit to the public interest from it; or that he had reasonable cause to believe at the time of the disclosure that it was so in the public interest.

(2) In the case of a Crown servant, government contractor or person notified under section 1, the defence in subsection (1) above shall only be available if he has, without effect taken reasonable steps to comply with any established procedures for making such disclosures to the appropriate authorities.'.

New clause 8—*Disclosures where public safety is threatened*

'( ) It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this Act to show that the disclosure or retention of the information, document or other article was in the public interest insofar as it revealed the existence of an imminent and serious threat to public health or safety, provided that effective steps to remove that threat had not been taken.'.

New clause 10—*Disclosure of evidence of fraud*

'It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this Act to prove that the disclosure indicated the existence of fraud, corruption or the misappropriation of public funds which had been reported to the appropriate authorities without effect.'.

Mr. Dalyell: As clause 1 stands, the situation could arise in which a person would be automatically guilty of a criminal offence without any possibility of a defence of any kind if it was true that he made a relevant disclosure without lawful authority. The words "without lawful authority" are not defined and are unacceptably imprecise. They would be open to wide or narrow construction by the courts.

The primary purpose of amendment No. 91 is to avoid the potentially absurd situation in which, for example, a senior official was automatically guilty of a criminal offence because it was held that he had made a disclosure, that the courts might in future hold to have been done "without lawful authority". Amendment No. 91 seeks simply to introduce the words "or justification" after "lawful authority", so leaving it open for the courts to determine, according to the circumstances of the particular case, whether the disclosure was justified in the absence of lawful authority.

Justification must, of course, be defined and that is the purpose of amendment No. 90. In substance, it amounts to the same thing as some of the public interest defences proposed by the new clauses. Technically, however, amendments Nos. 90 and 91 are preferable, as they avoid the difficult situation where a judge has to explain to a jury the difference between a primary charge where the onus, as always, is on the prosecution, and a defence where the onus is on the accused. Amendments Nos. 90 and 91 ensure that the absence of authority, or justification, is built into the primary charge, clearly leaving the onus where it should be—always on the prosecution. The content of amendment No. 90 is, of course, open to discussion, but the principle is sound.

The amendment raises issues of fundamental importance to the House—the duty of Ministers to tell the truth, and the abhorrence felt by hon. Members on all sides, regardless of party if the House is deliberately deceived. We require that the truth be told to us, and not merely as a matter of personal ethics, for to deceive Parliament is a far greater offence than to deceive one's associates. It is an offence against the basis of our system of democracy.

4.15 pm

How do we in the House protect ourselves against this injury? We may cross-examine Ministers on the Floor of the House or in Select Committee. But if Ministers wish to choose to remain silent and refuse to justify their statements or to document their assertions, they do so; and if they wish to prevent their officials from replying to questions, the officials do not reply.

Hon. Members will remember how many vital questions about the conduct of the Westland affair were never answered, either on the Floor of the House or before the Select Committee. I refer, just in passing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to Sir Leon Brittan's appearance before the distinguished Select Committee on Defence. If I may be forgiven for saying so, I refer, also in passing, to the Prime Minister's answer to question No. 2 this afternoon. Do not be under any illusion that parliamentary questions provide any kind of effective scrutiny of legitimate issues.

This afternoon I had a substantial question on the Order Paper—not one of those open questions—but the Prime Minister was easily able to brush it aside because of the nature of parliamentary questions. I use that as an example of why it is necessary to have this sort of amendment.

How does the amendment protect us against injury? I believe that anyone reading our proceedings in *Hansard* of 25 January would be rather shocked that an officer of the security services who informed an hon. Member that his or her phone was being tapped illegally would commit an offence. By illegally, I mean without a warrant or any suggestion that it is required in the interests of national security.

Where the interception is done for purely a party political reason, how do we treat the officer who reveals such disgraceful behaviour? The Government have put before us a Bill that proposes that he or she be put in prison for as long as two years. The House should not accept that disgraceful proposition.

How does the Bill protect us from a Minister who tells untruths to the House? It does not protect us; in fact, it protects the Minister. If a lie is exposed by someone who has been privy to the private discussions of those involved, the Bill punishes that person. He or she may be prosecuted, and cannot argue that the disclosure exposed was a deliberate deceit of the House, or that the disclosure protected the rights of the House to be told the truth.

Ministers know that if they sought to suppress such a disclosure by an injunction, they would have grave difficulty in securing it. They might obtain a temporary injunction, but ultimately there would be a full hearing. If the defendant showed that a disclosure revealed iniquity, the injunction would not be granted. That is how the courts have interpreted the civil law of confidence.

Hon. Members know that section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 has been used to punish those who have exposed the dishonesty of Ministers, and have been caught acting essentially as deep throats. It has been used by the Government. I will say more about it in relation to the case of Clive Ponting, but not at inordinate length.

This is a non-party matter. The *Sunday Telegraph* trial of 1970 was brought by a Labour Attorney-General over disclosures showing that Parliament had been deceived by Ministers of that Government. It would be better for the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to deal with that case in greater detail, but I recognise that I do not speak on a party basis.

I deliberately mentioned both cases, because it is not a party political matter. The use of the law in this way and the use to which the new Bill may so easily be put are offences against the House as a whole. I crave the indulgence of my colleagues to say a little about the case of Clive Ponting. In a sense, I have seen the Bill as an anti-Clive Ponting jury Bill. We may not have had this debate had it not been for the Ponting case. Other than when there were heavy three-line Whips, I attended the 11-day hearing at the Old Bailey. I speak against that background because there are lessons to be drawn.

The Clive Ponting case was unique and it strongly influenced the Government's approach to replacing section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. In the public mind, whatever Governments may say about the unanimous verdict of not guilty, the Ponting trial jury clearly established that the interests of the state are not necessarily the same as the interests of the Government of the day. It also established that Clive Ponting's action of disclosure could be successfully defended in court under section 2(1)(a) of the Official Secrets Act 1911, which states that it is not a misdemeanour to communicate information to

"a person to whom it is in interest of the State his duty to communicate it".

In other words, in such circumstances a civil servant can claim a public interest defence.

As hon. Members know, the Government were extremely displeased with the outcome of the Ponting trial.

[Mr. Dalyell]

From the Official Secrets Bill it has become clear that the Government are intent on reversing the precedents that were established in the Ponting case.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that the document that he received from the gentleman he mentioned suggested that the Government were economical with the truth in the Foreign Affairs Select Committee? It revealed that any extension of what he called "our joint position"—that is, the Government's position—would reveal what I consider to be at least a disreputable diplomatic manoeuvre. Might it not be an even stronger case to say that if a Labour Government embarked on a questionable and controversial exercise, perhaps controlled by three leading members of the Cabinet, Conservative Members might agree that Mr. Ponting's action was the right thing in the national interest? Is that not the objective test that we should apply, and does it not support the argument?

Mr. Dalyell: I am careful on this subject. Before giving blank assent to what my hon. Friend has said, it would be more appropriate to read *Hansard*. I think that I agree with that proposition.

I think that I know Conservative Members' views on the behaviour of Mr. Ponting, but I say one thing in riposte. Mr. Ponting acted as he did because he was outraged at the treatment of Parliament. I speak for myself, and I believe that that was his motive.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): On the behaviour of Mr. Ponting—I hope not to detain the hon. Gentleman too long—does he agree with the assessment in Mr. David Hooper's book? There is no question that Mr. David Hooper supports the Government on these matters. He said that the odds were long against Mr. Ponting being acquitted at the trial. He went on to say:

> "However, Ponting's choice of Dalyell, who was neither his constituency MP nor a Privy Councillor and had form for leaking, his attempt to remove all identifying marks from the documents, his alleged untruthfulness when first asked whether he was the culprit, his failure to exhaust Civil Service remedies for his grievances, and his attempts to blame others were better explanations of the odds."

Will the hon. Gentleman comment on that?

Mr. Dalyell: I do not know whether it is realistic to expect Mr. Ponting to knock on Sir Robert Armstrong's door and say "Please, sir, I do not think that the Government are behaving very properly."

Mr. John Patten: Why not?

Mr. Dalyell: From a sedentary position, the Minister asks "Why not?" Career matters and a human factor are involved. There are real problems in using the usual channels. I think it is slightly egregious to say that the Cabinet Secretary is always available.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): On the specific point about Mr. Ponting speaking to Sir Robert Armstrong, he was a Cabinet Secretary who was quite prepared on a later occasion to accept that he was being "economical with the truth". Was there any reason for Mr. Ponting to think that the truth would necessarily have been delivered had he spoken to Sir Robert?

Mr. Dalyell: That is a hypothetical or rhetorical question. I should like to reply to my hon. Friend who made a friendly interruption and to the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney).

I read one chapter of Mr. Hooper's book, but not the one which the hon. Gentleman quoted. I did not read the whole book. The hon. Member for Wycombe quoted Mr. Hooper as saying that Dalyell behaved in such a way. Dalyell behaved quite properly on that occasion, because I did not go to the press. I kept it as a proceeding in Parliament. I went frankly to Anthony Kershaw, who was the Chairman of the Select Committee. I was naive enough to imagine that he would be schocked at how his Select Committee had been deceived. It was Kershaw's responsibility. He immediately went to the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). I did the proper thing, because that kept it as a proceeding in Parliament. I do not know whether it weighed with the Ponting jury, but it certainly was a factor.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): As the constituency Member for Clive Ponting, I put two brief propositions to my hon. Friend. First, it was perfectly understandable and justifiable that Mr. Ponting chose my hon. Friend as the person to send the information to. He knew that my hon. Friend had been asking serious questions about the matter germane to the information that he had. It was because of those questions and because of my hon. Friend's known interest in the matter that he chose that route of disclosure. That seems to me to be an entirely justifiable course of action.

Secondly, it was quite clear that, when called upon to come to a verdict at the Old Bailey, the jury rapidly and unanimously rejected the clear advice that they had been given by the judge that the interests of the state spelt out in the existing law were exactly equal to the decisions of the Government of the day. The jury rightly rejected that advice from the judge. That surely is the nub of the point that my hon. Friend is making.

Mr. Dalyell: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention.

4.30 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpoool, Walton): Will my hon. Friend not confine himself solely to the case of Mr. Ponting? I agree that Mr. Ponting was right and that the jury was right. But this is a much wider issue involving the rights of all people, whether they are civil servants or others, who will be affected by the Bill. The nitty-gritty of what happened in relation to Mr. Ponting is agreed. I think most hon. Members with any intelligence accept that the jury was right. I hope that my hon. Friend will come to the wider issue of all who may be affected by the Bill. I accept that Mr. Ponting's case was of great importance, but it is not the only issue involved.

Mr. Dalyell: I accept that it is not the only case. There are many other hon. Members in the Chamber who are supremely qualified to talk on general issues. I think that I am justified in detaining the Committee a little longer on what happened at the Old Bailey, because there are important lessons to be learnt for the amendment from those proceedings.

The Government intend to make it impossible for a civil servant ever again to claim a public interest defence should he reveal privately to a Member of Parliament that

Ministers are intentionally misleading Parliament. This has never been tested in the higher courts or by the Law Lords. I see my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), the former Solicitor-General, nodding his head. The Bill raises a crucial question. Is the security of the state enhanced by preventing Parliament from being informed when it has been misled intentionally by Government Ministers? As Mr. Bruce Laughland, QC for Clive Ponting, said:

"This is not a case about spying. It is a case about lying or misleading Parliament."

In view of the constitutional importance of the Ponting case, it is worth recalling certain significant aspects of the highly political trial, particularly the extraordinary events of 6 and 7 February 1985 which were not fully publicised and which revealed clearly what the Government were about.

The Government did everything in their power to secure the conviction of Clive Ponting. In *The Guardian* of 13 September 1984 there had been a reference to a meeting of Whitehall information officers at which the Prime Minister's press secretary, Mr. Bernard Ingham, was reported to have said that the Government were quite set on prosecution; indeed, it was hoped that an appropriately severe member of the judiciary would be on hand to hear the case. Mr. Ingham was reported to have named a couple of judges whom he thought suitable. It was also said that he regretted that Judge Jeffreys had passed on. Then the Government ensured that the trial jury was vetted, even though, as Mr. Roy Amlot QC, prosecution counsel, said on the first day of the trial:

"It is not suggested that the disclosure in fact damaged national security."

I think I have the assent of my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) on that.

At lunch time on Wednesday, 6 February 1985—day 8 of the trial—some extraordinary and revealing events started to take place in court No. 2 at the Old Bailey. Just before 1 o'clock, the judge, Mr. Justice McCowan, sent the jury home until 10.30 am the next day as the afternoon was to be taken up with legal submissions relating to legal definitions of the offence and the terms of the judge's pending summing up to the jury. The press and the public were present throughout the afternoon and the judge did not put any reporting restrictions on the events that took place.

As a consequence *The Observer* of 10 February 1985 carried an article by David Leigh on the afternoon's proceedings. It was the only newspaper to report those events, although Ivan Rowan in the *Sunday Telegraph* of the same date wrote:

"Because the jury was out of court, I cannot tell you what was said. . . . This particular afternoon—it was Wednesday—turned into an absolute thriller, with a double-twist at the very end that even Agatha Christie never equalled."

Because the public and the press were allowed to remain in court that afternoon, they were given a remarkable insight into the behind-the-scenes working of the supposedly non-political trial.

The first bombshell was dropped immediately before lunch, just after the jury had left the court. The judge indicated that if he accepted the prosecution's submission, he would have no alternative but to direct the jury to convict. After lunch, detailed discussions took place on the meanings of the two key words in the trial—"duty" and "state". The judge told the prosecution counsel, Mr. Amlot, that if he, the judge, accepted the prosecution's definition of the interest of the state, that is, that this was synonymous with the policies of the Government of the day, as he was inclined to do, he would have no alternative but to direct the jury to convict. Mr. Amlot responded:

"I would be very reluctant to seek to persuade you to a direction to convict".

The judge repeated his opinion. Mr. Amlot stressed his point by saying, in very positive terms:

"I am very reluctant in this of all cases that you should finish up directing the jury to convict".

The Home Secretary shakes his head; he will no doubt make his own speech, but I think that there is an important point here. It reveals that Roy Amlot had very grave doubts about precisely what we are now being expected to do as a House of Commons. We look to the Home Secretary for an explanation of the difficult problem of direction of a jury.

Mr. Justice McCowan pointed out that it would be very difficult for a judge to invite a jury to convict if the prosecution counsel for the Crown advised otherwise. Mr. Amlot asked if he could reflect on the matter overnight. The judge said that he would prefer a short adjournment that day. That was agreed. Mr. Amlot hurriedly wrote a note to Sir Thomas Hetherington, the Director of Public Prosecutions, who was sitting behind him, as he had been throughout the trial. The DPP quickly left the court, almost certainly to seek guidance; at least, that is what I thought. Meanwhile, Mr. Amlot continued by pointing out that it would be unconstitutional for a judge to direct a jury to return a verdict of guilty.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): That is the case.

Mr. Dalyell: He said that a judge might give his opinion as advice, but not direction. I am glad to have the assent of my right hon. and learned Friend, a former Solicitor-General.

Sir Peter Hetherington returned to the court, and at 4.25 pm the court adjourned for 10 minutes. The judge also left the court. When the judge returned, Mr. Amlot stated:

"Even if the ruling is in our favour, we do not ask for a direction to convict."

Mr. Justice McCowan said that after considering certain legal authorities, he had changed his mind. For a trial which purported to be non-political, the events of the afternoon of Wednesday 6 February had been most revealing.

The next morning, prior to the return of the jury, the legal submissions continued and were mainly concerned with the meaning of the key words "duty" and "state". During those submissions, the judge pointed out that the jury was not the body to decide what the interest of the state should be.

The jury returned to the court just after 11 am and the final speeches for the prosecution and defence were delivered. Mr. Bruce Laughland, the defence counsel, concluded with these words:

"We say that he"—

that is Clive Ponting—

"was faced in good conscience with an obligation to do his duty, a duty which was in the true interests of the State and that it was one from which he did not shrink. If what he did was a crime for which he renders himself liable for punishment, you know it could be a licence for Ministers to withhold from Parliament information with the tame acquiescence of their Civil Servants and so to infringe our liberties. And, if what he did was a crime in English law, you say so. But if it is, God help us, because no government will."

[Mr. Dalyell]

It is up to the House to reflect on what a Government would do in such a situation.

Mr. Archer: So that we can be clear about what my hon. Friend is saying, does he agree that there were two quite separate legal issues? The first was whether the public interest question should be left to the jury and the second was whether it could ever be right for a judge to direct a jury to convict—which, of course, in the end the judge did not. Does my hon. Friend agree that the real indictment of the law was that the jury, in effect, had to fly in the face of the judge's direction on law to arrive at a verdict which they found acceptable? That means that the House should look at the law again.

Mr. Dalyell: My right hon. and learned Friend is one of my oldest friends in the House, in both senses of the word. He is a distinguished lawyer and I am a layman. I shall not take issue with him, and I shall accept those propositions.

Mr. Justice McCowan's summing-up appeared to be aimed at dismissing the case for the defence. The jury retired at 11.15 am on the last day of the trial, and returned at 2 pm to deliver a unanimous verdict of not guilty.

Immediately after the verdict was announced, Mr. Amlot shook hands with Mr. Laughland in a gesture that was not in accordance with normal court procedure—so I am told. They were warm and generous congratulations.

That was clearly a most important verdict. It was the jury who decided the outcome of the case. Without a jury, the outcome would have been very different. The unsuccessful attempt by the Government to establish that
"the interest of the state"
was invariably the same as
"the interest of the Government of the day"
has underlined the importance of trial by jury in certain cases.

Nobody would want to put national security at risk by revealing genuine state secrets, but where national security is not involved, it is a misuse of the law to try to use it to protect the Government from embarrassment by preventing disclosures to Members of Parliament that Ministers are misleading Parliament. It cannot be right that the last resort of a civil servant to inform Parliament of serious wrongdoing by Ministers is to be withdrawn by a new law that will put him in gaol for so doing. That is no way to protect the security of the state; nor is it the way to protect parliamentary democracy.

It is clear that something extremely serious is about to happen. If a Government can succeed in passing a law that makes it a crime punishable by imprisonment for a civil servant to inform a Member of Parliament of serious malpractices by Ministers, the door will be opened to enable the destruction of the sovereignty of this House and this Parliament. I see that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) nods his head. I believe that there is a good deal of agreement among serious people about this matter.

4.45 pm

Mr. Spearing: I want to make one point absolutely clear. It might be interpreted from my hon. Friend's speech that the information Mr. Ponting passed to him was gratuitous, in that it revealed something that otherwise was not known, which it did. Does he not agree, however, that in this case the importance of that document was that the Select Committee had specifically asked for certain information, and that the document that my hon. Friend received showed that the draft replies to those questions would be such as could mislead the Committee? In other words, it was revealing not just that Ministers were misleading the House, but that they were intending to mislead in relation to specific questions asked by a Select Committee of the House.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend, along with Ian Mikardo, put in an enormous amount of work on their Foreign Affairs Committee minority report covering the events of 1 and 2 May 1982. My hon. Friend knows a great deal about this matter, and I accept his proposition, which raises an important point. When my hon. Friend makes these interventions, he does so with considerable detailed knowledge.

The Bill would prevent Parliament from being informed of such malpractices and, therefore, prevent Parliament from exercising its power to investigate and restrain such wrongdoing and would leave the continuation of such malpractices safe in the hands of a rogue Government. There is now a real danger that Parliament will soon be voting to ensure that that happens. That is what we are up against. However, before taking that step, Parliament would do well to consider the situation that would exist if the Government were the party in opposition and not the party in power.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I have been following the hon. Gentleman's speech with considerable interest and with a growing belief in its correctness. Is there not, however, another implicit inference to be drawn from his argument? It appears that he has been painting a rather black and white picture. On the one hand, his premise is that there is the law and, on the other, there is illegality —there is nothing else. I put it to the hon. Gentleman that there is an unacknowledged twilight situation in which there is wrongdoing, law-breaking or the infringement of liberties, which, if his amendments are not carried, would be sanctioned by the state. Irrespective of whether it is possible to raise them in the House, the law would have that effect unless it is amended in the way suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman has made an extremely perceptive intervention. I may appear to be putting it in black and white terms, but my colleagues would not wish me to go on for much longer. Part of the problem is that this is very much a situation of various shades of grey, and anyone who looks at these matters seriously cannot be too dogmatic. I accept the importance and, indeed, the validity of the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

Although a number of other changes in the Bill are to be welcomed, because they clarify many of the poorly defined areas in the original Act, undue emphasis on the scope of those changes must not be allowed to obscure the elimination of the all-important safeguard of the public interest defence. If that last ditch defence is lost, we shall have set up the legal framework necessary to enable a Government to establish and maintain a rather toothless Parliament.

If a new law is passed, which makes the act of passing the information itself a serious crime with no public interest defence available, the only issue for the jury then would be whether the information was passed or not. If the

defendant admits that it was, or if there is no doubt about it, the jury must find the defendant guilty of the specified crime.

In view of the now established importance of the jury in such cases, it could be to the defendant's disadvantage if the matter were taken up in the civil courts, should the Bill be passed with a public interest defence provision. A jury in a civil court is now a rarity. The Peter Wright case was heard in the civil courts with no jury and treated as a breach of confidentiality rather than a breach of the Official Secrets Act 1911. That might be one way round the prosecution's jury problem in the criminal courts. Hon. Members will recall Mr. Justice McCowan's remark in the Ponting case. He said:

"the jury is not the body to decide what the interest of the state should be."

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) that I have gone into the Ponting case. There are conclusions to be drawn. It is not a matter of black and white and I shall listen with very great care to what my colleagues and other hon. Members of the House have to say.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): This is a supremely important debate, and I mean no discourtesy to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), whose speech I found of intense interest, or to others if I limit my remarks to an aspect of the public interest involved in the disclosure of confidential or secret information which is concerned not with security or the defence of the realm but with the public's own health and safety. I refer specifically, of course, to new clause 8, which refers to a more limited public interest defence than that advanced by hon. Members in the earlier stages of this debate. But it is still one, I submit, of immense importance to all our people.

The clause provides a defence where a disclosure is shown to be

"in the public interest insofar as it revealed the existence of an imminent and serious threat to public health or safety, provided that effective steps to remove that threat had not been taken."

The Committee will note that the clause is limited in two ways. First, the threat must be shown to be imminent and serious, and, second, although it is imminent and serious, no effective steps have been taken to remove it. In short, we are dealing here with a possible serious threat to the health and safety of our fellow citizens, where I would have thought it proper that any Government should act and inform the public.

The threat may be posed in information from domestic sources known to the Government but not to Parliament or the public; or it may derive from information provided under confidential cover by another Government or by an international body. It is my contention that in neither case can there be any justification whatsoever for important public information about health and safety to be kept secret. It is surely in the public interest in a mature democracy such as ours to alert the public to threatening danger.

I am glad to tell the Committee that in tabling this new clause, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) are fully supported by the highly respected British Safety Council and by the Consumers Association, which, I understand, has indicated this to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Indeed, a whole host of other responsible organisations have expressed supporting views.

As the Bill stands, information about safety problems could be covered by clause 3(1)(b), which protects information supplied to Her Majesty's Government in confidence by other Governments and by international bodies. As an example, such information might relate to the shipping of highly toxic wastes to or from the United Kingdom, or the spread across frontiers of radiation, acid rain, or pesticides or other chemical products. It was not so very long ago that we were made aware of the distress in Poland, Finland, Sweden and, ultimately, Cumbria as a result of what happened at Chernobyl, as a result of a distinct shortage of information from the Soviet authorities.

Just suppose that the United States Government notified Her Majesty's Government in confidence that a particular model of an airliner was unsafe, and nothing was done about it, or there was serious delay in disclosing the facts, or—if I may borrow the phrase used by the hon. Member for Linlithgow—there was a disposition to be economical with the truth. Under the Bill as it stands, the person who revealed such information would be guilty of an offence.

The case for the new clause can be put quite simply. Where there appears to be an imminent and serious threat to public health and safety, it should not be an offence for anyone possessing that information to disclose it if he believes that it would be in the public interest to do so. I do not think that the words "public interest" appear anywhere in the Bill, so I will define the term. The public interest in this context means, bluntly, avoidance of a situation which, if left unchecked and unheeded, could lead to the death and injury of fellow citizens and the destruction of property, possibly on a very large scale.

I went all the way through the Bill and I could not find the words "public interest" anywhere. In the event of a prosecution, therefore, the jury would not be invited to consider the public interest, still less whether the disclosure did more good than harm to the public. Yet, looking back, I can recall—and I am sure hon. Members in all parts of the House can recall—a number of instances in which disclosure not only would have served the public interest but would have saved lives.

Some hon. Members may recall the tragic consequences of keeping quiet about the risks to which the workers in an asbestos works at Acre Mill near Hebden in Yorkshire were subjected in the 1960s. Employees there knew that white asbestos dust was everywhere in the workplace, in the air, on their clothes and on their skin, and was conveyed to their families when they got home. What they did not know and could not know until long after the plant was closed was what this betokened for their health. Some of them were to die of asbestosis and many were to be gravely injured. The dust on their clothes infected members of their families. The local factories inspectorate knew that asbestos was prevalent there and did nothing.

I will read out a passage from the ombudsman's report. It is to the eternal credit of the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), who was at the time the hon. Member for Sowerby, that he campaigned in this connection and took the matter to the ombudsman. The ombudsman concluded:

"For many years neither employers, with whom the principal responsibility lies for arrangements to protect workers from dangers to health and asbestos, nor the Factory Inspectorate, who are charged with responsibility for

[Sir Bernard Braine]

enforcing the legislative health and safety requirements, were aware of the full extent of the dangers from the dust created by processing asbestos."

Many hon. Members will know Mr. James Tye, the director general of the British Safety Council, an organisation which enjoys a worldwide reputation for its work in industrial safety. He told me only last week that, in this case, he pleaded with the factory inspectorate to make known the result of its inquiries in the public interest. In a letter to me he wrote:

"I knew about this situation, I repeatedly asked the District Inspector and the Chief Inspector of Factories to disclose from their official records this situation in the public interest and they repeatedly refused on the grounds that Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act didn't allow them to do so. Workers died and worse still their families died as well."

I could cite a number of examples but this one makes my point more eloquently than most.

5 pm

A second example was the continued failure of the Department of Transport in the 1960s and 1970s to publish the results of its inspection of vehicles, which showed dangerous defects. In his letter, Mr. Tye continued:

"From 1950 through to 1979 the Ministry of Transport carried out tests of motor cars at the Road Research Laboratory. These tests revealed defects in cars which could cause accident and death, not only to drivers but to pedestrians. In 1979 following a visit to the American Highway Transportation Safety Agency I came back to England and set up a 'hot-line'—in one week we had over a thousand people phone us up and tell us how unsafe their *new* cars were. All of this information was known to the Department of Transport who would not disclose it to the motorist because it contravened Section 2 of the Official Secrets Act."

I shall describe two other cases. The British Safety Council discovered two years ago that the highly efficient accident prevention advisory unit of the Health and Safety Executive had produced a confidential report on the safety of the London Underground system: it was never published. If the recommendations of that document had been implemented, there seems little doubt that a major disaster would have been averted. As it was, one management witness at the recent inquiry into the King's Cross disaster said that

"the APAU Report had not been discussed at any board meeting."

I shall not dwell on the conclusion reached by the distinguished chairman of the King's Cross inquiry that management was at fault. This is not the occasion to go into detail; however, I will say that the chairman said that cost-cutting came first and safety warnings not even second. If the report had been published, or even leaked, one can say that lives would have been saved.

Some older Members will remember the long battle that I waged for well over a decade against official blindness to the potential and actual dangers to my Canvey Island constituents. For years they were exposed to industrial hazards arising not only from an excessive concentration of liquefied gas, chemical and oil storage, but from management's careless handling at installations listed as major hazards. As a result there were numerous public inquiries and three health and safety reports.

Today, circumstances are very different, thanks to the public campaigns that my constituents and I waged together, and, one must concede, to the efforts of the Health and Safety Executive. Yet I still recall an electrical engineer, employed at one of the installations, who came to tell me at my clinic one Saturday morning that serious risks were being taken with the safety of liquefied gas storage which posed a serious threat to residents beyond the perimeter fence. The risks arose from a defective alarm system fitted to a number of above-ground tanks containing huge quantities of liquefied gas. Half a mile away was a population of about 35,000. Any escape of liquefied gas would have led inevitably to the formation of a gas cloud and, with the prevailing winds blowing over the residential area—as they would in the Thames estuary—and where there are thousands of adventitious sources of ignition, would almost certainly have experienced one of the greatest disasters of all time.

My informant was hounded by his employers for his public-spiritedness and felt unable to attend a public inquiry at which what he had to say would have been devastating. I can scarcely blame him for that.

Eventually, the matter was brought out in public and the necessary remedial measures were taken by the Health and Safety Executive. Disclosure of confidential information in a case of such slackness in safety mangement should have been regarded as a public duty from the start. It was not.

Mr. Whitney: Would my right hon. Friend agree that it was the broad scope of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, which ranges from national security to the industrial problems to which he referred, that caused the problem? Narrowing the scope of the section so that it would affect only those within the "ring fence"—to use the jargon of this debate—would mean that those industrial problems would be debated and judged in a court of law. Does that not dispel my right hon. Friend's concern?

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend has opened up the subject more widely. Since the passing of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, managements at all industrial plants, especially those listed as high hazards, have had a responsibility not only to their employees but to the population living beyond the perimeter fence. I am talking of a period when that Act was in force. The asbestos example that I described occurred before that Act came into force.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): It is easy for the right hon. Gentleman to answer his hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney). If the hon. Member for Wycombe is correct, there should not be the slightest difficulty about the Government accepting new clause 8.

Sir Bernard Braine: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. I shall make a plea to that effect at the end of my remarks, and I am hopeful about its outcome.

I must issue a warning. If the Government resist the new clause, I must say, with all the force at my command, that they will be asserting that even if cases of malpractice or negligence occurred seriously undermining public health and safety, it would be an offence to reveal them. That runs counter——

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury) *rose*——

Sir Bernard Braine: Let me finish my point.

At best that runs counter to common sense and at worst is plain wicked. The basis of our parliamentary system is that Ministers are answerable in this place for the powers that they exercise.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow made an apposite remark about parliamentary questions. He said that if hon. Members possessed certain information, their questions could often be effective, but how often do we find that questions are deflected because an hon. Member has slipped up with his information, or it is not complete, or there are other factors to be considered? We know how the system works. Yet Ministers must know that they are answerable to the House for the safety and health of the population.

In my judgment, there can be no justification for anyone to remain silent in circumstances in which he believes, and the information shows plainly, that there is an imminent and serious threat to public health and safety. I hope that I have persuaded my right hon. Friend of the logic and good sense of the new clause.

Mr. Dalyell: The right hon. Gentleman referred to parliamentary questions. I do not want to grind a personal axe, but there is a general point to be made—that, given the nature of parliamentary questions, particularly prime ministerial questions, Ministers can simply choose not to answer direct questions and can say something that just puts the shutters down. I intervene because that is relevant to information that comes from the general category of deep throats. Naturally, one must be careful unless one has that information on an attributable rather than an unattributable basis from a man who is careful with civil servants' careers. That is part of the reason for the amendment that we are discussing.

Sir Bernard Braine: I do not disagree with what the hon. Gentleman says. If we are questioned in our constituencies about what influence we can bring to bear on Ministers, we say that we can ask them questions and require them to give answers. However, in the present circumstances we get no answers with regard to highly confidential matters. I am going further and saying that, where public health and safety are concerned, Ministers of whatever Government have a duty to be frank and open. If they had been frank and open in case after case that I could cite, tragedy could have been averted.

Mr. Raison: I am trying to follow my right hon. Friend's argument. With regard to the cases to which refers, which might be covered by clauses 3 and 5, the Bill states specifically that the disclosure must be damaging. Surely, far from being damaging, the disclosures to which he refers would be beneficial; it would therefore be possible for disclosure to be made.

Sir Bernard Braine: Perhaps my right hon. Friend will make that case in greater detail later, as I do not wish to detain the Committee any longer. I believe that I have made my point and I hope that the reasonableness of my case will have persuaded my right hon. Friend to look afresh at the matter. If he can give me an undertaking that he will do so and consider ways and means of accepting the logic and good sense of the new clause, I shall not seek to divide the House.

Mr. Gorst: I am worried that my right hon. Friend might have been persuaded by the intervention of our right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). Surely he has been ill-advised by our right hon. Friend in that matter. If a balance of harm is done to the public interest and to the Government of the day, my guess is that the Government interest will win and the public interest will lose. It is therefore important to insert the words "public interest", not just the word "harm", in the Bill. There would be two categories of harm, but only the Government harm would be considered. My right hon. Friend should press his new clause and not simply rely on the words in the Bill.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am not relying on anything, certainly not on the Bill. I had thought that I had made that absolutely clear. At this stage, I am not even relying on my right hon. Friend. I am relying on the sheer good sense and logic of what I have been saying, which is supported by every safety organisation in the country, and which I guarantee will be supported 100 per cent. by all my constituents and probably by other hon. Members' constituents.

Numerous examples can be given of cases in which failure to disclose information has subsequently led to people losing their lives or suffering ill-health, and that is something—as the greatest man who has ever sat in this House said—up with which I will not put. I am being utterly reasonable here. I want my right hon. Friend to say explicitly that he grasps the point and will do something about it. However, if I fail to obtain a clear assurance which satisfies me, my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) and all hon. Members, we shall press the new clause to a Division.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hattersley: I wish to speak principally in support of new clause 1 which is grouped with amendment No. 91 and provides an opportunity for the Committee to insert into the Bill a formal and explicit public interest defence.

However, before I do so, I wish to say something to the Home Secretary about the speech of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). In giving many powerful examples, the right hon. Gentleman probably gave two or three examples of the need to speak out and make public certain information, which would be allowed under the Bill. As I know the Home Secretary's techniques, I should tell him that the House will regard his response as inadequate——

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The right hon. Gentleman has not heard it yet.

Mr. Hattersley: —if he picks simply on those examples in the right hon. Gentleman's speech that are not covered by his proposals. I see from the Home Secretary's smile that that is exactly what he had in mind. Opposition Members know that one case will certainly be covered by some of the examples given by the right hon. Gentleman; that is the general case in favour of a public interest defence. We hope that the Home Secretary will turn his mind to that general case, which encompasses what he will claim to be safeguards in the Bill and which, in some particulars, would meet his right hon. Friend's point, but would not do so in others.

The new clause would make it possible for a defendant prosecuted under the legislation to argue that the disclosure which was the basis of the charge was justified in the public interest. It would be possible to argue that a

[Mr. Hattersley]

disclosure, although unauthorised by Government, was positively desirable in the national interest. If the new clause is incorporated in the Bill, the Government will forfeit their right to be the sole arbiter of where, in these matters, the public interest lies.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point asked a rhetorical question—whether the words "public interest" appear in the Bill. They do not, but it is the Home Secretary's habit to argue from time to time that something which amounts to an observance of and a respect for the national interest appears in the Bill and makes the new clause and amendment No. 91 unnecessary. The Home Office press release of 11 November suggested that a public interest defence already appears in the Bill. If the Home Secretary seeks to justify that press release, he will no doubt do so in the way that I shall describe, having asserted that the suggestion that public interest is recognised, let alone acknowledged, is simply untrue. We established in our debate last week that, with regard to clause 1, the prosecution is not required to demonstrate anything except the fact of disclosure.

The rest of the Bill is certainly less absolute, but it does not contain the protections that were suggested, at least by implication, in the intervention of the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) when he interrupted his right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point. In lieu of a public interest defence, as the Home Secretary will describe it, the Bill includes what are described as "specific tests of harm." But if they are examined, as they must be, in comparison with a proper public interest defence, they are seen to be nothing like an adequate substitute, particularly since, looking at them closely, we realise—and we must put the point even before we debate the so-called tests of harm later in our consideration—that the so-called tests of harm are not precise, are not objective and therefore are not reasonable.

I offer two examples to justify the claim that the tests of harm cannot compensate for the absence of a public interest defence. If a disclosure prejudices the capabilities of the armed forces in part or in whole, or is likely to do so, an offence is committed. The width of that definition makes it virtually worthless as a protection for anyone who reveals anything about the armed forces, and makes it wholly different in kind from a public interest defence. It covers all that the armed forces are doing, anywhere and at any time.

Obviously—this is the sort of example that defenders of this as an alternative to a public interest defence will bring forward—neither Labour nor Conservative Members who oppose the Bill would attempt to justify revealing, say, the battle plans of the British Army of the Rhine, thus impairing the armed forces' ability to defend this country.

Consider another example. Let us assume that a civil servant discovers corruption at an ordnance depot and that the scandal is suppressed by authority. The revelation of that scandal might for a week or two prevent that depot from operating with its normal day-to-day smoothness, and because of that would prejudice the operations of the Army in that small particular.

Harm will in consequence be done. A prosecution can in consequence follow, and on the evidence of the Bill, since harm was done, the prosecution would succeed. But surely on balance it would be in the public interest for the revelation to be made—although since there is no public interest clause in the Bill, that revelation would be illegal.

Mr. Heffer: If the Rhine battle plans were purely defensive, in line with NATO policy, I would agree with my right hon. Friend's comments. But if the plans were not purely defensive and a small group of people in the Army got control of the Army and decided to extend into a positive shooting war without anybody else's agreement, would my right hon. Friend not think it right that that should be revealed to the nation?

Mr. Hattersley: While I do not want to divide the opposition to the Bill, were a public interest defence included in it and were someone to reveal the battle plans of BAOR, offensive or defensive, and were I to sit on the jury which tested the propriety of that, I would come down on the side of it not being in the public interest that those plans should be revealed. That is a point on which my right hon. Friend and I may disagree, but let us concentrate for the sake of this argument on those areas where we are in unanimity about the desirabilitiy of allowing to be made public that information which can be made public without damage, by any criterion, to the national interest.

Mr. Whitney: In considering the right hon. Gentleman's example, it is important to get as near to reality as possible and away from hypothesis. There is a workshop or ordnance depot where corruption has been discovered. Is he seriously suggesting that he believes it possible that, if the discoverer of that information so persisted right the way up through the chain of command of the Army and Civil Service, to the permanent head of the Ministry of Defence and on to the head of the Civil Service, the whole of that web would participate in covering up the corruption?

Mr. Hattersley: I have noticed from the repeated interventions in debates by the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney)—no doubt the product of his years flitting from the Army to the Civil Service and on to Government—his extraordinary deferences to authority. He always believes that the next man up will do the right thing. That in my experience, and I suspect his, is not how life turns out in practice.

We must consider in discussing the Bill—for it is protecting the public interest—those occasions when the next man up does not or might not do the right thing. The Bill as drafted says that when the next man up does not do the right thing, it becomes a criminal offence to say so. I hope that the hon. Member for Wycombe will try to concentrate on that concept rather than reiterate his pathetic belief that authority is always right.

Mr. Whitney: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will understand—I appreciate the limitations he may have in comprehending this—that we are not talking about incompetence. He was talking about corruption and was inviting the Committee to suggest that the whole of the structure that he posited would condone corruption. I think I see him sniggering. I do not subscribe to that view of the Civil Service or of the armed services of this country.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to that grand old traditional view of life and society and will no doubt vote that way when the Committee divides on this issue.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): An example that springs to mind quickly of somebody who would suffer badly under the Bill is Jack Kane, who made allegations relating to corruption and the leakage of secret information from a GCHQ establishment in Hong Kong. He pursued that case, and as far as I can tell—having followed the case as best I can, bearing in mind that there is an injunction on it—there have not been any criminal convictions, except that Jack Kane has had to seek employment as a milkman.

Mr. Hattersley: I understand—the hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong—that if Mr. Kane had, in the circumstances he described, revealed what he regarded as corruption and the attitude of authority, under the Bill as drafted he would be prosecuted and convicted. So I repeat that the width of the definitions and the limitation of the harm test mean that they are in no way an appropriate alternative to the public interest defence.

I will give a second example. The Home Secretary will no doubt say that when we talk about information regarding international matters that can or cannot be revealed, the limitation on revelations and prosecutions for unauthorised revelations will concern only matters which jeopardise the interests of the United Kingdom abroad.

The idea that that might form the basis of a defence and provide some sort of protection was dealt with by the BBC, which wryly said that that definition could not be used as useful guide to journalists. It will, no doubt, be used as a useful weapon for politicians who wish to determine what journalists write and say, but that is different from a public interest defence.

There have been—no doubt we shall hear about this again from the Home Secretary—arguments as to whether a public interest defence could reasonably become a feature of English law. On the evidence, it is already in some respects a feature of English law. There is no doubt that the aquittal of Mr. Clive Ponting amounted to the jury's judgment that he acted in the public interest by revealing the truth, when the Government wanted to deceive the British people.

I was not sure whether the quotation given by the hon. Member for Wycombe was intended to incriminate my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) or incriminate Mr. Ponting. The question is not whether we like or admire Mr. Ponting or whether he is the sort of man with whom we would want to be stationed in China. The question is whether the principle that underlined his prosecution and the removal of the principle on which he was acquitted is a principle that we wish to uphold in the Committee today.

Not only the Ponting case gives one reason to believe that, at least to some degree, there is an element of public interest defence. The judgments of the Law Lords in "Spycatcher" made it clear that at any rate some of their conclusions were based on an assessment of where the public interest lay. Lord Keith of Kinkel, having referred to the public interest implications of the Crossman diaries as a precedent, turned to the proposed injunctions against *The Guardian* and *The Observer* and said:

"I am of the opinion that the reports and comments proposed. . .would not be harmful to the public interest."

Lord Brightman judged that the articles—I quote again exactly from the judgment—

"were not in fact damaging to the public interest and are not therefore a proper foundation for any case by the Crown against the newspapers."

5.30 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Surely one other case that comes to mind is that of Cathy Massiter, who, as I think my right hon. Friend would agree, is a woman of the utmost integrity. She performed a public service by disclosing what went on in the security services—the abuses that seemed to be connected with the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) when he was Secretary of State for Defence. Surely that lady, who was not prosecuted—and rightly so, of course—would have absolutely no defence under clause 1.

Mr. Hattersley: If there had been a prosecution in that case, if I had been on the jury, and if the public interest defence had been invoked, I would have wished to declare Miss Massiter wholly innocent, in that she was acting in the public interest. But whether the Home Secretary accepts my hon. Friend's judgment, and mine, that in a number of matters affecting security the public interest criterion is already partly present, he has to accept that it exists in other English laws as they now stand. Under section 4(1) of the Obscene Publications Act, conviction is conditional on the public interest being served, for it is possible for a defendant to argue that publication is "justified as being in the public good".

The significant—I almost said "sinister", but it would be too open, too overt, to admit that it is sinister—damaging and dangerous thing about this Bill is that if it is passed in its present form it will extinguish many of the elements of the public interest defence that now exist. That fact alone—the present elements are to be distinguished—disqualifies it from being described, as the Home Secretary so often chooses to describe it, as a great liberalising measure.

I repeat—for it is worth repeating—that in this particular the Bill removes a defence which, at least in part, was available under, I think, part of section 2 of the 1911 Act, and which was successfully employed by Mr. Clive Ponting.

Mr. Hurd: Oh.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary says, "Oh." I want to develop the point of the Ponting case and the Ponting judgment. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) that this is only illustrative, that it is not simply about Mr. Ponting, although what happened to Mr. Ponting demonstrates what the law now says and how the law will soon be changed—in my view, for the worse.

If this Bill becomes law, it will not be possible, as it was possible for Mr. Ponting, to argue that, while the rule of confidentiality had certainly been broken, the public interest was served. Nor will it be possible for a defendant to argue that, while some marginal harm might have been done to the national interest, the good that disclosure did more than outweighed the damage.

The present Act—the 1911 Act—is explicit. My hon. Friend quoted it, but it is worth quoting again.

That Act says that it is no offence to make a disclosure to someone

"to whom it is in the interests of the state"

the informant's

"duty to communicate the material."

The Home Secretary always says that that provision was not intended to be interpreted as the Ponting jury chose to

[Mr. Hattersley]

interpret it, but, with great respect to the Home Secretary, I must say that in this matter his opinion is of no consequence whatsoever.

The fact is that the section was so interpreted, and there are two views we can take of that interpretation. The first is that it was a point that was so good in law that at least the Government were not able to appeal against it. The second is that, if the area of law is at least grey, as the Home Secretary suggests, a British jury's wisdom and instinct for justice and common sense led it to choose to make a public interest defence relevant to that case. Either way, the Home Secretary is overturning and reversing processes that are better than those that he chooses to put in their place.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Is not the fascinating thing the fact that the Government did not take that case to appeal, because they were afraid of the judgment? If an appeal had upheld the jury's judgment, this legislation would really have been impossible to produce, so the Government decided to change the law so as to prevent that defence from ever being used again.

Mr. Hattersley: I agree entirely. I believe that, at the time, there was an upsurge of the opinion that telling the truth in order to contradict the misinformation that is spread by the Government is not something for which a man ought to be penalised and sent to prison. The upsurge of feeling was such that the Government could not have maintained their case successfully in any court.

The result is that there is a period of cooling off in the hope that that feeling of outrage will subside, and then the Government bring in a Bill which, in this particular, is far more repressive than that which it is intended to replace.

The fact is that, whatever the Home Secretary may say about the present law, the jurors in Mr. Ponting's trial, balancing Mr. Ponting's unauthorised revelation of the truth against the Government's official dissemination of inaccuracies, judged that, among the persons to whom, in the words of the Bill, it was in the interests of the state for the truth to be revealed were the citizens of the state, the people themselves—that it was in the interests of the state for the people to know what was happening.

The public interest defence is essentially based on that contention—the contention that it is sometimes in the interest of the state as a whole for the people to be told the truth when the Government want to suppress the truth. That is a principle that ought to be respected in every democracy, but if this Bill goes through unamended by any of the group of amendments and new clauses that we now debate, a defence based upon that essential canon of democracy will be wholly obliterated.

I know that I encourage some hon. Members opposite to support the Bill when I say that, under the present proposals, Mr. Clive Ponting, who was acquitted under the 1911 Act, would be convicted, but I want to repeat that, whatever else that fact proves, it certainly demonstrates that the Home Secretary's contention that this Bill is in almost every particular more liberal than the one it seeks to replace does not stand up to a moment's examination.

Before I seek to justify the concept of the public interest, I want to make clear the limited nature of the new clause that we now propose. Its wording is so intended that it does not provide a defence for civil servants who, acting out of political prejudice, personal resentment, pique, or spite, reveal what should be kept secret. The public interest defence will be possible only in the limited circumstances that the clause specifies—where the man or woman charged with the offence is able to demonstrate that he or she had reasonable cause to believe that the facts revealed indicated the existence of crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect in the performance of official duty, or other misconduct.

Because it is so limited, what the Committee has to decide, when we come to vote tonight, is whether a public servant who believes that one of those situations exists —crime, fraud, the abuse of authority, neglect or misconduct—should be sent to prison for attempting to end the abuse by making the abuse public, even if he or she has attempted to find redress under the internal mechanisms and found that, under those mechanisms, redress is impossible.

Under the Bill, unless it is amended, in the sort of circumstances that I have described, the wrongdoer may well escape, while the public servant who revealed the wrongdoing is automatically prosecuted, convicted and sent to prison.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): I have been listening carefully to what the right hon. Gentleman has had to say. Will the test that juries will have to apply under his amendment be subjective or objective?

Mr. Hattersley: It will be a test according to the criteria I have just described—namely, that the man or woman had reasonable cause to believe that the conditions that I have outlined were operating. Of course, that means that there may be occasions when the jury says that the man thought that a misdemeanour was being perpetrated or that the woman believed that misconduct was taking place, but that that was an unreasonable conclusion for the man or woman to come to, that it was not based on sufficient evidence. In that case, the man or woman would be convicted rather than acquitted.

There may be some, therefore, who will feel that this is an over-exacting test of the public interest, but we have tried to put it in minimal terms in order that anyone who has the slightest instinct and feeling for the proper public interest of this country will feel able to vote for the new clause.

I hope that some hon. Members will feel able to vote for the amendment, because the implication in this amendment and in the new clause carries an idea which is essential to democracy in this country. Without a public interest clause in the Bill, what is harmful to the national interest is determined by the Government. They become the arbiters of the national good and, at least in their own minds, synonymous with the national good and the public interest. There are occasions in any democracy when on an objective, unbiased judgment, a Government act against the national interest. To allow the Government to decide what is in the national interest allows the Government to act lawfully, but tyrannically.

Lord Hailsham constantly warned us about the dangers of Britain becoming an elective dictatorship, before he joined one by becoming a member of the Cabinet in 1979. Lord Hailsham and the Secretary of State must understand that to announce, as the Bill announces, that the Government will decide within the vaguest of

parameters what may or may not be published, without the benefit of a public interest defence, is a perfect example of elective dictatorship in operation. The Government claim to act for the state, of the state and to be the state and they extinguish one of the people's basic rights, the right to know the things which can be published without causing damage to the community as a whole.

We argue that the absence of a public interest defence means that information will be suppressed which, were it made public, would be to the benefit of society as a whole. Not only ought that information to be available, but it would benefit society through its availability.

Reasonable men and women will agree that, when the interests, and particularly the security, of our society are threatened, it is right and necessary to proscribe and prohibit the publication of official information. However, the public interest defence is, by definition, about information which, if published, certainly does not damage the national interest and may be to its benefit.

The public interest defence also insists that a court of law—a jury—should decide where the public interest lies. The Government are incapable of understanding that they cannot be the arbiters in those matters. That is true—I repeat this because it is worth repeating—because the Government are not the whole state and should not believe that they are or act as if they are. It is also true because, very often, information is suppressed which need not be suppressed and is kept in secret by the Government, not to keep it from unfriendly powers, but to keep it from the people of this country.

The crucial test of an Official Secrets Bill is whether it adequately distinguishes between information that it is necessary to keep secret in the national interest, and information that is either capable of publication or which it would be positively in the national interest to disclose. In the absence of a public interest defence, this Bill fails that test.

The Bill provides—not absolutely, but far more widely than is acceptable in a democracy—the right of the Government to decide what people may know and what they may be told. Throughout the lifetime of this Government, we have seen that their obsession with secrecy is not so much about protecting information necessary for our security, but suppressing information which is embarrassing to the Government. Time after time, information well known to other Governments, friendly and unfriendly, and freely available in other countries has been proscribed or pursued through the courts. Without a public interest defence, the Bill allows the Government to suppress information which the people of this country have the right to know. That is why I will happily vote for the amendment.

Mr. Hurd: I thought that it might be helpful to the Committee if I intervened at this early stage. If it is convenient to the Committee, I will gladly speak again if necessary. I thought that it might be sensible to discuss the amendments from the Government's point of view in the wider compass of the Bill and with regard to our general approach to protecting the national interest.

I agree with all right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken that the question whether there should be some form of over-arching public interest exemption from the offences in the Bill goes to the heart of the measure. In my mind, it raises the question whether the criminal law can have any effective role in relation to official secrets. I want to consider what has been said and to consider the amendments, not in detail at this stage, but to see how they fit into the Bill's structure and the approach that we have tried to adopt to deal with section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

5.45 pm

Once again, I do not recognise the portrait of the Bill that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) painted. I do not expect at this stage to persuade all members of the Committee, but I am sure that hon. Members are open to argument about these matters and to our request that they consider exactly what the Bill states.

As the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook anticipated, I disagree with the argument that there is already, partially, some kind of over-arching public interest defence in the existing criminal law. A number of defendants have tried to claim that there is a limited form of such a defence, but the right hon. Gentleman knows that he cannot cite cases in which the courts have accepted that argument. Certainly, juries have acquitted in some cases—and a feature that is common to the existing law and to the Bill is that, at the end of the day, juries must decide and they do not give reasons for their decisions. Nevertheless, it is a flimsy argument to erect a great construction on the basis of individual cases.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: I want to make progress as I have a connected point to make, but I will give way later.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook quoted the Obscene Publications Act 1959. I was surprised that he did that as I thought that all hon. Members, lawyers and non-lawyers, would agree that that Act is thoroughly unsatisfactory.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): It is criminal law.

Mr. Hurd: We have had difficulty from time to time in deciding how to change the Obscene Publications Act 1959, but I cannot think that the isolated example that the right hon. Gentleman gave is a good example to cite in this context.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary and I may argue about whether it is a good example, but I hope that we shall not argue about whether it is an example. The right hon. Gentleman contends that the public interest defence does not exist in criminal law. I have given an example in which it exists and I do not understand how he can continue to claim that it does not exist in that area.

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry, but it does not exist in the official secrets legislation. That is my point. The right hon. Gentleman cannot sustain his flimsy construction in that area. He has found, quite accurately, an example where it exists in another piece of the criminal law—that is perfectly true—but the force of his argument is spoilt by the fact that everyone considers his example to be a thoroughly unsatisfactory statute.

Mr. Aitken: How can my right hon. Friend possibly argue that section 2(1)(a) of the Official Secrets Act 1911 does not exist and has not been used as a form of public interest defence? Not only has it almost certainly been used

[Mr. Aitken]

as an argument by those who have not been prosecuted, such as the civil servants who briefed Sir Winston Churchill before the war, but it has been used in specific cases. I naturally remember the case in which I was involved. In that a great deal of the Old Bailey's time was taken up with submissions, which were accepted, to the effect that the words in section 2

"in the interests of the state"

formed the basis upon which a jury could acquit. So there is clearly a public interest defence and it just does not add up for the Home Scretary to deny its existence.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend and I have had this exchange before. I can only repeat my previous answer. As I said a moment ago, defendants have tried to construct that defence, but it has never been accepted by the courts.

Mr. Archer: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I stand by this.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not the custom of the House that in Committee right hon. and hon Members, whatever their status or experience, give way to reasonable interventions, particularly from those Members who have served the Crown on matters relating to their speeches and to the law?

Mr. Hurd: I have already given way several times. I am perfectly prepared to give way to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). Then, with the permission of the Committee, I should like to continue what I consider is a connected argument, but I shall give way again before I sit down.

Mr. Archer: Will the right hon. Gentleman explain how the argument for the defence in the Ponting case—that the disclosure was to a person to whom it was in the public interest to disclose it—could be advanced in a prosecution under the Bill?

Mr. Hurd: I am not saying that. I am making the point that neither the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, nor the right hon. and learned Gentleman, nor my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) has been able to show where the courts have established a public interest defence under the existing law. The argument with which my hon. Friend concluded is that there have been acquittals—a fact that I acknowledged five minutes ago. Juries do not give reasons—and the one thing common to the Bill and the existing Act is that ultimately the jury takes a decision without giving reasons.

I hold to the view that it is perfectly reasonable to debate the proposition that we should provide a public interest defence. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook spent most of his speech on that subject. However, it is not possible to argue, as the amendments do, that we should retain something which exists in the present law under criminal legislation.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the mover of the amendment, may I ask you whether at this stage, when there is a clash of opinion with QCs and others taking very different views, it would be reasonable to ask for the presence of the Attorney-General or the Solicitor-General to clear up these matters?

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): They should have been here.

Mr. Dalyell: My right hon. Friend says that they should have been here. I do not wish to be offensive to the Home Secretary, but as the mover of the amendment and a layman I think we are entitled to have a Law Officer present.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that I do not have the authority to do what he asks. It might make sense for the Secretary of State to be allowed to reply to the debate so far. In Committee there is no requirement for any hon. or right hon. Member to seek the approval of the Committee to speak on a second occasion.

Mr. Hurd: We are covering ground that we have covered before. I want to get to the heart of the matter. Regardless of whether there has been a public interest defence, on which I disagree with some right hon. and hon. Members and I think that I am right, we now reach the question whether there should be one in the future.

I hope that the Committee will agree that there is no need to create a public interest defence where there can be no prosecution. I listened with very great care to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, who has since had to leave the Chamber. As he said, under the 1911 Act there could be a prosecution if there was any unauthorised disclosure of official documents on matters such as public health or aircraft safety. My right hon. Friend gave examples from the factories inspectorate, the Department of Transport and from his own continuous and eloquent efforts to protect his constituency from certain environmental evils. I am not so familiar with those cases as he is, and I do not know what reasons officials or official organisations had for withholding information on those various occasions, but having listened carefully I can assure my right hon. Friend that if the Bill is passed those officials will not be able to say to him what they said on those occasions—that they could not give him the information because it was against the criminal law.

Mr. Hattersley: I realise that the Home Secretary is dealing with the speech of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) at some length, so I wish to ask him a question that relates to the part of the right hon. Gentleman's speech regarding safety, the possible outbreak of disease, damage or contagion. Would the Bill catch the Windscale cover-up of 1957 when the Cabinet took a conscious decision not to allow people to know the damage that was caused by the leak at Windscale?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know the background to the Windscale case or whether it conceivably could have come under any of the tests of harm in the Bill. However, I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend's examples and I cannot think that they would. Indeed, my right hon. Friend's speech drew from the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook the first acknowledgment in many hours of debate that the Bill, as compared with the Act, contains important safeguards. That was a very important and interesting admission. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point that it is not common sense that, whatever the arguments about the merits of particular disclosures, they should not be conducted on the basis of the criminal law. There may be wrinkles that I have not grasped, but I cannot see how his examples could

be within the scope of the present Bill, although they certainly came within the scope of section 2 of the Act. His speech was a measure of the substantial changes between the existing Act and the Bill which have been acknowledged for the first time by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I shall not contend the instances that my right hon. Friend recalls. However, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) gave other instances such as information originating from foreign Governments which might affect matters such as salmonella, poison or health risks, and information on the safety of aircraft engines. Those matters will still be covered by the criminal law with a very trivial defence barrier.

Mr. Hurd: I will not swap epithets with my hon. Friend—he knows better than that. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point dealt with that point, but it was not the main thrust of his argument. He said that he had been led to believe that it was possible that issues which might otherwise have been removed from the criminal law under the Bill, although they exist in the Act, might be retained by the protection which the Bill gives to confidential information obtained from other countries or international organisations. It has been argued that it would be an offence to disclose any EC draft directive or any confidential document on any subject. I understand why that misunderstanding may have occurred to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and the safety organisations that he cited.

It is perfectly true that that would have been the case under the White Paper. One of the criticisms made in the House when we debated the White Paper was that it went far too wide. Sir Leon Brittan made that point at the time, and we listened to that criticism. Therefore, the position is different in the Bill. Under the Bill, no one who discloses such information—information derived from a confidential draft EC document on salmonella, for example—can be convicted under the Bill unless his disclosure jeopardises our interests abroad, seriously obstructs the promotion or protection of those interests, or endangers the safety of our citizens abroad, or is likely to have any of those effects and he had good reason to know that it would. That is quite a different kettle of fish and it would be a considerable contortion to imagine circumstances in which the Bill as opposed to the White Paper could meet any of the cases that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point put forward.

I entirely understand why my right hon. Friend put his case so strongly. If we had rested on the White Paper, although the great majority of the cases that he mentioned would be outside the Bill and would be examples of information liberated from the criminal law under the Bill, there might have been an argument about information derived from abroad. However, the change between the White Paper and the Bill deals with that point and I hope that on reflection my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) will regard it as reasonable.

Mr. Buchan: The other aspect in clause 2 for which, again, there is an absolute case relates to defence. I live near the Clyde estuary, surrounded by nuclear weapons, nuclear bases and nuclear installations. If there were a leakage, damage would be done to the health of the local community, but disclosure could damage our prestige, standing or relationship with allies. Would the interest of the state mean the interest of the people in the area and therefore mean that the information should be disclosed, as was argued in regard to Windscale, or would the Bill prevent that?

Mr. Hurd: The present law provides no protection. We shall discuss later the specific defences to which the hon. Gentleman refers and hon. Members will decide whether they are sufficiently specific, too wide or too narrow.

6 pm

Mr. Gorst: My right hon. Friend is exchanging the disincentive in section 2 of the Act for a further disincentive. No one will feel free to make a disclosure with the sword of Damocles described as "harm" hanging over his head. The prosecution will have to prove that harm took place—and unless the person is proved to have been justified in making a disclosure in the public interest he will go down for years.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has not grasped the narrow nature of the Bill. In the type of case with which my hon. Friend sympathetically helped my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), there is no question of having to prove harm. Prosecutions cannot be brought on matters relating to public health, so there is no need for a public interest defence.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: What about clause 3(3)?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has returned to the international issue.

Mr. Shepherd: My right hon. Friend asserted that under this category information coming from the EEC would not harm the interests of the United Kingdom abroad, and he emphasised "abroad". One of the issues raised in previous debates was that the test of damaging the interests of the United Kingdom abroad is satisfied by the fact that a document is confidential. That is what has caused the difficulty and why we say that it is within the scope of the criminal law.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is wrong——

Mr. Shepherd: It should be amended.

Mr. Hurd: The test of damage to our interests abroad applies whether or not the prosecution is based on the contents of disclosure.

Mr. Shepherd: What is the test?

Mr. Hurd: The test is of jeopardising our interests abroad. It is extremely unlikely that the examples given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, the Father of the House, will be brought within the scope of the Bill.

I shall deal with the parts of the Bill that are relevant to the arguments deployed by hon. Members about public health and safety. With two exceptions, it will be for the jury to decide whether a disclosure meets the terms of the harm described in the Bill. Most people expected ministerial certificates to be introduced. All issues are to be decided by the jury because it is not the Government but the jury who are the arbiters on the basis of the legislation that Parliament passes. That is why I do not recognise the portrait painted by the right hon. Member for

[Mr. Hurd]

Sparkbrook. I understand why those who, like the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, thought in terms of ministerial certificates—throughout their working lives their propositions were based on ministerial certificates—have difficulty in accepting the full implications of the change that we are proposing.

Two sets of circumstances are defined in the Bill in which we believe that the disclosure of official information without authority must inevitably cause harm. The Committee has already discussed the first—clause 1—in which a former member of the security and intelligence services or a notified person breaks the secrecy by which the services must operate. The second relates to the disclosure of information about or arising from the use of the special investigation powers under statutory warrant from the Secretary of State. In all the other more substantial information covered by the Bill, including information relating to security and intelligence that is not covered by the special offence that I have just mentioned, it will be for the jury to decide whether a disclosure caused or was likely to cause the form of serious harm to the public that the Bill specifies. I cannot accept that any of the harm tests are minor, trivial or unimportant. Hon. Members will want to discuss the wording of the relevant test, but no criticism of it can be a sufficient argument for setting aside or overlaying those tests with a different public interest defence.

In different ways, the amendments propose an over-arching, public interest defence. It is worth mentioning that there will be no over-arching, public interest prosecution. We have deliberately narrowed the scope of possible prosecution by providing, in most cases, the specific harm test. At present, the prosecution need not prove harm, but in future it will not be possible for it to argue against a civil servant who reveals a defence secret that the disclosure damaged some vague public interest. The prosecution will have to show that the defendant knowingly caused or was likely to cause the harm defined by Parliament in the Bill.

In the light of the relevant harm tests, the defendant is free to introduce such evidence as he chooses to support his argument that the disclosure was not likely to cause that harm or that he had no reasonable cause to know that it would. He can argue that the prosecution's application of the test of harm is mistaken and that on a proper application of the test his disclosure was not likely, for example, to damage the capability of the armed forces. He may say, on the contrary, that as he was revealing deficiencies his disclosure could not possibly have harmed the forces and could only have enhanced their capability. Within the test of harm, the jury will have to decide that argument.

The Bill does not allow the defendant to argue that, although his disclosure has caused the specified harm, and he knew that it would, the court should weigh that against some other consideration. Critics argue that that is a restriction on the defence, but it is also—I am sure that this will be acknowledged by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West, who is a former Solicitor-General—a restriction on the prosecution in the sense that I have just described. The argument will be whether the test of harm has been satisfied.

Mr. Hattersley: The Home Secretary seems to be arguing that there is a concept of balance of harm. He said that it would be open to argument that, although some harm had been done, even more good had been done—*[Interruption.]* The Home Secretary said or implied that, and I am asking for clarification. Am I right in thinking that, if a little harm is done, it is sufficient to convict even though the defence may argue that much benefit has been derived at the same time?

Mr. Hurd: If the prosecution were based on the test specified for defence information, the defence would simply argue that harm had not been done or that capability had not been damaged. The defence would adduce arguments to prove its case, but neither the prosecution nor the defence could import vague arguments derived from other matters. I hope that that is clear.

Mr. Buchan: If the harm relates to the defence of the country, but the good relates to the interests of people in the area, it would be sufficient to prove that harm had been done—not to make a balance—for the person to be found guilty.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is right, and on that he will base his criticisms of the Bill. In the case that he mentioned, the test would be whether harm had been done to the defence forces.

It has been suggested—this is the crux of the matter—that there are circumstances in which it is necessary for a person seriously to harm this country's vital interests to reveal a matter of public concern. The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) sought to argue that from his example. We do not accept that argument because we believe that there are ample ways of pursuing grievances, worries and anxieties up to the highest level if one is a public servant, although the methods vary according to the Department concerned.

The case that has caused the greatest discussion in Committee is the absolute offence. I remind the House that about 15 months ago a staff counsellor was appointed to whom members and former members of the intelligence and security services could take anxieties about their work. He has unrestricted access to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and to myself to report on any matter raised with him.

Mr. Winnick: Let us consider again the case of Cathy Massiter. Had there been a staff counsellor then—I know that he was appointed afterwards—and she had not been satisfied that her complaint was being dealt with properly, what could she have done if what she saw as an abuse by the security services continued? Is he telling us that in those circumstances someone like that or anyone else in future should come to the conclusion that there is no overriding interest for the country above that of the Government of the day?

Mr. Hurd: There have been two recent changes since that case—I have deliberately not referred to past cases. I have just mentioned the first and the other is the procedure for warrants which took up considerable time during the debate on the Security Services Bill. The hon. Gentleman knows the position. One reform already introduced is that warrants must be authorised personally by the Secretary of State with the commissioner looking over his shoulder and, of course, people with grievances will have access to

the tribunal. We propose to extend that principle to any interference with property that the Security Service may undertake.

Mr. Richard Shepherd *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: So there have been two substantial changes in recent years and, between them, they provide a remedy for iniquity—to use the legal jargon for the point that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) made. The remedy that a member or a former member of the security or intelligence services should seek should be other than breaking the duty of confidentiality.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): My right hon. Friend has commended to us the enhancement of the internal Civil Service rectification procedures and has said that the internal situation in all Departments will be much improved. Does that not mean that he should have greater assurance and self-confidence and accept the strong arguments for the public interest defence? The senior civil servants to whom aggrieved civil servants take complaints about serious misdemeanour will know of the solemn and serious procedures and will know that, in the background, there is the possibility of the public interest defence being invoked if an unallowable disclosure takes place. On the other hand, the aggrieved civil servant who is anxious to get off his chest the fact that gross and improper misdemeanours and wrongdoings are occurring in his Department will know that the final, solemn and awesome step, which he does not want to entertain as a possibility, is that public interest defence which he knows that he has the right to invoke in the final analysis. Surely my right hon. Friend should have more confidence in the internal procedures and should see the merits and weight of having those two considerations proceeding jointly, rather than one cancelling out the other.

Mr. Hurd: I admire my hon. Friend's great ingenuity in making that point and I shall try to deal with it. I was trying to put the argument that, although it would have been possible, a long time ago, to argue that the people referred to in clause 1 had no remedy except to go to the press, that argument no longer exists. In dealing with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) one must look at the amendments, one of which he believes I should accept.

6.15 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I hope that my right hon. Friend saw the letter in *The Times* a week ago from Lord Croham, Sir Douglas Wass, Sir Patrick Nairne and others. They envisaged that internal procedures cannot always be relied upon and that, therefore, some other mechanism is needed. The burden of my right hon. Friend's argument is that internal procedures can be relied upon absolutely, which conflicts with the views of those who have administered the Civil Service for some years and who have some insight.

Mr. Hurd: The letter did not argue for my hon. Friend's proposition, but for further strengthening of internal procedures. The letter-writers were a little out of date because the procedures have been updated. There is now access to the head of the Civil Service and not just to the head of Department, but that is a minor change and we do not rest our case on that. The letter from those distinguished former public servants is an argument not for amendment, but for a further strengthening of internal remedies.

It is useful that our critics have tabled this group of amendments because we then have something to shoot at. Some of the amendments, such as amendment No. 91, would justify disclosure on grounds, such as the suspicion of misconduct, so wide that they would give the wrong message to public servants and could lead to a dangerous weakening of the public service.

Mr. Allason: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall just illustrate my point. New clause 1 and some of the other amendments seek to provide an absolute defence for anyone who can show reasonable cause to believe that the information he disclosed suggested the existence of misconduct, however minor. What is misconduct? Does it mean being slow in answering a letter or taking a few days off when one should not? We have had to face such criticisms. It is right to say that the amendments go wide. What is meant by

"neglect in the performance of official duty"?

That could cover comparatively minor matters. Amendment No. 91 provides that indication of such behaviour would be sufficient to prevent prosecution for an unauthorised disclosure, even if it caused great harm.

I shall now deal with the point raised by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. He implied that it would not matter if the plans of the British Army of the Rhine were revealed so long as one indicated the existence of neglect in the performance of public duty or other misconduct.

Mr. Allason: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to the end of my remarks.

Far from asserting the Government's role as an arbiter, which is the gravamen of the charge made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow and the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, the Bill, in comparison with section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911, is shifting the balance in favour of the individual, whether a civil servant or journalist, by withdrawing the criminal law wholly from the bulk of official information and providing that the specific harm test will not be laid down by Government but agreed by Parliament. For most of the remainder, the prosecution will have to pass the specific harm test, and the Bill provides that nobody can be convicted if he had no reason to know that his disclosure would be harmful and will leave the final decision to the jury without ministerial certificates.

The question is whether with all those changes we want to provide grounds—sometimes loosely defined—that would justify public disclosure of information that Parliament will have decided should be kept close. I am sure that we should not.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Home Secretary's early intervention in the debate has been helpful, because it has revealed the poverty of the Government's case at an early stage. We shall not now have to indulge in speculation about how the Government will deploy their defence, but can instead examine the argument that the Home Secretary has used to seek to deflect almost universal criticism of the Government's refusal to adopt a public interest defence. There was widespread support for the Government's attempt to amend section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, but by digging

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

in his heels against the public interest defence the Home Secretary has frittered away the goodwill that he undoubtedly enjoyed when he embarked on this task.

I shall speak specifically to new clause 5, which stands in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), but before I do so I should like to discuss amendments Nos. 81 and 16, in the name of the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). Their purpose is to restrict the scope of the offence relating to disclosures about security or intelligence to disclosures about the lawful activities of the security and intelligence services. If the amendments were carried, it would not be an offence to reveal information about the illegal activities of the service. That would deter such activities, as anyone contemplating illegal activity would know that he ran a greater risk of being publicly exposed. The Home Secretary did not refer to amendments Nos. 81 and 16, and perhaps he will do so later in the debate as they could be accepted without undermining the Government's objectives as he outlined them.

We went over a good deal of the ground in our debates last week, but there are one or two points that I should like to make for the first time. It should be recognised that there may be a particular benefit to society in the unauthorised disclosure of information, even if that causes damage, and such a case is not entirely hypothetical. The Government considered the issue back in 1979 following an adverse report by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the production of a report by the Civil Service Department called "Legal Entitlements and Administrative Practices". A committee was set up under the chairmanship of Lord Deedes with the advantage of the membership of Lord Croham and a number of other distinguished lawyers and administrators. That report proffered advice from the Lord Advocate's Department in Scotland:

"There would be fraudulent silence if an official had previously given information which he subsequently discovered to be incorrect and failed to communicate the true situation, if that failure would result in the person remaining ignorant of a right to claim."

The Director of Public Prosecutions reported that such silence could also amount to a conspiracy to defraud in English law. The Government's committee reported:

"In constitutional terms, the Minister is responsible for the actions of his Departmental staff, who act on his behalf and whose authority is delegated to them by him. This, however, does not absolve the individual civil servant from his obligation to act within the law in carrying out his duties. If he breaks the law he cannot seek to excuse himself in terms of the constitutional responsibility of his Minister."

It is widely understood that the Bill makes the civil servant's position even more difficult than that described in the Government's own document of 1979, and it is interesting to note that the original advice was given by the man who is now Lord Chancellor. The Bill would make the civil servant's position more difficult because it would force him to choose between making an unauthorised disclosure which could cause damage—factually demonstrable damage or conclusively deemed damage—and remaining a silent party to a criminal offence. In advancing the public interest defence, we seek to protect civil servants from that dilemma. That is part of the argument behind my new clause 5, which differs slightly from new clause 4, tabled by the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills, although I should be ready to support his new clause if the Minister preferred it to mine.

The form of defence that I advocate would require that a Crown servant should first have taken reasonable steps to comply with established procedures for making such disclosures to the appropriate authorities but that they should have had no effect. I acknowledge freely that that defence is more akin to that under the civil law of confidence in which the balancing of competing public interests is involved. The fact that this can be done had been shown conclusively by the Law Commissions. The Law Commission reported on this matter in October 1981 and the Scottish Law Commission in December 1984.

The more recent of the reports, the Scottish Law Commission report, stated the case straightforwardly:

"We have no doubt that the law should be prepared to recognise that use or disclosure of confidential information in the public interest may sometimes be permissible and justifiable. Unless this is clearly recognised, the law on breach of confidence could become a shield for those engaged in criminal or other antisocial activity."

I readily acknowledge that those remarks were made in the context of the amendment of the civil law. The conclusions of the English Law Commission were equally forceful, and its consideration of the common law supports the conclusion that I have described. If the court is capable of balancing public interest considerations in the civil law —as it has in a number of cases—I do not see why it cannot similarly balance public interest considerations in criminal law cases. I put it to the Home Secretary that, while his attempt to distingush may be historically interesting, it is not relevant to the argument.

Mr. Archer: Would not the hon. Gentleman go a step further than that? If it is unjustifiable to apply civil sanctions without making that balance, is it not even more unjustifiable to apply criminal sanctions without doing so?

Mr. Maclennan: I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

The Home Secretary has shown the weakness of the ground on which he stands by his uncertainty in dealing with the legal situation. He has tried to run the argument that there is no such thing as a public interest defence in the criminal law. That argument has been disproved and displaced, and he has heard examples of such a public interest defence. So he has modified his position to suggest that there is no public interest defence in the sphere of official secrets.

To abbreviate the debate, which no doubt will be a long one, I shall not rehearse at length arguments about the Ponting case. Clearly, in that case a public interest defence was successfully deployed by Clive Ponting and was a contributory factor in his acquittal. The Home Secretary is standing on very weak ground if he is arguing that the law of England on this matter was set out by Mr. Justice McCowan in his statement in that case, and if that is the only ground on which he rests his argument that there is no such defence in criminal law. He has not succeeded in persuading the House.

6.30 pm

The public importance of having a public interest defence cannot be overstated. The Bill is taking existing legal protection away from civil servants and the

possessors of official information who have good reason to be convinced that there is wrongdoing and that the public interest is served by disclosing this fact.

The Home Secretary has argued that the official channels of communication are sufficient. But although improved avenues from those that existed in the past can be used and relied on by a concerned civil servant, to have his concerns ventilated, higher up the service, very few of us, in the light of the "Spycatcher" case, will feel total confidence that the senior civil servants will necessarily take the view of the concerned official, and not the view of the Prime Minister, as she instructed Sir Robert Armstrong to take her case and point of view and contest it in the courts around the world. Few of us believe that in other cases the political view of the political head of department will not prevail against the view of an official who is perhaps at a much lower level that what will be done will be done properly in the public interest.

I do not believe that the law proposed by the Home Secretary is a good law, because it will not work. The sense of public and civic responsibility that imbues our Civil Service will override even the consideration of the possible criminal penalty that a civil servant may suffer as a result of revealing wrongdoing.

This is plainly a response to the "Spycatcher" case and, more directly, the Ponting case. It will fail in its objective, but it will not fail without great hardship and uncertainty and agonising. It will take away from patriotic civil servants who are seeking to put the interests of the nation before the corporate interest of the body in which the wrongdoing is done a legitimate protection that they ought to enjoy in the law of the land, and which they do enjoy in the civil law. There is no argument but that they will not enjoy it in future under the criminal law.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: It is always worth bearing in mind what the Bill does not deal with. It is not about section 1 offences of crime, espionage and treason. It is directing its attention to the generality of Government information in a number of specified areas that we think ought to be secured. The Government contend that that security should descend so low as to cover documents that are currently classified as confidential. We are looking to see whether the criminal law should be appropriate to that. The Government further contend that from as low a degree of secrecy as confidentiality they need to apply two years imprisonment and take in the whole grading of document classification in Whitehall.

The Government's proposition to the House in the Bill is that it is necessary to send a man or woman to prison even if he or she reveals crime or fraud or iniquity, without their having any defence or the Government's having to adduce any form of damage or harm. That is an outrageous and monstrous proposition. It is a proposition that tyrants hide behind. It is a proposition that should be rejected by the Commons of Britain. There is no way that this has ever been an acceptable contention outside the Napoleonic wars or the darkest days of the Stuart monarchy. It is something which we fought to overturn. A Conservative Government come to the House and contend that it is necessary to send someone to prison for up to two years, without his having a defence, even if the information relates only in Civil Service classification terms to "confidential". I think that that proposition is one we should want to reject.

We have failed to look at the classification, or succeed in encouraging the Government to be more generous in their view of who should be covered by the absolute offence category. We learnt last Wednesday, in an extraordinary debate, that the Home Secretary, or the Government of the day, can nominate anyone to be covered by the category of absolute offences. That, therefore, means that, should it be in the mind of a Home Secretary who is neither as benign as my right hon. Friend nor a Conservative—it is for a generation later that we are legislating—he could nominate the editors of newspapers if necessary, if in his opinion the measure was so loosely drawn that the Government would not accept that it required refinement to meet what they had been saying offstage.

We have often had this sort of difficulty when pressing new clauses and amendments. There have been press releases making assertions about the damage test. I have heard my right hon. Friend talking about serious damage. The Government write to newspaper editors and say, "We will prosecute only where serious damage is involved." They write to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and talk about serious damage. On Second Reading my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary talked about serious damage being incurred before the Government would invoke the criminal law.

Yet look at the Bill. It does not mention "serious damage" anywhere. It trips down a degree of classification, and says "damage"—in order to meet some of the contentions that a man or woman should go to prison, possibly without a defence or the opportunity to mount one, or that the Government have only to establish the lowest level of damage: confidentiality. In some cases the evidence is so stacked against the defence as to make it difficult for them to overcome the prosecution's contention on a narrow front, such as that the Home Secretary did not take up or respond to clause 3(3) in which it is deemed that damage is effective because a document is confidential. Almost every document I have ever heard about in Whitehall, or between Governments, is marked "confidential", so that trivialises the damage test that the Government have to meet.

That is why we say, having been unable so far to coax the Government into generosity and a realisation that they are the representatives of the British people, through the House of Commons, and not the state aggrandising itself at the expense of the House of Commons, that there ought to be some amelioration of the Bill, and some brake on the Attorney-General raising a prosecution on the basis of something which is trivial, but could possibly succeed in a criminal prosecution in the courts. That is why my hon. Friends, and right hon. and hon. Gentlemen in other parts of the House, have expressed a desire for some form of public interest defence. As I said, it is not as caricatured in the White Paper. It is set out fairly specifically in new clause 4.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Supposing a jury is trying a person charged under new clause 1, which has been tabled by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and they conclude that the disclosure was not in the public interest but that, when it was made, the man being prosecuted genuinely believed that it was in the public interest for it to be disclosed. Would that ensure that he would be acquitted?

Mr. Shepherd: Until now I had assumed that my hon. Friend was a distinguished lawyer. I understood that that was his profession. It is for the jury to determine guilt. If they find that the man has committed an offence, no matter of his calling out that it is in the public interest, they will determine his freedom. The jury will decide. In those circumstances, the jury will find him guilty.

The point about a public interest defence is that there is a mechanism for the individual to say that, in the public interest, the revelation of crime or fraud overcomes the fact that he released a confidential document and therefore overcomes the fact that the prosecution merely has to prove that he has done some trivial damage. The jury can weigh in their consideration whether his revelation of fraud or of crime was in the public interest. That does not stop the disciplinary procedures of the Civil Service coming into play. It does not mean that the man will not be dismissed, but it means that he can at least say, "I have acted in an honourable way."

I read in *The Daily Telegraph* of last Monday

"Whistleblower law to break Left's grip".

It seems that the Government, through their new Local Government and Housing Bill—I have no doubt that if I or *The Daily Telegraph* have got it wrong we will be corrected—will seek to appoint what *The Daily Telegraph*, I am sure, wrongly characterises as whistle blowers

"empowered to speak out against illegal or unfair actions as part of a campaign to raise standards of local government".

What they think is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander. I do not know whether many people would say that crime or abuse goes on—*The Daily Telegraph* refers to illegal or unfair actions—in local government. We want it revealed. I should think that all hon. Members will march through the Lobbies in support of that contention.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The hon. Gentleman is quite right. There has been the most disgraceful leak. The Local Government and Housing Bill was published yesterday. The name "whistle blower" does not appear in the Bill. He is generally called a monitoring officer. In all other details, the hon. Gentleman is right. The Bill refers to contravention by the authority, by any committee, and so on, of the rule of law or of any code of practice, maladministration or injustice. It is on all fours with the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I stand in defence of my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell). Is there not a major flaw in new clauses 1 and 4? It is what the person making the disclosure actually believes—*[Interruption.]* No. New clause 4 states that he must have

"reasonable cause to believe that it indicated the existence of crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect in the performance of official duty or other misconduct."

If a person did it in good faith and had reasonable cause at the time, but it is wrong, the jury will acquit him, despite the harm and damage to the national interest. The new clause relates to what a person believes, not to what the situation actually is.

Mr. Shepherd: The person must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the jury that he has met the criterion—that he has proved that the disclosure or retention of the information, document or other article was in the public interest. As the Home Secretary has been arguing, it is then that the jury comes into play. It is for the jury to decide.

6.45 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): On a more fundamental point, the defence must have a reasonable cause to believe. A defendant cannot say, "I believe that." If it is idiotic, the jury will not allow it. It is reasonable cause, which, to some extent, is an objective test.

Mr. Shepherd: At the end of the day, that is the test. We may be sending people to prison. We are prepared to enact this legislation for people revealing crime or fraud. The Government say that that proposition is quite right.

At one stage last Wednesday hon. Members learnt of the wig maker of a former head of the Civil Service in 1918. The Minister said that it was an operational matter. It was quite right too, he told hon. Members, that that individual should be prosecuted. We want to ensure that that sort of nonsense is not contained in the Bill or could be interpreted by a court of law. Therefore, we are trying to provide the means by which a jury and, therefore, the House can be alerted to facts about our national life.

Mr. Hind: I should like my hon. Friend to consider this point again. He is discussing the public interest. The public interest is exposed in his argument, but he must look at the test that follows, which would show a jury what the public interest is. His test of defining the public interest is what the person making the disclosure reasonably believes is a criminal offence or whatever. If that is erroneous, much damage can be done to the public interest.

Mr. Shepherd: My hon. Friend misunderstands. If a person's judgment is erroneous, he is guilty and will be sentenced accordingly. He will be found guilty by the jury. It is a jury point.

Mr. Hurd: The jury decide.

Mr. Shepherd: I join my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in asserting the value of the jury in determining the matter. It is in that spirit that one moves this contention.

There is the argument in the Duncan Sandys case which is well remembered by hon. Members who have long memories or are better read. That case occurred before the war, and the Committee of Privileges examined it. It made the point that—it follows what the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said—to go to a Member of Parliament is the right of every citizen in this country. One cannot express the freedoms and rights of the people without having access to a Member of Parliament. That is essential. With this legislation we do not provide the right to those covered by absolute offences to go to a Member of Parliament. We discover that we do not allow them to go to a solicitor. As I understood the debate last Wednesday, a man in the designated category or in the security services could not even seek advice from his solicitor because he would be imparting information that was contrary to the Act. It is an absolute offence—any information to any person. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will amend the Bill to take account of that fact.

Mr. Gorst: Even though a man may not be able to go to a solicitor before he has committed an offence, he presumably will do so after he has committed it.

Mr. Shepherd I certainly hope so. My right hon. Friend and the Minister of State are always happy to remind us to read carefully what they have said, as one does. As I understood the debate, that is exactly what was said. It is an offence to reveal any information to anyone, to which the Minister added, "and quite right too".

Mr. Archer: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Minister of State appeared to say that someone would have committed an offence but that there might be some difficulty in proving it?

Mr. Shepherd: I do not want to detain the Committee, because many hon. Members want to speak. We are asking why it is right to send someone to prison without a defence for revealing a crime or fraud. Is it not necessary in our democratic country to know when crime or fraud are committed in Government? We cannot have accountable Government unless we know what they do. If we erect barriers so that we deny the citizen and the House the ability to know that information, we may never be able to judge appropriately and properly whether the Government are ethical, appropriate and working in the interests of this country.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): It is always a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd). He brings passion to issues which over the years have become pedantic. They come as much alive as the constitutional debates of the 18th century. As an older Member of Parliament, I simply say to him that it raised my heart to hear him talk as he did about the role of a Member of Parliament. Listening to the debate last evening, I wondered whether the role of a Member of Parliament had degenerated into knockabout farce to replace the music halls. The way the hon. Gentleman dealt with a difficult issue lifted my heart.

I am glad to speak after the Home Secretary, because what he said added force to my view that, on this subject and many others, it is difficult to get the legislation right. Earlier in the debate, there was a reference to four former permanent secretaries who wrote a letter to *The Times* about procedures within the Civil Service. The Home Secretary explained that they were arguing that the Government's proposals did not go far enough. I simply use that example to show that the Government think the Bill goes far enough, but that those former civil servants said that earlier changes did not go far enough.

As to my experience of the Official Secrets Act 1911, I want to refer to the Franks report. I was a member of the Franks committee which so many called in aid when arguing in favour of reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. I do not believe that any of us who were members of the committee at that time thought that we had got everything absolutely right. I certainly did not when, years later, I made a statement in the House and issued a White Paper.

I accept that no Bill was forthcoming in my day. We see what is happening now, when the Government have a majority of over 100. With a majority of minus three, the Leader of the House would have put me in my place if I had proposed legislation. We had not reached the point of dealing with certain issues, not the least of them being the question of the public interest.

When I was on the Franks committee, the Prime Minister of the day gave evidence to it. In a different context, I accept, he said that there should be a new defence that publication was in the public interest. Therefore, I could not forget that, when I eventually introduced legislation, it had to include something about the public interest, however difficult it was.

When the Home Secretary talked about the public interest, he confused me. It is not very difficult to do so in this respect, because I am not a lawyer. I do not wish to be disrespectful to the Home Secretary, but I wonder whether there should be a Law Officer on the Treasury Front Bench. Lawyers, distinguished or otherwise, have been arguing about what the Bill means. If they are doing that here, before the legislation receives Royal Assent, heaven knows what will happen when they get into court.

I ask the Home Secretary to read paragraph 37 of the Franks report, headed:

"Control over prosecutions by the Attorney-General and the Lord Advocate."

The paragraph says:

"This decision is taken by the Attorney in his capacity as the Crown's senior Law Officer, responsible for the enforcement of the criminal law, not in his capacity as a Minister in the Government of the day. In deciding whether to prosecute he applies his judgment to the balance of public interest involved."

At the moment, this public interest aspect is firmly in the legislation. I remember the then Attorney-General approaching me from what seemed a long distance across the room. He wanted to consult me, although making it absolutely clear that the decision was his, about whether it would be in the public interest to prosecute. The Attorney made his own decision on that case, although he consulted others—including, I think, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). We were not consulted together, but the Attorney was taking a view of the public interest.

The names of the Law Officers are in the Bill. Therefore, will not the Law Officer still take a public interest view before deciding whether to prosecute?

Mr. Archer: So that we may keep our minds clear about this, does my right hon. Friend agree that the question whether it is in the public interest to prosecute is a very different question from whether it was in the public interest to make the original disclosure?

Mr. Rees: I understand that. That is why I am raising the matter. It is with diffidence that I return to the Home Secretary the point that if there is a Law Officer public interest concept in the legislation at all, there ought to be a public interest concept somewhere in the original decision.

The public interest is a vital concern in the legislation. I realise that we have been debating the amendment for a long time; we will probably still be debating it at 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock, because it is a most important issue. I hope that we do not hear talk of a closure. This is an important issue, which the House has to tease out and discuss. It is not enough to argue that the amendments in the names of my right hon. and hon. Friends and other hon. Members have been drafted wrongly. The Government should have a chance to come back to us on Report. I hope that there will be a Report stage. Government Whips may come in

[Mr. Rees]

and say, "My God, are they still at it? What time are we going to take?" But this is not the Water Bill or another privatisation Bill, important though they are.

As the hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills made clear, the public interest in a democratic society is an important issue. Whatever Government are in power, society has every right to protect discussion and papers. We are arging about the balance of public interest, which changes from decade to decade. When I came to the House, less knowledgeable on these matters than I am now, I found hon. Members on both sides of the House who were concerned about such issues although they did not loom large in the so-called quality newspapers. The whole issue has developed since because of cases. I do not believe that we have heard the end of cases. People being what they are, there will be other cases. Therefore, it is important that we examine carefully the matter of the public interest.

I base my remarks on what the Franks committee reported nearly 17 years ago. What came out then is relevant to what we are talking about now. The recommendations which we made were based on words written with all the majesty of a proconsul—like Lord Franks, with all his experience in Government service, in wartime, in the university world and as an ambassador eventually in Washington. He was a most remarkable man. Paragraph 116 of the report said:

"National security is widely accepted as the prime justification for employing criminal sanctions to protect official information."

That is where I start. Later we said:

"In our view, the appropriate test on this basis, in relation to national security,"—

we are talking about national security—

"is that unauthorised disclosure would cause serious injury to the nation."

I do not want to quote much more, but reading it afresh brings it all back to me. In paragraph 118, we said:

"This means that the criminal law would not apply to information the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause some injury to the interests of the nation, but short of serious injury."

Many people would be surprised on reading this to see that it is "serious injury" and not "some serious injury".

However difficult it is to draw it up, that should be the basis of any legislation. How does one make one's judgment on that? I admit that there were difficulties in that respect. I would like to relate the matter to current issues. We said that criminal proceedings would be taken only against issues—documents, I suppose, in detail—where the mark on the paper was "secret" and above: that is, "secret" and "top secret". I admit, too, that the difficulties were that classifications of Government documents are for administrative purposes. As hon. Members will know, they are the vehicle by which civil servants know how to protect the contents.

There are far more classified documents in the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office and the Northern Ireland Office than there are in the Department of Education and Science. How are they protected? With "secret", for example at the top of the document, the private office knows how to handle them. Whether the classification told the truth about the nature of the document went out of the window long ago. Classifications were an administrative device. We felt that there would have to be a clean out in Government service, that the classifications would have to be changed, and that documents within the Government service would have to be looked at from time to time to see whether the nomenclature at the top bore any sense.

At home I have some documents which were issued when I was Northern Ireland Secretary with, I believe the nomenclature "confidential". They were reports about what the press had been saying about the situation in Northern Ireland at a difficult time. Given the feelings in the Northern Ireland community at that time, if that document had gone out of the Northern Ireland Office, heaven only knows what conspiratorial thoughts would have arisen. The classification, therefore, was perfectly proper, but about six months later one could have used those documents to wrap up fish and chips down the Shankill. The classification was right at the time but wrong a few months later.

What do the classifications mean? I shall relate it to the Government's current problem. Let us start at the lowest classification:

"RESTRICTED. Undesirable in the interest of the nation."

It says underneath that:

"The 'interests of the nation' are interpreted broadly."

The classifications continue:

"CONFIDENTIAL. Prejudicial to the interests of the nation."

"SECRET. Serious injury to the interests of the nation."

That is why we picked up the words "serious injury". Then:

"TOP SECRET. Exceptionally grave damage to the nation."

I picked that matter up because the other night, on "Newsnight", there was last week's leaked document about the White Paper on the reform of the National Health Service. At the top of that document, it said "Secret". In other words, if that document had got out, what it was saying was that it would cause serious injury to the nation. I do not believe that for one moment. What should have been at the top of that document was: "Keep this quiet until the Minister has revealed it in the House of Commons next Tuesday," and it should have been treated in that way. But secret? The classification was being used for administrative purposes. If the Government ever find out who leaked it—although today's *Evening Standard* puts a different interpretation on who did leak it—the treatment of the man or woman concerned would be determined under the Franks recommendations, because of the word "secret" at the top of the documents.

Whatever the Government say, it is important, when deciding these new clauses and amendments, to hold on to "serious injury" as properly defined. We shall have to put our minds to that definition, because there is a public interest.

Something I did not realise until I was on the Franks committee—not many other people knew it either—was that under the legislation, there had grown up conventions —let alone what was in the Act—that whether people had given information away was determined by whether they were authorised. We then discovered that some senior civil servants and Ministers were self-authorising. That meant that if a civil servant on the clerical grade leaked a "secret" document he was in real trouble. Of course, we are not talking about spies and section 1 of the Act. If a senior civil

servant leaked a secret document or talked about it over lunch, he would not be in trouble. Similarly, if the Minister did it, it would be self-authorised.

The question of authorisation is extremely important in the light of the story in the *Evening Standard*, which I do not believe. I wanted to use the article to authorise this story. It says:

"No. 10 dilemma . . . will they tell Maggie?
Affair of the Cabinet grass."

It says that it was leaked by a Cabinet Minister, but I do not believe that for one moment.

Mr. Buchan: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baldry: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rees: Let me get my other line in.

I have never known of a Cabinet Minister coming back to the House after a Cabinet meeting and talking to the press about what had happened that morning. I believe that that is a fiction, from the imagination of thriller writers. However, if it happened, it would be self-authorisation. That raises an important issue. It is an issue which goes back to the Duncan Sandys case, which was a much more important issue. If this were to be a Cabinet Minister, I bet that he or she would not be brought to court. I believe that the Attorney-General would say that it was not in the public interest to bring the matter before the court.

Mr. Baldry: Of course, the only reason that that has come out in the *Evening Standard* is that the press has to give some explanation of why the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) performed so appallingly at the Dispatch Box on the National Health Service White Paper. The only justification the press could come up with was that it was in some way a leak from the Government Benches to throw him off his stride. The truth is that it was undoubtedly an unauthorised leak and, even given four days studying it, the hon. Gentleman still muffed it at the Dispatch Box.

Mr. Rees: As I wake up in the morning, the first thought that comes into my mind is not that I am not at the Dispatch Box. The hon. Member should take into account the fact that one is not eaten up with great ambition to do that, but it just happens. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that this did not happen, and the media have made it up, he must forgive me. However, if we suppose that it happened, what would the Attorney-General do if it came to his notice, via MI5, which apparently has a role in all this business, including business connected with hon. Members on the Floor of Parliament?

Mr. Buchan: My hon. Friend is being too moderate about this matter. He says that he does not believe this story, but surely the question is whether he has reasonable cause to believe it.

Mr. Rees: What we are showing this evening—I hope the Government will allow us to have such a discussion on the other clauses—is that it is important to have a discussion on this clause. In the second major group of amendments, we should find something called the "public interest".

I went into the court during the Ponting case because the documentation was not "secret" and above. It was the Government who said that it was not a matter of national security. The man should have been dealt with in other ways and not brought before the court. If it had been a matter of national security, there is no way I would have become involved, but it was not a matter of national security. It is national security and serious injury that should be the linchpin. The rest should be dealt with in the Government service by the sort of procedures that major firms have and all of us have in any organisation to which we belong.

I ask the Government to give us a chance. It will come up again in the Lords, when very eminent lawyers will be talking about it. There is a case, in a free society, on that balance, as Attorneys-General have had to take into account over the years in a very non-political way. Is it in the public interest? That was the question Sam Silkin put to me on one issue. Whether his decision was right or wrong is not a matter for me. There ought to be a matter of public interest in this legislation.

Sir Ian Gilmour: I speak in support of new clause 4 in the names of my hon. Friends the Members for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and other right hon. and hon. Members who, as we know, recommend the public interest defence.

Having heard my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and having read his speeches on the subject, I am still not clear why he does not accept new clause 4. I should have thought that the Government would be in favour of people acting in the public interest, instead of which they are strongly against it. I should like to look at the reasons that have been given. I do not want to enter into the argument between my right hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) about whether there is a public interest defence under the present law. That does not seem to me to be altogether relevant. But I was surprised by what my right hon. Friend said about the Obscene Publications Act 1959. Although certainly that Act is defective, he would surely concede that it is a great deal better than what went before, so it does not become him to denigrate the defence in that. I think that he was perhaps not speaking under full advisement.

The point is that whether there is or is not a public interest defence under the present law is not relevant now because in the spheres with which we are dealing the law is becoming stricter. We all concede that that part of the Bill is excellent. The Home Secretary has cleared away the criminal law from great areas, but by implication he agreed that the law is becoming stricter in certain spheres when he said originally that the present law was too weak and too wide. Clearly he is now making it narrower and stricter, so the absence of a public sector defence now—if there is such an absence—is not relevant to what should happen in the future.

New clause 4, which is much the same as new clause 1 but meets the point to which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary referred, ensures that a civil servant or public employee would have to go through the established procedures and that those procedures would have to fail before the public sector defence would operate. Then, as we know, the defence would be existence of crime. I cannot believe that the Government would like crime by a public servant not to be revealed—or would they? I should have thought that the Home Secretary, especially in view of his other responsibilities, would have been quite strongly

[Sir Ian Gilmour]

against crime. The same surely applies to fraud, abuse of authority and negligence. I thought that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary rather trivialised the matter when he referred to not answering a letter. Clearly that would not apply. The idea that the jury would listen to such a defence is clearly wrong.

New clause 4 is fairly strictly drawn. It would not enable a defendant to say that he did not believe in the Vietnam war, the Falklands war or the Nigerian civil war. It is not a question of disagreeing with public policy. He would have to have found some crime or misdemeanour —something very wrong in the public service—that he was revealing. I cannot see why my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is not prepared to go along with that. He said earlier that he was against such a defence because it should be no part of the narrowly targeted scheme that is proposed, but it is difficult to think of this law as a narrowly targeted scheme. It is more like a blunderbuss than a precision instrument, so that argument seems irrelevant. My right hon. Friend said that confusion would be brought into the law where the Government are seeking to achieve certainty, but there is seldom any certainty in the law when my learned colleagues on either side of the House, or indeed in the courts, get at it. For anybody who has listened to the debate either today or last Wednesday to think that there will be any great certainty in this law is surely an illusion.

7.15 pm

What my right hon. Friend must have meant was that it was better to have a certain conviction than a defence which might get someone off. I cannot see what other meaning that sentence could have. Surely, on reflection, my right hon. Friend would agree that it is much better to have a slightly uncertain law which will prevent injustice than a certain law which will lead to people being wrongly and unjustly convicted. That is what the argument is about.

I suppose that my right hon. Friend will say that this is a matter that should be left to the jury. We all have great faith in the jury and are very pleased that the Government are going to allow it to continue and are not going to throw it open to any form of market or put it up for auction —that it will remain as a palladium of our liberties and so forth. It is very important that the jury should continue, but the jury is not infallible, as the Home Office has every reason to know.

I certainly have every reason to know it because one of my constituents was wrongly convicted, had his life ruined as a result and was then let out by one of my right hon. Friend's predecessors. That illustrates how wrong a jury can be. It was not in any way the fault of the judge, who summed up in favour of the defendent. It was the fault of the jury—and, of course, the fault of the Court of Appeal which said that the jury could not be wrong and must be infallible. The second time round they got it right, but by that time my constituent's life had been more or less ruined.

It is not enough, therefore, to leave it to the jury. The law must be clarified so that the jury knows what it is allowed to consider and what it is not allowed to consider. It is surely far better for the jury and for the law that people who are acting correctly in the public interest should not be sent to prison for doing something which most people would think was right.

As the arguments that we have heard against the public interest defence have been extremely threadbare, I hope that the Government will think again.

Mr. Foot: May I first make one or two personal references. I do not mean them in any offensive way, but I want to refer to one or two hon. Members who have spoken earlier in the debate.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), the Father of the House, tabled a new clause and apparently received a favourable response from the Home Secretary, who indicated that the right hon. Gentleman had understood the Bill and the new openings that would arise if it went through. Therefore, the dangers that the right hon. Gentleman described when in the past he played such a distinguished part in bringing these matters to the House did not arise. It was all covered by the Bill.

I certainly hope that that is the case. The right hon. Gentleman raised important matters. I say that particularly because he referred to the work of the Health and Safety Executive, which I was responsible for establishing. It was largely because of the right hon. Gentleman's activities that we ensured that the HSE covered various areas. So I hope very much that it is true that, as the Home Secretary seemed to suggest, the public safety problem is now removed, and that it will be confirmed by including the new clause, or the equivalent of its words if the Government do not think that those words will do the job satisfactorily, in the Bill. I believe that that would assist and I hope that everyone would be satisfied.

It was very important that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) reminded us at the beginning of the debate of the Ponting case, which was one of the origins of the Bill—it was not the sole one, but obviously it had an effect on the Government's thinking. It is right that the House of Commons and the Government should draw the proper conclusions from that case. The Government have drawn the wrong one, but that is another matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow was right to raise the matter afresh because it is part of the proper prelude to this debate. I emphasise that, because I disagree with my hon. Friend about the Belgrano affair. I have never thought that he was right about that because that ship might quite easily have returned to the battle line. However, that does not alter the fact—indeed, it reinforces it—that it was wrong that false information should have been given to Ministers at the Ministry of Defence. It was also wrong that Ministers were prepared to purvey some of that false information to the House.

It is pretty wretched of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) not to turn up for these debates —I think he is still a Member of the House. He should have come to speak, particularly on matters in which he had a close interest at the time. Many hon. Members will remember the speech that the right hon. Gentleman made at the time of the Ponting affair. He should come to the House to say whether he still holds the views that he tried to persuade the House to adopt at that time.

The Ponting case has affected this legislation and it is important that we should examine it carefully. The origin of the Bill is not, as the Home Secretary said, that the Government carried out a general examination of the way

that present legislation was working, examined the Franks report and came forward with a great liberal reform. That was not their motive for introducing the Bill—although they did examine the past.

Two cases inspired—if that is the proper term—the Government to introduce this legislation. I can clinch that claim by asking hon. Members to imagine how the Home Secretary persuaded the Prime Minister to give both her and her Cabinet's support to the Bill. Does anybody imagine that he went to her and said, "I propose to deal with the official secrets trouble that we have experienced over the past few years by introducing a great liberal reforming measure that will make it easier to deal generously with such cases"? The Home Secretary would hardly have persuaded her on the spot with such an appeal. The right hon. Gentleman did not say to the Prime Minister, "This is the way to establish your great liberal reputation and make your predecessor's Administration seem a reactionary one."

I picture it another way, with the Prime Minister asking the right hon. Gentleman, "Well, can you assure me that your change in the law will mean that we shall not have another Ponting or 'Spycatcher' case? Will it solve difficulties such as those two?" Whatever variations the Government permit in other parts of the Bill, and I hope that some will be made, solving such difficulties forms the linchpin of the Bill.

Central to the Bill—we discussed it last week, too—is the fact that the Government say that they will lay down for the first time an absolute principle of confidentiality, combined with a refusal to permit a public interest defence. The Government believe that those two factors will ensure that they have a new form of protection for official secrets, and that they will not have to suffer the humiliation of another Ponting or "Spycatcher" case. It is likely that the Home Secretary gave the Prime Minister assurances on both those matters.

It is also probable that Law Officers were invited in to discuss the matter. It is deplorable that those Law Officers are not present for this debate. I mean no disrespect to the Minister of State, who stood up to last week's blast and battering with great fortitude and allowed many other hon. Members to put their arguments. I do not class him with some of his colleagues of similar rank in other Departments—the parade of parliamentary popinjays—with whom this House has to put up. However, I say to the Minister and the Home Secretary that it is scandalous that the Bill should be carried through the House with no Law Officers present—particularly when, as I have said, it was the mistaken advice that they gave over the past two or three years that was largely responsible for the Government's difficulties.

In the Ponting case, the Law Officers' advice turned out to be wrong. The "Spycatcher" case was an even more glaring, persistent and expensive affair which continued month after month, with the Prime Minister and Home Office and Foreign Office officials asking the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General for their advice. Now, when we come to make a change in the Bill, we do not even have the chance to see whether the Law Officers agree with our interpretation of the Bill.

The Home Secretary has frequently attended the debates, but is not qualified to tell us the exact legal position. He has not answered the demands made by Opposition Members. It would have been much better if the Minister had arranged for the Attorney-General to wind up the debate on this central part of the Bill. We need to know whether it is time that no public interest defence existed before. The Home Secretary is wrong to say that, and the more he repeats it, the more he injures his case. He should understand that a public interest defence has been used effectively in the past in the cases of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and of Ponting and "Spycatcher".

When the "Spycatcher" case went to the Law Lords, they expressed a different view on the matter from that persistently taken over the previous two years by the Executive, as advised by its Law Officers. The reason for the Bill lies in all these past events. However, instead of drawing the proper conclusions from them and declaring that the law should be made more liberal, the Government have introduced a Bill that tightens the law and removes the public interest defence from some parts of it.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) first raised the Sandys affair to which I referred last week. The Minister of State rightly said that he did not know as much about it as I did. He spoke as if it were not a matter of major consequence, but it was. It was not only that it involved the Committee of Privileges, although that was an important element. The Duncan Sandys case was referred to the Committee of Privileges. That offered protection to a civil servant or a member of the defence services because it allowed him to approach a Member of Parliament. That was extremely important, but the matter was never brought to a conclusion.

The Government of the day were one of the most wretched in our history and would have pursued Churchill and those associated with him in the most bitter manner. At one stage, they almost tried to destroy him in his constituency. At that time, Churchill had to be careful about the way in which he defended himself because the Government would not have refrained from convicting him, Duncan Sandys and his associates of being guilty of betraying the nation.

7.30 pm

I remember the spirit of vengeance that sometimes prevailed in the Whips' Office of the Conservative Government at that time. They were very bitter times. Even then, Churchill said that the Government could not proceed with an official secrets Act of that kind. He said that there must be proper protection not only for a civil servant to be able to approach a Member of Parliament, but also for the patriotic citizens who said, "We shall tell Churchill and other people what are the real dangers."

That defence was operable at that time. The matter did not go to a court. There was a general consensus that, in the last resort, Churchill and his associates could not be pursued. That was an estimate of the element of public interest involved in the affair. A public interest defence was available to people approaching a Member of Parliament. There was a public interest defence in that critical issue even under the wretched Official Secrets Act 1911 which we all know must be abolished. Let no one deny that they were critical issues. They involved the life of the state and people had to make up their minds what they were going to do. Some brave people decided to defy what was apparently the Government's view at the time, and that view was as obtuse as this Government's approach to the Bill.

Mr. Hore-Belisha and Neville Chamberlain said that all right rested with them. They claimed to be the people who

[Mr. Foot]

knew and had to be obeyed. They were the Executive with the almighty power. Anyone who tried to trespass on that had to be dealt with by being driven out of public life. That is what would have happened if Churchill had gone down on the Duncan Sandys case. It would have been impossible for people to estimate the consequences for this country. Given that background, it is pitiable for the Government to say that they are dealing with the question properly when they come to the House and cannot answer the question whether the people who took the honourable course of telling Churchill at the time of the Duncan Sandys case and thus broke their oath had done right.

The Government should take away the Bill and introduce much better proposals to deal with the matter. New clause 1 covers the question of a public interest defence better than any of the other new clauses. However, if the Government proceed with the Bill without any legal advice, with nothing but their majority on which to rely and with scarcely any discussion or attempt to listen to anyone, it will destroy for ever the Home Secretary's liberal reputation. His reputation stands a good deal higher than that of most of his colleagues, but, if he rams the Bill through in the face of such opposition, he will live to regret it all his life. I plead with him to go back to the Cabinet and say, "We shall have a public interest clause in this Bill because the House of Commons demands it."

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Having had an opportunity to join in the debate on an earlier occasion, I hope that this will be a brief contribution. On that occasion, I congratulated my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on tackling this immensely difficult task. Today's debate, which has been serious and, in many ways, fascinating, has demonstrated both the problems involved and the skill with which the Home Secretary has attacked the problem.

The Bill is undoubtedly an improvement on what we discussed in the White Paper, but, at the same time, I do not believe that it is by any means absolutely right at present. I hope, therefore, that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary who, naturally, from time to time shows slight impatience with our difficulty in understanding some aspects of the Bill, will regain all his patience, put up with us and recognise that there is great force in most of the arguments that have been put forward in the debate so far.

My right hon. Friend appeared to make his contribution with an unaccustomed rush. I am not sure whether he was trying to hide what he was saying or whether he was trying to prevent us from realising what he was not saying. However, I hope that he will examine these points because they are of immense importance. He can claim that arrangements are now made for civil servants who are aware of evil in their work to go up the ladder and endeavour to put matters right. We must ask ourselves, as has already been asked, exactly how practical that is.

A civil servant who complains will be told, "I must refer this to my senior officer". The matter will go up the ladder until it reaches the permanent secretary. After a chat at the customary weekly lunch of permanent secretaries, the permanent secretary will then say, "I must tell the Minister". The Minister will say, "I didn't realise all this was going on, but for heaven's sake keep it quiet—tell the fellow that it's all being dealt with and for heaven's sake don't let the press know about it". At what stage does the civil servant take action? The Minister may say, "I must tell the Prime Minister," and the Prime Minister will say "For God's sake, think of that by-election—we must tell the fellow that we understand his anxiety but that it's really not justified."

What happens after that is crucial. I put it in a light-hearted way, but it is the crux of the matter. Does my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary believe that there is, or can be, a difference between the national interest and a Government's interest? That is the fundamental question. In my mind, there is no doubt about it because it is exactly the same with all constitutional philosophers throughout the ages. There is very often a difference between a national interest and the interest of a particular Government. When we are in opposition, we constantly point out in the House the great difference between the national interest and the interest of the Government then pursuing their policies. If we accept, therefore, that there is a difference between the national interest, described here as the public interest, and a Government's interest, we must find a way of safeguarding that difference. That is what this debate, the Bill and the Franks committee report are about. How can that difference be safeguarded?

The best suggestion that we have had so far—on the new clause tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine)—is that the public interest must be taken into account. I would describe as artificial the point that has been made by lawyers among my hon. Friends about proof of reasonable judgment that the public interest was taken into account by the offending person.

I would go further than the deputy Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who gave an example of corruption at an ordnance depot. He went so far as getting it put right. In my view, Parliament and the country have the right to know that the corruption existed and had been put right. I therefore go a stage further than the right hon. Gentleman, but I think that we agree. When evil has been committed and has been put right, it should be made known. If evil is committed, it should be brought to the notice of those who have to deal with it and if they do not deal with it it should be brought to the public notice. When it has been dealt with—and the action taken—the matter should be made public.

Mr. Dalyell: Would the right hon. Gentleman go along with the letter to *The Times* by Douglas Allen, Sir Patrick Nairne, Sir Frank Cooper and Sir Douglas Wass?

Mr. Heath: Yes, I would go along with that. Civil servants want more safeguards because they recognise the way in which civil servants are likely to react under the present system. One must be realistic about this.

I do not want to go over the matters which were raised by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) about how all this came about. The present Government have a problem about leakages—there can be no doubt about that—and they have sometimes sought to deal with them by prosecutions. Their problem arises from the fact that they have used their press office at No. 10 in a way which can be described as corrupt—in a way which went far beyond not only the achievements but even the aspirations of any previous Government. I am not asking the Home Secretary to nod his head in agreement with that, but he will know from his experience at No. 10

between 1970 and 1974 that what I have said is the case. If the lead is given in that way, others might be expected to follow it.

I have always had the greatest respect for the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), a former Home Secretary, though this evening he displayed extraordinary naivety when he expressed the view that it was impossible for any member of the present Cabinet to have left a Cabinet meeting and told the press and others about the contents of the National Health Service paper.

One of this Government's problems has been that, as differences inside the Cabinet have been so great—leading to the sacking or withdrawal of 22 members over the past few years—the tendency to talk has been irresistible. That has been followed by others at different departmental levels, and it is now part of the problem with which we have to deal.

I hope that the Home Secretary will accept the proposed new clause, or accept it in principle and say that it requires amendment. I do not understand how there can be any solid objection to the inclusion of public interest. It has been said time and again that there must not be any question of public interest, even though we have heard that it exists in, for example, the law on obscene publications.

The Home Secretary sounded what I thought was an ominous note when he said that the law on obscene publications was unsatisfactory. Does that mean that we are to have another prudish attack on the laws of this country, taking us back to the time when people had to go abroad to read what they wanted to read? Are we to have that from the present Home Secretary—*[Interruption.]* That is an interpretation of what my right hon. Friend said.

I see no reason why the public interest should not be embodied in the Bill. Speaking from experience, in the Leila Khaled case, the Attorney-General said that he had to take the public interest into account, and he did. Why cannot the public interest be taken into account in this legislation?

Dealing with health and safety, the Home Secretary said that it was most unlikely that a prosecution would be brought in certain cases. It is not enough to use the phrase "most unlikely" in this Committee. We have every right to say that we want to be absolutely sure, and we want it in a form that will enable us to be absolutely sure that the kind of action about which we have been speaking will not be taken.

When we last discussed this issue, I said that my test for all this was a simple question—under this measure, in this country, if it occurred, would we know about Irangate? That is still my test, though my question has not been answered. We would not have known anything about it. We would not have known about the evil policies, the hypocrisy, the corruption and the lies of President Reagan's regime. Is that justifiable in a modern democracy? Not for one moment.

Until I can be satisfied that this new legislation will deal not only with the problems about which hon. Members have been speaking but with the internal corruptions of Governments, I shall not be able to support it.

7.45 pm

Dr. Owen: The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) spoke with great conviction. The problem is that the Home Secretary has in many ways produced a great improvement on the present law. Unfortunately, the measure has the fatal weakness of lacking a public interest defence. If that were inserted, many of those who might have reservations about some aspects of the legislation would give it a broad welcome.

Can we manage to persuade the Home Secretary to amend the Bill in that way, or is our problem not the Home Secretary but the Prime Minister? I suspect the latter to be the case, and our real problem is how to persuade her. We have tried today and on previous occasions to invoke history. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) did that today with great effectiveness.

The events of the 1930s should concern hon. Members, particularly the way in which Winston Churchill was briefed. That was a major issue which cannot be ignored. I became worried when the Home Secretary was asked about the revelation that the Cabinet in 1955 deliberately decided not to reveal the leak from the Windscale plant. The right hon. Gentleman said that he knew nothing about it.

It was one of the most serious recent cases, and it showed how the Government, the Cabinet, thought that they were interpreting the national interest as their interest. When the Home Secretary studies those Cabinet papers he will probably conclude that they acted against the national and public interest.

That was the crucial point made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. We in Parliament will not accept that Cabinet, Government, national and public interest are at all times the same. We are well aware that there have been occasions, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad intentions, when democratic Governments, in this and other countries, have taken decisions against the national and public interest. The interests cannot be equated.

That is not just the view of hon. Members. It might be said that we are jealous of the Executive, that we are always on our guard, standing on our dignity and not ready to trust the Executive. We are speaking also of Law Lords, and in many distinguished judgments they have taken the same view. Consider, for example, Chandler *v.* DPP in 1964, when Lord Reid said:

> "Who, then, is to determine what is and what is not prejudicial to the interests of the state? The question more frequently arises as to what is or is not in the public interest. I do not subscribe to the view that the Government or a Minister must always, or even as a general rule, have the last word about that."

The Home Secretary will say that there is in the Bill, for the vast bulk of cases, the harm test. Because the harm test will go to a jury, they will reinterpret the right hon. Gentleman's law. When there is some other interest, the jury will try as hard as possible to inject some public interest, but will be advised by the judge not to take account of the public interest. I am not a lawyer, but I believe it will be difficult for counsel to argue the case for public interest because of what will be said.

I come to that group of people who will have no chance to argue in that way—people designated under the measure—those who work in the security and intelligence services or who come in touch with those services. These are people to whom I think we owe very special attention because they will have no defence—automatically, they will have committed a criminal offence.

Here again I should like to invoke a Law Lord. After all, the judgment of Lord Griffiths in the House of Lords

[Dr. Owen]

on the Attorney-General *v. The Observer* was extremely favourable to the Government. Lord Griffiths said that he thought that it was absolutely right that there should be a rule forbidding any member or ex-member of the service to publish any material relating to the service. He was on the Government's side. But he went on:

"theoretically, if a member of the service discovered that some iniquitous course of action was being pursued that was clearly detrimental to our national interest, and he was unable to persuade any senior members of his service or any member of the establishment, or the police, to do anything about it, then he should be relieved of his duty of confidence so that he could alert his fellow citizens to the impending danger".

He argued for a public interest defence.

We may dismiss the decisions of all these Law Lords, but we are going to hear more about them in another place, and there is a very real chance, in view of the extraordinary level of cross-party interest in, and concern about, this matter, that they will put this provision back into the Bill and thus improve it. That will be the real test of this House and—dare I say it?—also the real test of Conservative Members of Parliament. Are they just going to throw that as well?

I know that this is not a simple question, and I say to the Home Secretary that I understand the difficulties on the question of the security and intelligence services. The right hon. Gentleman referred to the ABC case, as it was called. He said that he had been consulted by the then Attorney-General. He said that I too had been consulted, and that is so. The Attorney-General always made it very clear that it was his decision but that he would come and ask us about what the effect would be if some of this information in a court case came into the public domain.

I do not think that I breach too many secrets when I say that initially I was against prosecution in the ABC case. However, everybody came in and persuaded me that it would be terrible not to prosecute—people in the services whom I respected said so—and I eventually relented. But one of my reasons for doing so was that I was given an absolute promise that the case would be heard in camera. However, what happened, if my memory does not serve me badly, was that they managed to argue that it should not be heard in camera.

This is one of the problems, and if the Home Secretary is listening to this debate and is prepared to reconsider this case, I should like to put a suggestion to him. In a case that involves somebody designated under this Act, who is going to be granted a public interest defence, I personally would accept that that case should automatically be heard in camera. There are very great difficulties in open court in deploying the full arguments as to why one believes that it is not in the public interest for information to be put out. It is a fair point that what appears very minor information can, cumulatively, be very revealing.

We are dealing here with a very small category of people. I am not arguing that all cases should be held in camera; I would argue that in a vast number of cases a public interest defence should be heard in open court. I am dealing simply with the small group of people designated in the Act who at the moment have no provision for appeal, no public interest defence, no rights at all—people who are subject to automatic criminal action. Such were the very people who gave Winston Churchill information all through the 1930s. All those would have been designated under this legislation. They would automatically have been adjudged to be taking criminal action if this had been the law of the land.

I believe that that would be a possibility for the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary has used the jury; he has gone away from ministerial designation. That, broadly, has been accepted. However, it would be possible to have a full court case, the jury making the decision, but to hold the proceedings in camera. Were that the case, some of the problems that arose in the ABC trial would be avoided.

It is very important that we get this law right. The paradox of this Government is that they talk about secrecy, yet we have had more actions and court cases than almost anywhere else. We have also had more revelations of real, genuine secrets than in any other period in our history. The paradox is that we know more about GCHQ and about the security and intelligence services, including some quite damaging information, because we have not had the right law—law that would have carried sufficient confidence. So it is important that we get it right.

The Home Secretary will say that he has made some changes, that we have welcomed, and I agree. Putting MI5 on a statutory basis was a sensible decision, and I supported the legislation, but the Home Secretary cannot carry all the House. On the question of public interest defence, he certainly is not carrying the House.

In the Green Paper that the Government produced, there was a certain element, in respect of public interest, suggesting that they were yet to be convinced. Some of us hoped that the Home Secretary was open-minded. My personal belief is that he is still somewhat open-minded about this. As I have said, a lot more will be heard about the matter in another place. My belief is that, if the public interest defence could be reintroduced in this Bill—the general one that we seek to put in the clause for the vast bulk of cases; possibly this suggestion that I am making about automatically hearing in camera cases involving security and intelligence and people who are designated under the Act—it would be not only a vast improvement but a confidence-building measure in this House and among a wider public, resulting in acceptance of some aspects of a Bill which does in fact, broaden information but is stricter in areas in which many of us accept that it ought to be stricter.

It is in that spirit that I hope the Home Secretary is listening. I hope he will let us know whether designation is or is not subject to judicial review. I hope the Minister of State will agree that he did say two different things.

Mr. John Patten: It is subject to judicial review.

Dr. Owen: I hope we will have it on the record that the Minister says that it is. We now know that at least that designation will be challenged, which is a comforting thought.

Mr. Hattersley: Did the Home Secretary say it?

Dr. Owen: I am prepared to take it from the Minister. *[Interruption.]* We have had two answers.

Mr. Buchan: Repeat the question.

Mr. Hattersley: Could the right hon. Gentleman also ask the Home Secretary exactly which clause in the Bill makes that more than a matter for his judgment and a legal necessity?

Dr. Owen: One thing that has certainly emerged from the earlier debate and from this debate is that we expect an amendment to come forward from the Government to make this clear beyond peradventure.

I am hoping also for a further amendment to be brought forth by the Government, possibly in another place, to deal with the public interest defence. It would do the reputation of the Home Secretary a great deal of good if he were to table such an amendment. What is much more important is that it would do the Government's reputation, and that of the Prime Minister, a great deal of good—and that is something they need at the moment. They would at least be showing that they are capable, occasionally, of listening.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) has rightly said that we should look to the lessons of history. This has been echoed and re-echoed by hon. and right hon. Members in all parts of the House.

While I support the broad sweep of this Bill, I think that its sweep is too broad. In their determination to silence any other would-be Peter Wright, the Government are in danger of going rather too far. The fundamental premise behind their thinking is that the Government and the Government alone are the guardians of the national interest and that, perforce, anyone breaching security can only be acting against the national interest. Of course, it is the common weakness afflicting every Government, no matter what their political complexion, to equate Government interest with the national interest when history has shown time and again that that is not so.

I invite the Committee and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to consider a scenario in which a British Government might act against the national interest to the point that they are wittingly or unwittingly providing military assistance to a hostile power. If hon. Members considered that suggestion to be a far-fetched flight of fancy, I would not blame them, but they would be mistaken. To my certain knowledge, it has already happened. I am not referring to the period immediately before world war 2 referred to by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport and also mentioned with passion and eloquence by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). They referred to an incident in which highly classified intelligence was supplied to a certain prominent Back-Bench Member of this House.

8 pm

I am referring to information which came into my hands in January 1977, following my appointment as an Opposition spokesman on defence. That information showed that the Labour Government of the day had given approval to one of our top electronics firms, Lucas Aerospace, to enter into a contract with the Soviet Government. That contract was signed on 22 December 1976 and was for the supply of advanced electronic equipment to improve the performance of the Kuznetsov NK144 jet engine which powered the TU-144 "Concordski". The Committee may feel that that was innocent enough, but when I pointed out that that engine —extended by 12 inches and uprated 10,000 lbs of thrust, from 45,000 lbs to 55,000 lbs—also powered the Soviet Backfire nuclear strike bomber, the gravity of what was afoot becomes apparent.

Thanks to an individual in the Ministry of Defence and a senior research scientist working for Plessey, I was able to obtain confirmation of the facts and to learn that while Lucas Aerospace was to supply a digital fuel control system for the Soviet engine, Plessey was to provide a variable geometry jet nozzle. The combination of those two pieces of equipment could have significantly extended the range and radius of action of the Backfire bomber, possibly to the point that it could strike the United States from Soviet bases.

At least one of the contracts involved pushing back the frontiers of science on behalf of the Soviet military machine. The senior research scientist who contacted me from Plessey begged me to do all in my power to ensure that the contracts were cancelled because in his judgment they constituted a clear threat to the security of Britain and of our allies. I made it my highest priority to do all in my power to secure the cancellation of those orders. None the less, despite questions and debates in the House and press articles and radio interviews, it took nine months before the contracts were cancelled and the Government of the day acknowledged that a serious error of judgment had been made.

It transpired that the contracts had been approved before the Government knew that the engine that powered the civil "Concordski" also powered the military Backfire. Evidently my telephone calls to the official in the Ministry of Defence were monitored, because soon afterwards I was cautioned by the then Secretary of State for Defence not to try to communicate further with the official concerned. I have no means of knowing what, if any, disciplinary action was instituted against that official. However, I know that a prosecution of that official or the senior research scientist at Plessey under the Official Secrets Act 1911 would have been unlikely to succeed because they could have claimed under section 2(1)(a) that their disclosure of secret information to a Member of Parliament was "in the national interest".

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that there is no national interest defence in the present legislation, but he is mistaken. Section 2(1)(a) states, in effect, that a person may be guilty of a misdemeanour if he communicates specified information to any person other than the person to whom he is authorised to communicate it or to a person to whom it is

"in the interests of the State his duty to communicate".

That key premise and defence existed for people connected with my grandfather's case before the war, in the Duncan Sandys case and in the case to which I have just referred. There would have been a defence before a court of law and almost certainly a prosecution would have failed.

Mr. Aitken: I hope that my hon. Friend will accept this point, which will strengthen his argument and perhaps destroy further the inaccurate argument put forward by the Home Secretary. A Select Committee of this House sat in 1938 to deal with the Official Secrets Act 1911. Part of its findings were based on the evidence of a Clerk of the House, Sir Gilbert Campion. The report states that the Committee

"could imagine circumstances in which it would, in the interests of the State, be the duty of a person having information to communicate it to an MP although he was not authorised to do so."

[Mr. Aitken]

The example to which my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has referred seems to have been foreseen some 30 years earlier, thus confirming the existence of a public interest defence under the 1911 Act.

Mr. Churchill: I am obliged to my hon. Friend.

In the example that I have outlined, had this Bill been on the statute book the Labour Government could undoubtedly have shown that harm was done because the disclosure resulted in the cancellation of contracts between this country and the Soviet Government worth many millions of pounds. The Lucas Aerospace contract was valued at £10 million. I do not know the value of the Plessey contract.

Mr. Baldry: If my hon. Friend wants to make that assertion, he should look at clause 2 and tell us where the Ministry of Defence or the prosecution could have shown that the case history that he has outlined would have prejudiced the capability of any part of the armed forces to carry out their task? Nowhere in clause 2 does it state that the loss of a contract comes within the context of a damaging disclosure.

Mr. Churchill: If one of the people who had been conveying information to me had been a designated person, it would have been an absolute offence under the Bill. The defendants in the case that I have outlined could no longer claim that they had communicated information to a person defined in the 1911 Act as

"to whom it is in the interest of the State his duty to communicate".

It disturbs me that under this Bill those people acting solely out of patriotism—few hon. Members would dispute the patriotism of the two individuals to whom I have referred—by imparting information about the Soviet contract could be held to be guilty of a criminal offence and liable to a two-year prison sentence. The fact that they acted in the national interest would be no defence. Is that really what my right hon. Friend and the Government have in mind? I find that quite impossible to believe.

Most worrying of all, if the Bill is passed unamended, is the damage that it will do to the privileges of the House as accepted during the past 75 years, and the rights of individuals in certain circumstances to communicate classified information to Members of Parliament without fear of prosecution, provided that they can show that the disclosure was in the interests of the state.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): My hon. Friend must excuse me because, unlike him, I am not an expert in these matters, but is the logic of his argument that, if the Bill had been in force before the war, the appeasers would have gone free and Vansittart would have ended up in jail?

Mr. Churchill: My hon. Friend must forgive me. I am not dealing with the period before the war—I am dealing with a specific case of which I have personal experience. The way in which that case would almost certainly have been handled under the Bill, were it to be passed unamended, gives grounds for serious concern. It is a clear deficiency in the Bill that there is no national interest defence and I ask my right hon. Friend to consider the matter afresh in the light of the facts that I and other right hon. and hon. Members have put before the Committee today.

The Government have a responsibility to produce legislation on this vital issue that will stand the test of time and not legislation designed to slam the door on the horse that has most recently bolted from the stables. If my right hon. Friend is not minded to accept new clause 4 proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd), at least let him bring forward his own national interest amendment.

Mr. Archer *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. I apologise sincerely to you, to the House and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), but may I ask you to reflect on something while my right hon. and learned Friend makes his speech? This important and crucial debate has been going on for more than four hours. In contemplating whom to call when my right hon. and learned Friend sits down, might it be a good idea to call someone who will speak in favour of the Bill, as so far only the Home Secretary has spoken in favour of it.

Mr. Baldry *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I can deal with that point of order. I am not aware who is in favour or not in favour of the Bill. I call those hon. Members who rise, and I shall continue to do so.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order, Miss Boothroyd. I apologise to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), but the matter is of some importance. My right hon. and learned Friend who is about to speak has been a Law Officer of the Crown, a solicitor and not a barrister—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is a barrister."]—but not an Attorney-General. I can espy no one on the Treasury Bench representing the Crown. I know that the matter has been raised before, but my right hon. and learned Friend will be asking searching questions which understandably the Home Secretary is not equipped to answer. Is there some procedure whereby we can have a dilatory motion until a person equipped to answer those points can be brought to the House?

The Second Deputy Chairman: I was almost one jump ahead of the hon. Gentleman. That is not a matter for the Chair. It is a matter for the Government and not for me. Mr. Archer.

Mr. Archer: It may set my hon. Friend's mind at rest if I tell him that the searching questions that I had in mind to ask have already been asked. I hope that the Government work sufficiently effectively for the Law Officers already to know that they have been asked. As to the matter which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) invited you, Miss Boothroyd, to reflect, you might reflect on it, but I hope that at least half your mind will be on the argument that I am seeking to adduce.

If the purpose of the speech by the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) was to point out that Governments do not always act in the best interests either of the public or of the nation, if there is a distinction, either

through malice or by mistake, I wholly agree with him. However, this is a serious debate and our main theme would not be enhanced if I were to enter into the dramatic details of the particular example which he gave. Whoever is in government, there is a consensus in the House that it is not the same thing to talk about the interests of Government and the interests of the nation.

I appreciate that the Second Reading debate is over, but it is worth reflecting for a moment on the background against which the debate is taking place. We are debating the circumstances in which someone may be prosecuted and punished as a criminal for revealing information. The vast majority of common law jurisdictions, and many other jurisdictions as well, have a law which imposes on Government a requirement to make that information available. Their courts debate whether Governments should be entitled to refuse information.

That impressed itself on me when I was looking to see whether courts in other countries had experienced, difficulty in deciding where public interest lies. They have not. There are cases enough about the public interest, but in Australia, Canada and most common law jurisdictions, public interest cases are about when the Government may refuse a disclosure of information. The public interest provision that we are discussing is about the circumstances in which, exceptionally, someone may tell the public without being sent to prison. So we are discussing the exceptions to the duty to conceal, while they are discussing the exceptions to the duty to reveal.

8.15 pm

It must be common ground that there have been occasions when misdeeds of those in government ought to be revealed and that it would have been wrong had they not been revealed. Unhappily, we still do not know whether Richard III murdered the princes, but if he did, and had that become public knowledge, would anyone argue that that would have been other than in the public interest? Of course it might have been damaging to the nation's armaments because the battle of Bosworth would have taken place earlier. Would not the world have been a nastier and dirtier place if Watergate had not come to light?

There have been a number of interventions on whether the public interest coincides with the interests of the Government. One of the historical foundations of the privilege of the House, which Mr. Speaker claims on our behalf, was the case of Sir Thomas Haxey in 1397. Sir Thomas was a senior official in the service of Richard II, and he asked the House of Commons to discuss a remonstrance against some of the King's practices. The King obtained from the House the name of the whistle-blower, and persuaded the other place to rule that it was treason to seek to remedy anything pertaining to his person, rule, or royalty. Sir Thomas was condemned as a traitor. But the House took the view that what he had done was in the public interest, although I do not think that it used those precise words, and history has vindicated him as one of the pioneers of our constitution. Even the King decided that it was unwise to pursue a whistleblower when what he had revealed was already in the public domain, so Sir Thomas was pardoned and restored to his former position. I sometimes think that it is a pity that the present Cabinet are such bad historians.

Of course there have been Government secrets which would have been better not disclosed. Those who disclosed them were at best misguided and at worst wicked. In the early 15th century, the House secured a promise from Henry IV not to listen to any of the leaks about proceedings in the House until the debate had finished and the House had reached a conclusion.

Of course, there have been times when the public's right to know has been invoked in the interest of nothing more edifying than a thirst for scandal or a profitable market in tittle tattle, but that is just the case for the new clauses and amendments. That is why we need some way of distinguishing between the two categories, and the Bill does not provide it. It simply says that, for certain categories of offence, the prosecution must prove that some harm resulted. It does not say—the Secretary of State did not show a clear realisation of this—that anyone shall be entitled to balance that harm against the good that might follow, however great the good. Under clause 1, there is not even a requirement that any harm should be established. The argument appears to be that, when security information is divulged, some harm is bound to follow.

It does not require the imagination of a John Le Carré to envisage circumstances in which the public benefit that follows a disclosure is out of all proportion to the harm caused. We have heard many such examples this evening. Suppose it came to the knowledge of a member of the security services that a vast installation contained chemicals, explosives or nuclear material that was unstable and capable of causing a public disaster. Could it possibly be said that the harm to the security services or defences arising from revealing that information was in any proportion to the benefits of causing that danger to be removed? When Ibsen wrote "An Enemy of the People" he clearly invited his audience to conclude that the enemy of the people was not the man trying to alert them to the danger. To invoke the harm that would follow a disclosure would be a fig leaf to cover a great obscenity.

If it is said that my example is far-fetched and that Ibsen was not introducing realism to the stage, I pose this question. If, before the Watergate disclosure, anyone had written a play using its facts as the plot, a Minister would have said that it was too far-fetched to be taken seriously. A jury that has heard the evidence—the merits of the case properly argued by both sides—and has been properly directed by the judge is eminently capable of weighing that balance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said that no speeches had been made supporting the Secretary of State, and that speaks for itself. However, I had expected one argument to be made and it was the only consideration which at one point caused me to hesitate. A person who is in the dilemma that we are discussing—who is asking whether it is his duty to maintain confidentiality or expose inequity—would have to make a judgment without knowing the view that a jury might take. He may say, "I must exercise my judgment in good faith but find subsequently that I have committed a criminal offence because the jury takes a different view." He would be better protected if there were some way of resolving that issue before he made the disclosure and before a prosecution followed.

We are dealing, ex hypothesi, with officials who have exhausted the system's channels. Any further oracles would have been part of the service, part of the culture of confidentiality, would probably be drawn from the ranks of the establishment and be motivated by the same

[Mr. Archer]

secretive culture. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) spoke of the "next man up", and we all know examples of the "next man up." We know what happened to Fletcher Christian after he mutinied on the Bounty. The Admiralty did not support the subordinate who took over from his superior, and we have a further fictional example in "The Caine Mutiny". The difficulty is that no sieve is provided prior to disclosure and prosecution. If the Home Secretary introduced a solution along those lines, some of us might be prepared to consider a settlement.

Mr. Dalyell: Might not the dilemma of Fletcher Christian have applied to Sir Ewen Broadbent and Sir Frank Cooper, had Clive Ponting gone to them?

Mr. Archer: My hon. Friend poses a fascinating question on which one is tempted to speculate. Sir Frank Cooper was one of the signatories to the letter we have been debating. I am not sure that what one does in concrete circumstances and when standing aside and writing to *The Times* are the same. I am not sure that I would recommend three wise Privy Councillors. I am inviting the Secretary of State to consider an alternative solution if he thinks that it might be preferable to some of those that we are debating.

Mr. Spearing: Would not the dilemma facing any of the gentlemen mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) be greater because the document leaked in the Ponting case questioned the validity of the joint position that had been reached by all parts of government? Surely that would have put them, according to the principle of "next man up", in an impossible position?

Mr. Archer: My hon. Friend is saying that there would not be a "next man up".

Mr. Buchan: Or "next woman up".

Mr. Archer: The woman may have been part of the agreement. We must hand the problem to the courts and to a jury properly directed. A decision must be made ex post facto.

Hon. Members who are not drawn to a public interest defence would have the comfort of knowing that anyone who is in a dilemma and is inclined to believe that his or her duty requires disclosure will be a potential martyr because he or she cannot be sure what will happen. But the possibility that a person with an irrepressible conscience will be labelled an enemy of the people is better than the certainty, and that is the case for the amendment and new clauses. The fact that a jury will have power to decide—we hope by applying the same common sense standards as the person in the dilemma—may help to sustain a future Sir Thomas Haxey.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to the fact that it could not be certain in advance how a jury would decide. Is not the difficulty that if one asked any 12 people their definition of the national or public interest one would receive a completely different answer from that which one received from another 12. It would be unsatisfactory if the public interest, which can be determined in many different ways by many different people, were the issue at stake.

Mr. Archer: The jury in the Ponting case retired for only a short time before it returned with a unanimous verdict. I am wholly in favour of the jury system and have been amazed at how well it has worked in these cases, from the seven bishops case down.

It is important that someone, at some stage, should be able to make these judgments. We must not remove from anybody the power to make such judgments and say, "There will be no defence and no one will have the authority to vindicate you." That would be completely unacceptable.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): In my judgment, the public interest is the obverse of the portcullis, which is the proud badge of Parliament. Neither Government nor Parliament is the sole custodian, but they are both major custodians of the public interest.

The Government of the day, however it may be drawn from the House, must always be the trustee of the public interest. The discharge of trust, and the conduct of that trust, must always be subject to a broad, continuing and on-going examination inside and outside the House. As I understand it, that is the definition of democracy. It is defined in the House by the width of the carpet between us. Sometimes the width is an enormous gulf, but at other times it is narrow indeed. I suggest that this evening it is very narrow.

Nonetheless, the Government are entitled not to be humiliated by those who serve them, and that is where the difficulty begins. In imposing the necessary disciplines on their servants, the Government must define carefully, and often in the greatest detail, precisely what the measures and limits of that discipline are. As several right hon. and hon. Members have said, in distinguished speeches, the moment that they extend that definition into the area of public interest, the greatest difficulties arise.

8.30 pm

It was my privilege, as a very amateur historian, to deal with a case that is highly relevant to the debate. I propose to put the case before the House because my decision on whether to support the Bill will depend on the answer that I receive from my hon. Friend the Minister of State about the case. In 1941, our tanks were performing extremely badly in the western desert. They were outgunned, under armoured and too slow and they were being shot up and destroyed by the Germans on a distressingly large scale. Our tanks were no match for the 88 mm guns, whether mobile or fixed. That must have been known to the commanders concerned and to everyone up to the general staff, but nothing appeared to be done and, from my analysis of the records, very little was being done.

A Captain Scott in one of the armoured regiments decided that the only action to take was to write to his father, who happened to be Lord Herbert Scott, the chairman of Rolls-Royce. I have seen the letter and it described the appalling situation in the desert. He said to his father, in so many words, "For God's sake, do something." Lord Herbert Scott was in the position of being able to inject an important urgency and rethinking into tank production, performance and design. I have no doubt—and Captain Scott had no doubt—that he was in breach of the Official Secrets Act 1911, and his father was in no doubt of that either.

But from what I have heard earlier, it seems that the position is this. Captain Scott should have gone through

the usual channels: first his commanding officer, then his brigadier, then his divisional commander, then his corps commander, then his commander-in-chief in the middle east, General Wavell, then the chief of the Imperial General Staff and finally the War Cabinet. In reality, how far would he have got? How far would his message have got?

Mr. Hind: If my hon. Friend thinks carefully about what he has just said—and I am sure that we all commend the courageous action of Captain Scott—he will realise that Captain Scott would not have committed an offence under the Bill, for the simple reason that the harm that would have come from his disclosure would have been nil. In fact, his disclosure would have been beneficial to the country. The point that my hon. Friend has missed is that the pillar of the Bill is what harm comes from a disclosure.

Sir Ian Lloyd: All I can say is that the possible harm of disclosure from a means more public than that of a private letter would have been that the Germans would have learnt what our position was far sooner than they would have done from their military experience.

Mr. Buchan: I was in a tank regiment in the 8th Army. We said that if we saw an 88 mm, we were dead. That was the difference between the two weapons. The other problem was that if any other rank had written the letter, it would never have reached the end of the line. Many deaths had already resulted.

Sir Ian Lloyd: I am obliged to the hon. Member, who speaks from great personal experience, which I certainly do not have. I am merely reporting the facts as an amateur historian. What happened was that as a result of the highly private, unofficial and irregular intervention, the tanks that we produced and which went into action on D-Day in 1944 were significantly better than the tanks in the western desert. I have no doubt that, had Captain Scott's action been known to the military authorities, he would have been court-martialled.

It seems ludicrous to argue that in all such cases, the official channels must be used to the ultimate limit before any other action is taken. Under the provisions of the Bill, would Captain Scott be prosecuted or would he have a defence in the public interest? If he would have such a defence under the Bill, I would support it. If he would have no defence, I cannot support it. I believe that there will be other circumstances in other times when other Captain Scotts will have to take courageous decisions similar to those referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) when his distinguished grandfather acted as he did because of inside information in the 1930s. If we rule out such occasions by definition and put such a weight on the exercise of courage that it becomes impossible, we shall not be acting in the public interest and the Government will not be either.

Mr. Heffer: Under the provisions of the Bill, Captain Scott would obviously have been in some difficulty and so too would the gentleman to whom the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) was referring. So too would those who gave valuable information to his grandfather. That is the point of the amendment and the arguments against the Bill. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made that point clearly when he said that someone who is not of the lowest levels in the Civil Service may see something with which he or she does not agree, become upset and go right through the channels to the Minister. The Minister may say, "Well, keep it quiet and don't tell the press anything about it." That person may go back later and be told, "It's all right, you've no need to worry, because it's all being dealt with." Three months later, that person may discover that nothing has happened that his or her views have not been taken into consideration, that there has been no change. He may feel passionately about it, but what can he do?

It is true that nothing could be done under the present Act, but nothing can be done under the Bill either. Such a person cannot resign and make a statement. Anyone who has been a Minister can have an argument and resign—or in my case, get kicked out. He can make a speech in the House explaining his point of view, but civil servants will not be in a position to give a press conference. If they do, under the provisions of the Bill, they will immediately be in trouble and they will have no real defence. They already know the terms of the Bill and they are in real trouble.

The problem does not concern only military equipment. That is important, but the Bill raises other questions, and of course, people have different views about what is in the public interest. That is a serious problem.

Take the example of a practising Roman Catholic—indeed, somebody practising any religion. What is that person supposed to do if his bishops issue a statement on something? The American bishops issued a pastoral letter to their national conference, entitled "The Challenge of Peace". Paragraph 147, on page 46, says:

> "Under no circumstances may nuclear weapons or other instruments of mass slaughter be used for the purpose of destroying population centres or other predominantly civilian targets."

Paragraph 150, on page 47, says:

> "We do not perceive any situation in which the deliberate initiation of nuclear warfare, on however restricted a scale, can be morally justified."

Suppose that a Catholic member of the Civil Service, who had not thought much about the question, received that pastoral letter and thought, "That's right. It is a matter of conscience." I am giving an extreme example because I think it important to do so, but one could give other examples.

That civil servant may discover that someone is about to initiate the use of nuclear weapons. What is he to do? Under the Bill he would have to keep quiet. His conscience might tell him that he had to speak out, in which case he would be in immediate trouble under the Bill. That is the whole point. One cannot stop people having a conscience or feeling so concerned about something that they have to make a stand.

If I remember rightly, the Home Secretary himself said that he did not think that, in the last analysis, fear of criminal action would stop people. Of course it will not. I could not. In the end, a person will make that statement irrespective of whether it is criminal to do so, and will suffer the consequences. We should at least give people the opportunity of some defence—the defence that they consider that what they have done is in the public interest. Others may not agree with them, and they may end up on the receiving end, but people who feel strongly should have the right to argue the public interest defence.

No real action was taken against any of those who argued that there should have been better equipment and aircraft, and rearmament, to offset the growth of German

[Mr. Heffer]

weapons under Hitler. Thank God they did that. We were in trouble as it was, and we should have been in much greater trouble if civil servants had not taken that view.

I know that other hon. Members want to speak and I know that it is nice when one has sat here all day to think, "Now that I am at last on my feet I shall go on as long as I want." I shall not do that; I shall restrict myself to a few points.

I wish that we were discussing a freedom of information Act, which would be far more useful to the people of this country than this Bill. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup made an excellent speech, but I did not agree with him that the Bill improves matters. I cannot see how it does. It may improve minor details here and there but in some respects it has made matters worse, and that cannot be acceptable.

It would be a good thing if we had a freedom of information Act. Look what happens in the United States. The list of defectors from the CIA is getting longer and longer. They all go on television and write books and newspaper articles. The effect of that has been that the American people are much more careful and much more concerned about the CIA. They look more closely at what the CIA does in other countries, although they could look closer still. Take the case of Oliver North: how could all that have come out, with secrecy laws like ours?

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It could not.

8.45 pm

Mr. Heffer: Precisely; it could not. We have to look at the American example. I think that hon. Friends will agree that I am not in love with the American system and American politics. I do not like the Americans' unbridled capitalism, but that is another matter. One cannot say that their legislation is not vastly superior to ours in some respects. There are two British examples. How did we find out that we had agreed to the manufacture of the bomb? We learned years afterwards. We had a Labour Prime Minister at the time. How did we learn about Chevaline? Again, it was a long time afterwards. Everybody said, "It was done in our name but there were no debates or discussions" Why not? Why should not people know about these things?

I am cutting my speech considerably, but I want to conclude by quoting what is unfortunately a somewhat lengthy statement from a book called "The Second Oldest Profession" by a man called Knightley. It is a very interesting book, and the last page sums up the position:

"So in the mid-1980s we are faced with an intelligence community which has grown to a size and power which is unprecedented. It is so big and so expensive that we can only guess at its size and cost. But there is no doubt about its power. In the Soviet Union national leaders come from its ranks. In the United States its influence on presidential decisions is such that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether the President is running the CIA, or the CIA is running the President . . .

There might, just might, be some justification for the intelligence community if it did what it claimed to do: provide timely warnings of threats to national existence. But, as we have seen, this claim is exaggerated even in wartime and, in peacetime, intelligence agencies seem to have spent more time trying to score off each other, protecting their budgets and their establishments, and inventing new justifications for their existence, than in gathering intelligence.

Perhaps this is because—when not deep in their fantasy world—the intelligence community knows that open, published information, and that obtained through traditional diplomatic and other overt contacts, have proved this century by far the most useful source of military, political and economic intelligence for both sides."

I shall end on that note, because that is what we should be talking about. Meanwhile, we can at least support the excellent amendment tabled by my hon. and right hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I hesitate to enter into the whirlpool of this debate——

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Miss Boothroyd. Forgive me for raising a point of order at this stage. It is not meant to offend you, in the Chair, or other hon. Members. You will be well aware that certain hon. Members have been waiting to make a contribution in this debate for nearly five hours and I believe that other hon. Members have arrived more recently.

The Second Deputy Chairman: The hon. Member is always very courteous to the Chair. I am sure that he will understand that calling a Member is at the Chair's discretion. I really am doing the best I can to be as fair as possible in a very difficult debate where so many hon. Members are seeking to speak.

Mr. Wheeler: I hesitate to enter into the whirlpool of this debate, for many of us have indeed been here for well over five hours, listening to most complicated but important arguments on the new clauses. Those of us who have been here from the outset will agree that those who have spoken thus far have spoken from a position of great worthiness and a desire to see the law right.

So far, my right hon. Friend's proposals have been almost friendless. I at least intend to speak in support of the Government, if only to show that, from all this ebb and flow, the Government offer the Committee certainty in the law, and that is the one principle to be gained from this Bill. The plain truth is that, if we accept either new clause 1 or new clause 4 we shall virtually wreck the Bill. Both are effectively wrecking clauses. They may not be intended deliberately so to do by the whole Committee, but that will be the outcome of supporting them.

In essence, my right hon. Friend suggests that the criminal law should define the offence with certainty. The law should be concerned with the actions of an individual rather than motive. That has been the essence of our debate. New clauses 1 and 4 include phrases such as "reasonable cause to believe" and

"existence of crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect in the performance of official duty or other misconduct".

That is a catch-all phrase.

The trouble with these phrases in the new clauses is that they are vague and ambiguous. They will import uncertainty into the law if the Committee passes them, whereas my right hon. Friend seeks courageously to reform section 2 of the Act, to restrict it severely and to impose upon the prosecution tests of harm, which are provided for five of the six categories.

I shall dwell on the test of harm for just a moment. I heard several hours ago, although I hope that I was deceived—the phrase "balance of harm". This is nothing to do with the balance of harm. It is to do with the test of harm, which the prosecution would have to prove unambiguously before a jury. As we have gone through the past five hours, we have lost sight of the integrity that my

right hon. Friend brought to the proposals. He is saying that the prosecution will have to prove its case before a jury, which is a formidable test. More than 50 per cent. of cases tried before a jury in London today in which there is a "not guilty" plea result in an acquittal. The fact is that some fanciful suggestions from hon. Members have been to the extreme of credibility, including the notion that the Crown prosecutor or the Director of Public Prosecutions would embark on a prosecution in such cases.

Mr. Gorst: May I put this suggestion to my hon. Friend in a slightly fanciful but nonetheless helpful way to show why I believe him to be wrong?

We are elected to the House to perform a function based upon trying to do something in the public interest. If we were to be judged at the end of the day on how much harm we had done, we would have got the balance of philosophy wrong. The same could be said about this piece of legislation. My hon. Friend is absolutely wrong to say that it is important to judge whether harm has been done. We ought to judge whether the matter has been dealt with according to the public interest. After all, if we were to judge whether a bank robber had done more or less harm in his crime where would that lead us?

Mr. Wheeler: My hon. Friend is reversing the arguments of the past five and a half hours. He has really put forward a plea in mitigation. While we could go down the road proposed by right my hon. Friend and aim for certainty in the law, the defence could advance the argument in mitigation before a jury to justify what had been done to break the law. It would rest upon the jury whether they wished to believe that.

I would say to my hon. Friend, as we have gone round this subject for many hours, and there is little more that is new to be said about it, that one cannot persuade a British jury to convict anyone if they do not want to. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is proposing to trust the jury.

9 pm

Mr. Buchan: I have waited a long time to try to deal with some of the points that have now been encapsulated by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler). He exactly exemplified the Government's wrong-headed attitude in this case. I hope that they welcome him as an ally. He has at least been consistent in stating the argument. He talked about certainty in the law. But our view of the law was certainly exonerated by the Ponting trial. Twelve out of 12 jurors said that the law was an ass and should be rejected. They knew that he was technically guilty within the law, and they rejected it.

Throughout the "Spycatcher" case and the series of judgments on it and from what was said by the Government, we thought that this antiquated law, which proved to be an ass, would be swept out and something intelligent, sensible and rational would be put in its place. Instead we have a cheat of a Bill which claims to be a reform. If anything, it has made the situation worse. It introduces the spurious concept of harm, allowing juries to think that they are getting some kind of balanced argument as opposed to the ass that was made of the previous one. It has introduced a series of absolutes which would declare everyone who would have been exonerated by the intelligent behaviour of the Ponting jury now automatically guilty.

Their argument is wrong. The hon. Gentleman's technical argument in accusing the amendments of being wrecking amendments is also wrong. They are far from wrecking amendments. Public interest is essential if we are to have security legislation that can be acceptable in any democracy.

It was said that the Colonel North case would not have occurred in this country. That is quite true. If an Irangate had developed in this country, the case would never have been prosecuted—certainly not in front of cameras and not in a court. The honest whistleblower would have found it almost impossible to come forward. That is one of the problems. Far from being wrecking amendments, these are the only kind of amendments that will ensure that the law which is about to be passed can be at all acceptable.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North asked how the disclosure or retention of information or an article was in the public interest in that someone had reasonable cause to believe. Much fun has been made of the phrase "reasonable cause to believe". Much of English law—I specify English law, not Scottish law—depends on the assumptions to be made by a reasonable person.

Mr. Hind *indicated dissent*——

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. A Daniel has come to judgment. An hour ago, he was squealing about that point.

Mr. Hind: The hon. Gentleman is correct. Much English law is based on the reasonable man principle, but a jury will look not at what was done and the harm that resulted from disclosure but purely and simply at what the person who made the disclosure believed to be the situation. That is not dealing with the problems that the Bill sets out to correct.

Mr. Buchan: That is precisely the reference to the reasonable person in English law. The hon. Gentleman has got it wrong again. That person will not necessarily be found innocent. He will have to prove that he had reasonable cause, not that he imagined that he had reasonable cause. *[Interruption.]* He will have to prove that he had reasonable cause to believe. He will have to bring forward the objective factors on which he based his belief.

Far from being neglected, that argument was brought up in a curious way in regard to the obscenity legislation. A jury had to decide whether a reasonable man would consider whether a certain act of obscenity could cause gross offence to others. The reasonable cause to believe principle is perfectly sensible and right, although not in that case. It is the only way in which a man who after all cannot prove that he is not guilty until he is brought to court can then prove it.

Every case that is brought forward is based on reasonable cause to believe, or there would be no trials. The point of jury trial or any other trial is to decide whether there was reasonable cause to believe that X happened. That is the basis of law. I wish that Conservative Members would grow up.

The Home Secretary said that there has been no such public interest proposition in law before. He is wrong. He is wrong even about the Act he seeks to amend. If there had been no public interest case, Ponting's defence would have nothing to argue, but there was a glimmer of public interest.

[Mr. Buchan]

Section 2 of the 1911 Act refers to the interest of the state. That is to be wiped out. There is no clause to allow the interest of the state to be pleaded. The Ponting case was concerned with whether the interest of the state was the interest of the Government of the day. But it was in the Act. The Home Secretary is talking nonsense when he says that it is no defence to any charge that the long-term effect of the criminal act was beneficial and that that benefit outweighs the harm done. That is not totally our argument but let us accept it for the moment. The Home Secretary is wrong. It was in the obscenity legislation and even in the Act which he seeks to replace.

In the "Spycatcher" judgment Lord Griffiths ruled that if a serious iniquity arose, which could not be stopped by complaints to the authorities, an official should be relieved of his duty of confidence so that he could alert his fellow citizens to the impending danger. Lord Griffiths said that if iniquity was being committed and if there was no other means by which it could be stopped, because complaints were not being listened to, an official had no other means of action if he had reasonable cause to believe that there was danger. His duty of confidentiality should be suspended so that he could alert his fellow citizens. So their lordships were saying that it was not only proper that this should happen but that it was a duty.

Some of the historical cases rehearsed today have proved the occasional necessity for the honest whistleblower. It was the honest whistleblowers leaking like hell to Churchill throughout the 1930s who began to alert the country to the serious mess it was in. One reason why such people were not charged was that if they had been brought to public trial it might have alerted the whole country to the truths which were being concealed by the Government of the day. Some Conservative Members failed to understand that point today. There may be a width of carpet between us but it is not a carpet under which we can sweep honest arguments.

Even the amendments which we are putting forward cannot always deal with the problems. I was touched by the case referred to by the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) of the man Scott who wrote to his father in England about the weakness of the guns. I was in the 8th Army and, as I said in an intervention, we had a common saying that if a man saw an 88 he was dead because it shot faster and more accurately. We had 75s, which were useless against 88s. I had one tank commander who lost three tanks in one day at Sidi Rezegh. If a private or a corporal had said what Scott did, he would have been in gaol.

The old boys' network has helped the honest whistleblower. It was easier for Churchill, Vansittart and others. It was not so easy for the honest whistleblower in the lower ranks. It is one thing in a country which has the safety of the old pals' network; it is another when we have larger numbers of civil servants than ever before and papers go further down. It is no longer a case of simply dropping into the Athenaeum and saying, "Look here, old boy, this is what they are up to." It is ever more dangerous and difficult.

Even their Lordships failed to understand. Many civil servants, coming across iniquity, are terrified to raise it with the next in command. He, too, is terrified to raise it further up. There has to be some means by which the iniquities of Government can be explored. This is not to exonerate the dishonest whistleblower or to encourage the continual leaking of information.

Most of the information which is leaked is not secret. Modern technological surveillance is the important thing. The old-fashioned spy might have mattered, but it is not so serious now. A new development does not take place out of the head of Gallileo when he remembers the imaginary story of the lamp moving in the cathedral of Pisa. It arises because of the exchange of technology throughout the world and a new technical development here or there.

Developments take place through the interchange of scientists. I speak of Erickson in Edinburgh. One week he is lecturing on nuclear strategy to scientists, engineers and generals in Washington. The next week he is in Moscow lecturing about what the generals in Washington are saying. Satellites do the job.

What happens in the kind of balance adumbrated by the Secretary of State—I fear slightly dishonestly, because he is bright enough to know what this Bill does—to the people on the Clyde estuary. What will happen on the Clyde, where we have to consider the well-being of people living near to a nuclear base? What happens if there is a radiation leakage and it is not disclosed?

I have a letter that refers to somebody further down the ranks and, frankly, I am not sure how to use it. I shall send it privately to a Minister. I hope that now I have mentioned this man in the House, he will receive some protection. He talks in his letter about a radiation leak. He served for 13 years on the Polaris submarines. The authorities have denied it, but he claims that, one way or another, he has seen his medical records in which it is referred to. He cannot, however, get the Government to disclose those records to him. If he were an admiral, all hell would be let loose until he acquired his medical records. If another leakage, this time of information about the first leakage of radiation occurs in the Clyde nuclear base, it will harm the defence of the State, under clause 2, on two counts. It will harm our relationship internationally, because other countries will ask, "What has happened? Is there a weakness in the British defence and American bases?" It will also harm the people who live on Clydeside.

If someone leaks information about a radiation leakage and gets charged for so doing, the argument under clause 2 will be that it will harm defence. It prejudices the capability of and it jeopardises the interests of defence. We will have been told that we have certain inadequacies in our defence.

Clause 3 deals with confidential information obtained from a state other than the United Kingdom which does harm to the state.

The only way to decide that the man who I mentioned had an honest reason to believe that his information should be exposed is to bring the matter to trial. If that ingredient is missing, he has no chance.

I had hoped that we would have received a response from the Home Secretary.

I feel that I should give some reason for my interest in this as I am not especially concerned with problems of secrecy. Other hon. Members know much more about it than I. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) is an expert on the matter. I have been pulled into this question of secrecy because I have a vital interest in another matter, which I call the freedom of the word. I have been concerned over the years that not only is secrecy at the top getting more powerful and rigid, but that the

inability to have freedom in this area is mirrored by what I see happening to the freedom of expression elsewhere. When three people in Britain—Maxwell, Stevens and Murdoch—control more than 80 per cent. of the popular press, freedom is in danger.

At one time the grandfather of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) had the *Daily Express*, which was both a popular and a serious paper. It had the best foreign correspondent in Britain, Sefton Delmer. The paper was pursuing the interests and views of Lord Beaverbrook, but serious propositions were being put forward. It was a paper that mattered. Foreign affairs were on the front page. Alongside it was the *Daily Mirror*, iconoclastic, Left-wing and radical. How different now. If no one sees the danger to freedom, understanding and knowledge, when three people control more than 80 per cent. of the press, they must be dead to the world.

9.15 pm

At the same time the Government are slashing public service broadcasting and passing television and radio across to the private sector. We have broadcasting in this country under the same man who introduces Secrecy Bills such as this. So much for freedom of the word in this country; the man who is supposed to be in charge of broadcasting and defending freedom of the word is the same man who allows the special branch to invade the Scottish BBC. This is a strange situation, a dangerous situation. What is happening under his White Paper which is to be debated next week is that public service broadcasting is being passed across to the same people who own and possess the newspapers. Those three newspaper magnates are going to take over satellite broadcasting, too.

This is what concerns me. I see it in the arts in which I am concerned. Public sponsorship is lower and lower in proportion and private commercial sponsorship is increasing. Ibsen's plays are classics and can be seen in the National Theatre, but it is not quite so easy for a contemporary Ibsen to write a play such as "An Enemy of the People". It is not so easy for the contemporary film maker to raise the necessary money to expose the enemies of the people as Ibsen did. If hon. Members laugh it is because they do not begin to understand what is happening in this country.

It is alongside this that we are worried when we see Bills of this kind. We should be opening up understanding and access to information, instead of which we are closing and clamping it down.

At one period in history we depended upon the sovereignty of Parliament to defend and expand our liberty. That sovereignty of Parliament, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has pointed out to me on more than one occasion, has now degenerated to the sovereignty of the Executive, and the sovereignty of the Executive has further degenerated to the sovereignty of the Prime Minister. We have a Prime Minister buttressed by the press being in the hands of three people, and an Executive buttressing her position by this kind of secrecy Bill.

That is why we would welcome even the most minor of amendments to this Bill to allow some kind of concept of public interest to be involved, so that the honest whistleblower observing an iniquity within what I regard as an iniquitous Government can honestly declare it and be exonerated if he proves his case.

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) as usual, went a little over the top, to say the least, but he is a very articulate, fluent speaker and he said much with which I agree—and at least he has been here since the beginning of the debate. I was both amused and distressed when my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) made an admittedly very brief intervention and left a few minutes later when the hon. Member for Paisley, South had started speaking. My hon. Friend is the very distinguished Chairman of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, and I understand that, but I am sorry that he was not able to be here longer because he referred whimsically to the five hours that we have had on this debate already. *[Interruption.]* It is true that he had been here earlier, but I have been waiting since the beginning of the debate, and some of my hon. Friends have not been here so long.

I intend to be brief, but I think that these points have to be made. Hon. Members on both sides who have been here all the time have with great force, and almost without exception, pleaded sincerely and honestly with the Home Secretary to give very serious consideration to their very earnest request that he accept the new clause and the amendments clustered around the concept of the public interest defence. This is one of the most powerful debates that I have heard in recent times in a Committee stage on the Floor of the House. It has been a very profound expression of the will of the House of Commons by hon. Members who have advanced very sincere arguments. It has been not a partisan debate or a party battle but a high-level, high-profile parliamentary occasion. People do want to get this Bill right.

Like others, I express gratitude to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for introducing a Bill which contains improvements to the overall situation, thus fulfilling the will of the House as expressed a number of times in recent years when we have seen the difficulties, the leakages and the various prosecutions, as well as the distinguished work done by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) with his own private Member's Bill—nothwithstanding the Government's reaction to that, which caused disappointment in some quarters. The Home Secretary has given a substantial response to those anxieties. I welcome legislation that does away with section 2 of the Official Secrets Act in its present ridiculous form.

I cannot understand why the Home Secretary has not said that he is prepared to accept the public interest defence. It is genuinely in the interests of this Government, of any future Government, of governmental integrity, of public life and of the value of this House as a guardian of the public interest—whatever its future electoral composition. There is scope for him to modify his seemingly obstinate stance. I understand the Home Secretary's difficulty and sympathise with him.

Earlier in the debate, some hon. Members rightly said that one could not analyse why juries returned a certain verdict. They said that public interest came into the minds of the jury in the Ponting case by implication and discussion, and thus affected their decision.

I was surprised when hon. Members—mostly Conservative—started to decry the jury system, because I thought that we attached great importance to it in the traditions of our British legal system. I, like other hon. Members, have my doubts about the tradition of our British legal sytem. I, like other hon. Members, have my

[Mr. Dykes]

doubts about the jury system, which can work in a quirky way, particularly in criminal and City financial fraud cases. We tend to think, more and more, that there should be a panel of professional assesors in such cases rather than a jury, which cannot understand the intricacies of financial fraud and chicanery.

In cases involving official secrets, there is no substitute for the ideal sacred British tradition of the jury assessing the aspects and values and deciding the relevant prosecution. There is a need to build into the Bill an amendment on public interest defence. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is nodding, but perhaps not at that suggestion. Will he or the Minister, when they have the opportunity, return to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)? The Home Secretary has not yet properly dealt with the difficulties in clause 3(3), which constricts the automatic confidential or contents criteria. It is a worrying subsection, upon which we need more guidance.

We are talking against a background of difficulties that have occurred in recent years. People have used phrases such as elective dictatorship—I do not, but a previous Lord Chancellor used it about another Administration. We are talking about the background of a political and constitutional system in which Governments with a minority of the popular vote can more or less do what they will—aided, abetted and supplemented, often with beneficial effects, by the tradition of the strong party Whip. In this country, Governments can operate without a true majority and—unlike the system in some other European countries—with no constitutional court to restrain them or say that they have gone beyond the reasonable bounds of what they were publicly elected to do.

In most other countries, one party cannot govern without a majority of more than 50 per cent. If there are no restraints inside the Chamber or, to a lesser extent, in the Upper House—where it does not matter so much and where their Lordships do their best in difficult circumstances—what are we here for? How can we uphold the public interest and serve the national interest in an on-going sense, rather than simply worrying about what the party manifesto, the Cabinet or No. 10, say? This occasion is a classic example of the traditional ritual of the strong whipping system, with just a handful of Members—mainly Conservative Members—introducing new clauses and amendments. I mean no offence to Opposition Members when I say that.

If that is the direction in which our politics is going in this country, God help us in this House of Commons. We must realise that we have a sacred duty not always to accept partisanship and say that we will do what the party Whips ask us to do, day in and day out. I do that most of the time, like all hon. Members, both Labour Members and Members from smaller parties, albeit from a problematical political and constitutional position.

If that is the case—as my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) implied, although he was dealing with specific points concerning the amendments and new clauses—we might as well give up, because we are not serving the public, and they know it. People outside who follow these matters, although they are complicated issues even for parliamentarians, overwhelmingly want a public interest defence.

I do not necessarily agree with the interesting idea of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). As I understand it, he said that all the officially listed category of persons should be heard in camera if they were prosecuted, rather than simply a significant minority of those designated persons. If it were a significant minority, I might consider that an interesting and constructive proposal, for the reason that the right hon. Gentleman gave—to try to help the Executive—but it would be too sweeping to go beyond that.

Once again—I do not wish to stray out of order in saying this—we come overwhelmingly back to the idea of a Select Committee of Privy Councillors in this House to oversee these matters. That Committee would be very much reinforced by having the proper kind of public interest adjustment which we want to see and which is contained in these amendments.

I was touched when the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) spoke in romantic and idealistic terms about the need for amendments to Bills, either on the Floor of the House or in Committee. We live in an age of cynical sophistication. The right hon. Gentleman must realise that we no longer amend Bills in Standing Committee, nor do we normally amend Bills on the Floor of the House. That is out of date and old-fashioned. Small technical amendments might be accepted and, occasionally, amendments on behalf of a trade association or an outside interest group in respect of a legitimate little matter. Does not the right hon. Gentleman understand that this is a new era? I wish that he would adjust his thinking to that new era.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Surely, as a consequence of the absence of restraint, scepticism concerning the United Kingdom's constitution will grow. I argue——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. That is a little beyond the scope of the amendments before the House. Mr. Dykes.

Mr. Dykes: I agree, but I shall not reply to that comment save to say that I noticed that, after the war, turnouts were at least 80 per cent. and that nowadays they are down to 72 per cent. Perhaps there is something in what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend has committed a gross discourtesy to the Home Secretary in suggesting that no amendments are now allowed in debates. I wish to put the record straight. There will be one amendment. I should like my hon. Friend to take account of the fact that all amendments are equal, but one word from the Home Secretary will make one amendment more equal than others.

Mr. Dykes: I am mortified by the sin that I have just committed. If I had not been interrupted, I would have said that this was a marvellous opportunity for my right hon. Friend to say that that is not the case and that one of the most important amendments that has ever been proposed in respect of such legislation at this crucial stage is acceptable, or, at least, that he and his colleagues—I pay genuine tribute to their work on this legislation—will consider returning to the House with suitable proposals.

I wish to reiterate a point to which one or two other Members have alluded, especially my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), if I understood him correctly. If there is a public interest defence in the legislation, we positively enhance the previous stage, involving all the other internal Civil Service procedures, to put the matter right before it reaches this stage.

The senior civil servants above the aggrieved official, up to the head of the Civil Service will have a chance to put matters right in the knowledge that, if they do not, there is a second line of defence for the nation as a whole. In discussion with his seniors, the aggrieved civil servant—in whatever Department he is working, be it security, defence or any other Department of State; it must be remembered that we are dealing with other than matters coming within section 1 of the Official Secrets Act—will know that the channels available to him are more legitimate and valid because the seniors above him must get it right. If they do not get it right, he will have the ability to act—genuinely and legitimately, not irresponsibly, superficially, frivolously, with malice or simply because he disagrees with policy. If he feels there has been wrongdoing, improper conduct or corruption in a Department of State, he will have a second line of defence—or perhaps it could be called a second line of attack—represented by the genuine national interest. That would save this country from going downhill and into dubious areas about which, I believe, journalists are already writing.

9.30 pm

Mr. Rooker: This has been a long and interesting debate, and although I have listened to all of it, save when I left the Chamber to make two telephone calls, I have not risen to speak until now because I was anxious to hear what senior colleagues on both sides had to say.

The argument has been one-sided, as I pointed out in an intervention. Knowing the way in which the Government operate, I have every reason to believe that the Bill will be timetabled. We shall probably rue the day—the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) spur me into making this point—that when, a few years ago, we had a Government in a minority situation, they did not legislate on this subject. Such legislation, if passed 10 years ago under such circumstances, would probably have stood the test of time. I fear that legislation of this type, passed by the present Administration with their overwhelming majority, will not stand the test of time.

It is clear that the Government do not want public interest included in the Bill. The same can be said of other amendments that hon. Members have suggested but which the Home Secretary will undoubtedly turn down. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to remember that his party, with its present majority, will not be in office for ever. If we had a free vote, major amendments to the Bill would be made.

I am not suggesting that the official secrets legislation passed earlier this century has stood the test of time. It needs amending, and it will not be an easy exercise. If we are obliged to discuss the Bill under the guillotine, we shall end up having fewer hours in which to debate the measure than had we begun in Committee upstairs in the first place. Those who fall foul of the legislation will be bound to feel that the Bill was not adequately discussed.

Although we shall not have an opportunity to vote on all the proposed amendments and new clauses, I prefer new clause 4 to new clause 1, but that is only a choice between options. As the *Official Report* of our debates is read widely, including by those in the other place, it is worth recording that certain issues are regarded as House of Commons matters while others are not. Legislation is separate from that, by which I mean that the rules of the House, allowances, matters of access to the Palace of Westminster and so on are dealt with, by and large, without the Whips being on.

There ought to be certain classifications of legislation —certainly constitutional legislation, however it is defined—where different ground rules apply, if only to protect this House in future from having to keep coming back and looking at what are essentially long-term constitutional matters. In other words, the people ought not to be messed around every time a Parliament or a Government changes. By and large, the overwhelming majority of the House should accept that such a piece of legislation should be able to stand the test of time —to survive a decade or more.

That can be done only if future Parliaments know that the legislation was dealt with not by the dead hand of the Whips, not by the sledgehammer, not by the guillotine, but with a degree of free and open debate that we would not normally seek in the case of the ordinary run of legislation —legislation about which we might complain but in respect of whose passage I accept that the Government have to apply the rules of the House in getting their programme through.

However, this Bill, above all others—certainly any that have been dealt within this Session of Parliament—ought to be treated differently. It would be all very well to make the point that the Committee stage is being taken on the Floor of the House, if we knew that there was going to be a genuinely free debate, if we knew that Ministers would treat the debate seriously—and I sat through the whole debate last Wednesday.

The Home Secretary spoke a few hours ago. Since he spoke so early, he could not answer the debate. His early intervention was useful to the House, but at no time did he seek to address the substance and the detail of the group of amendments that is before the House, so, clearly, that will have to be done by another Minister, and that will obviously cause other Members to contribute.

If we knew that there was going to be a free and open debate, if the Government had a totally open mind and showed that they were prepared to listen to points of great importance to our unwritten constitution—theoretically it may be unwritten, but in fact it is written down in statutes like this for the servants of the Crown to operate—that would be a different matter.

In making this point, I end on the same note as the hon. Member for Harrow East (Mr. Dykes). If the Government were willing to countenance amendments of substance—clearly, provision for a public interest debate is a matter of substance; there is no argument about that—I am pretty sure that there would be less likelihood that servants of the Crown taking that gamble would feel upon them the pressures that they will undoubtedly feel if this legislation gets on the statute book.

Will the jury agree with me? I do not want people to be put in that position—and I think we have discussed these things a little too glibly. A public interest provision would simply be a long stop—perhaps a threat to the internal

[Mr. Rooker]

workings of the Department to make sure that it listened to its employees and tried to see if there were a legitimate and reasonable redress.

There does not seem to be that degree of openness on the part of the Minister, and I think that we are all—not only right hon. and hon. Members on both sides but the people of this country—losers because of the way this legislation is being handled.

Mr. Whitney: Given the lateness of the hour, I will endeavour to be brief. I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Bar (Mr. Rooker) that this Bill is crucially important to the people of this country. It is right that I should emphasise that the area of debate centres on a very small number of public servants. The need to correct the Official Secrets Act 1911 has been recognised for more than 20 years, but we understood that that would be a very difficult task. We are all aware that the last Labour Government could not perform that task and the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) explained why.

We must understand how far the Government have come. The concerns that have been expressed tonight from both sides of the Committee centre on a narrow class of people within the ring fence. We are talking about a few thousand out of a total of nearly a million people who would currently be covered by the official secrets legislation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) and others focused on cases like that of Captain Scott and the tanks and on industrial health and safety matters. There would be great benefits in those areas. We shall have swept away the all-embracing impact of the Official Secrets Act 1911 which is so unsatisfactory. Those activities which are not covered would be outside the ring fence and open to the test of harm. Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee should welcome that.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) asked in Committee last week what was happening to this House. I want to know what is happening to this House because we appear to be ready to throw away the very important balance in our concerns about public interest. There is a very difficult balance to strike in public interest matters. We all recognise that there is a fine balance between the public and national interest on the one hand, and the interests of public servants and their civic rights on the other. It all boils down to a very narrow category of civil servants to which the ring fence proposals apply.

Perhaps the right hon. Member for Devonport and his right hon. and hon. Friends can tell us what happened to the House when the Labour party was in government. The Labour Government recognised the crucial need for a degree of secrecy within the public service. For example, there was secrecy in the Chevaline episode to which reference has been made today. The development of Chevaline was kept from the House of Commons for reasons which will be known to members of the Labour Cabinet of the time. It must also have been known to dozens and possibly hundreds of public servants. I wonder what those right hon. and hon. Members who kept the details from the House would have said if a civil servant had decided that Chevaline was not in the public interest and that he would reveal it. Right hon. and hon. Members must look into their hearts to understand the pressures of Government.

The examples that we have heard today demonstrate the validity of this Government's position. Right hon. and hon. Members have had to refer to absurd examples which do not bear a moment's examination. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) is prepared to believe that a chain of civil servants would be corrupt and act in collusion. Of course, that is unacceptable and untrue. He can demonstrate his case only by citing examples which do not stand up. The old cliché that hard cases make bad law has never been more clearly shown than by the examples today.

We heard much about the Sir Winston Churchill and Duncan Sandys episodes before the war. I was not privileged to hear the speech from the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), but I know that he referred to those matters, as did other hon. Members. If those hon. Members considered their examples, they would realise that the Churchill and Sandys episodes are of a different order of magnitude from what we are considering now. With regard to the public interest, we hope through this Bill to make Government work better.

In the 1930s we had a massive national debate. It was not a matter of a Ponting, a Peter Wright or a Cathy Massiter leaking information in a brown paper envelope to one individual. It was a major debate and everyone knew what was happening. Sir Winston Churchill was half within the realm of secrecy. He was a member of the Air Defence Council. Because of the lateness of the hour, I shall not read it out, but Martin Gilbert's book contains a list of 20 or 30 senior Ministers and officials who were well known to be in contact with Winston Churchill. I do not suggest that we should legislate for such a difficult situation.

9.45 pm

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I am not sure what my hon. Friend is suggesting. Is he saying that if that were to happen today, Winston Churchill's leakers would or would not be prosecuted? Is he suggesting that it would or would not be appropriate that such people should be prosecuted today? Is the law to be based on some special public debate? If he believes that such circumstances occurred in the 1930s, how can he believe that the same could not happen tomorrow or another year?

Mr. Whitney: I was saying that it is quite inapposite to believe that we can construct a law to cover a massive national debate. If we seek to do that we shall write a Ponting charter. Nearly every Opposition Member has agreed that such conduct was contemptible and nearly everyone would agree that Government could not function if we had such a charter. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that we have a problem, but the present is one thing and the problem of another national debate is another.

No one can seriously suggest that the substance of the debate in the 1930s was not clear. Churchill's attack on the Government of the day benefited from the hard information that he had, but the major debate about what was going on in Germany, what the Government were doing and what the Labour party was doing was a matter of public debate so the national interest was not so much in jeopardy. Therefore, we cannot use the 1930s affair to bring into law something that is not in the law of other

European countries. I commend to right hon. and hon. Members the letter in *The Times* today. In Switzerland, France and Germany the concept of a public interest debate in such a narrow area is unheard of and does not exist.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend addressed a question in my speech, namely that if a foreign Government, albeit a friendly Government, provide the British Government with information which is then leaked because it is thought by the leaker to be detrimental to the best interest of the safety and health of the people of this country, under the Bill there would be no public interest defence.

Mr. Whitney: My right hon. Friend has just resumed his place and I had addressed that point earlier. As the person concerned was outside the ring fence, the harm test would apply. Under the Bill, the case that my right hon. Friend was proposing, would be a great deal more advanced, furthered and better off than it is now.

Sir Bernard Braine: With great respect, my hon. Friend said that the question of harm would not apply, but what would happen if a leak were designed to prevent harm?

Mr. Whitney: I said clearly to my right hon. Friend that the harm test does apply because the people he is talking about are outside the ring fence. Therefore, the Bill provides a major advance in the direction in which my right hon. Friend would urge us to go.

As the House knows, I am a former civil servant who, with hundreds of thousands of my former colleagues, gave loyal service to Governments of both complexions. If we introduce a leakers' charter into this narrow sector, we shall do much harm not only to the machinery of Government—to the responsibility and loyalty between Ministers and their nearest civil servants—but to the Civil Service. The affairs of Mr. Ponting and the performance of people such as him do much harm to the morale of public servants, the majority of whom will welcome the clarification and improvement in their status that the Bill offers.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I rise with some diffidence because almost every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate knows more about the subject than I do. I should like my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to answer three questions, the answers to which may be known by everyone else.

First, is my right hon. Friend sure that people will be able to have their case heard by a jury? I am anxious that, because of the wording of some of the clauses, much pressure will be put on them to plead guilty. If that were to happen, their opportunity to present a defence would disappear. If some form of public interest defence were available, that danger would not exist.

Secondly, I hope that I have understood incorrectly, but it is not clear whether it is valid to say that while harm has been done, greater good has resulted. Is that part of the definition of "harm" being done? Many hon. Members have said that that is not so and that one may not lay good against the harm that one is alleged to have done. Again, the argument for some form of public interest defence is overwhelming.

Thirdly, how likely is it that it will be made impossible to mount a defence because the material needed to do so will be secret? This relates to the point made by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

I do not share some hon. Members' gloom about the closing of channels of communication. Whatever any Government wish to do, the growing cheapness and accessibility of international communications will make monkeys of most Governments over a wide range of matters. I rather welcome that because I believe that, in common with some other countries, we are ridiculously secret. Much better decisions would be made by Government if they were in the habit of consulting widely and early rather than, as so often happens, keeping opinions to their chests and extensively narrowing the amount of consultation.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) mentioned the classification of documents. As an administrative device, the suggestion that documents classified below a certain level should, ipso facto, be regarded as not harmful is sensible. The danger is that classifications become ever more restrictive. Embarrassment to Ministers, in particular, is a potent source of wrongdoing. Many Ministers—consciously or unconsciously—connive at the ever-growing number of documents classified as secret or top secret. That, too, would need to be looked into.

Mr. Corbett: A number of right hon. and hon. Members have said that this has been a remarkable debate, and it has. I am glad that the Home Secretary has been here to listen, and I am not being snide in saying that. I take the point that has echoed around the Chamber since the debate began just after 4 pm that this has been one of those all-too-rare occasions when the voice and will of the House of Commons have been expressed irrespective of party. I am trying to avoid treading in narrow party political trenches. The Home Secretary will be aware of the weight of shared opinion that has come from his right hon. and hon. Friends, which has been reflected by Opposition Members of various parties.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, as he has just started his speech. He referred to the debate. Does he agree that there has literally not been a single contribution since the debate began at about 4.15 pm that has tried to prolong the debate? Every point has been relevant and that is all the more reason why there should not be a guillotine.

Mr. Corbett: I accept absolutely what my hon. Friend has said, which reflects what a number of us have been saying to the Government. The Bill is so important that we require proper time to discuss it. There is not a shred of evidence that any hon. Member who has spoken today or in the first day's debate last week has been seeking to spin out time.

Mr. Maclennan: I have heard from a number of hon. Members repeated references to the possibility of a guillotine being introduced. As I am not privy to the usual channels, would the hon. Gentleman care to share his intelligence about the Government's intentions on the matter, if he has any?

Mr. Corbett: I can say to the hon. Gentleman only that I have heard the rumours and I have discounted them as being inconceivable.

[Mr. Corbett]

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) put the nub of the debate in a couple of sentences to the Home Secretary and his colleagues. He asked, broadly, whether the Government accepted that there was a proper difference between the national interest and the interest of the Government of the day. That is the point on which the whole argument about public interest turns. It has been suggested by some of the right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends that although no specific public interest defence is written into the Bill, that defence will somehow come up in any event and that, in the nature of court proceedings, it will be one of the factors open to the defence. Some of us are not persuaded of that, but the Home Secretary will, no doubt, try to persuade us. If the Government argue that, by implication, a public interest defence will be arrived at in trials, why not write that into the Bill? What will have been lost? The Home Secretary has said that it is in the Bill. I shall be delighted if he will tell me about it.

In the Local Government and Housing Bill, which was published yesterday, the Government have not just written such a provision on the face of the Bill, but have written it heavily in it. Clause 5 provides for the appointment by local authorities of what it calls "the monitoring officer". The officer's duty is to scrutinise any "proposal, decision or omission" or any contravention of

"any enactment or rule of law or of any code of practice"

or any "maladministration or injustice" that is happening in that local authority's area. Indeed, it goes beyond the bounds of that local authority, whose representatives can serve on bodies such as police committees, local fisheries committees—we all know what nuisance they get up to—national park committees and any sub-committees of the bodies of the appointing council.

If that provision——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report Progress.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Official Secrets Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Official Secrets Bill

Again considered in Committee.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Corbett: I shall not labour my point, except to say that if it is important—as the Government seem to feel it is—to write into a local government Bill the role of an officer to look after the public interest, how much more important it is to provide for the public interest in the Official Secrets Bill.

Throughout the debate we have had exchanges about the matter of harm, with which the public interest defence is linked. The Government's case is that harm is caused purely by disclosure, and that it does not matter whether it is a little harm or a great deal of harm. That is what the Government have asserted. The Home Secretary started this argument during our debate on 22 July, when he said:

"Our central objective is to narrow the law so it applies only to disclosures without authority of official information which"—

these are the words of which I wish to remind the Home Secretary—

"is likely to give rise to unacceptable degree of harm to the public interest."—[*Official Report,* 22 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 1413.]

Those were the Home Secretary's words, and he is not a man to use words carelessly. On that occasion he acknowledged that there were different degrees of harm. If there is an unacceptable degree of harm it follows in logic that there must be acceptable degrees of harm. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) reminded us, that is what the Franks committee said. One of the major points in its report was that the Official Secrets Act should come into force only where there was serious harm or serious injury.

The Home Secretary took us on to that ground, and it must have crossed his mind that if he had acknowledged the two principles in the Bill—that the degree of harm was measurable and that it had to be measured in relation to the public interest—we should not have had to spend all these hours on the amendment. If he told us that he is now willing to think again, on the basis of what has been argued so forcefully and eloquently by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, most of our differences over the Bill—though not all, by any means—could be put on one side and we should make much easier progress.

I do not want to waste the time of the House, but the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) raised the issue of public health and safety. Unless the Home Secretary can give us an assurance that under no circumstances will anyone who reveals anything touching on public safety and health be caught by the Bill we shall be in trouble.

If the Secretary of State will bear with me for a minute I will ask him a question, although I suspect that he will give me a different answer from the one I want. Many hon. Members have rightly mentioned the honest and loyal civil servants who know that suspected crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect of public duty or threat to public safety has been going on. That is what has made this debate so important.

But the Government are saying "Mum's the word". They say, "Crawl up this route. Talk to the next man up the ladder and hope to the heavens that he will do something about it."

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup took us through two scenarios where, for the most understandable reasons, there would be occasions where that would not happen. I find that notion deeply offensive to our public servants whether they are in security or intelligence, or merely pushing a pen in Whitehall.

It needs to be said that we are dealing with the morals and standards of public service. We have a right to expect—and we have had it by and large over the years from those who serve the public and those whom we employ on our behalf—that they should stand guardians of the public interest against the all-embracing powers of the Executive.

There is a fundamental difference between us on this matter. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup also referred to it. The question is not simply about where suspected wrongdoing is discovered. Let us accept that in nine cases out of 10 it is put right and that is properly the end of the argument. But as the right hon. Member said,

there are circumstances where that wrongdoing is so wicked and against the public interest that the public have a right to know what was done, that it is being put right and that the Government of the day, of whatever colour, will take steps to see that it never happens again.

I want to put to the Minister a case that has already been referred to in our debate. We now know, from the release of official papers, rather than from the work of a whistleblower, that in 1957 following an escape of strontium 90 from Windscale, as it was then known, the then Conservative Government organised a massive cover-up. The accident contaminated milk from 800 farms. That case occurred even before the notorious fire at the plant, where the truth was also bent.

Secret papers were released on 1 January this year. They reveal that no information about that Windscale fallout was released until 18 months afterwards and details were not even given by the Government to the National Radiological Protection Board. The House will remember that in the context of the Chernobyl fallout.

Indeed, the Medical Research Council helped to mislead people about the true extent of the danger by relaxing its standards for safe consumption of the radio-nuclide, so making the contamination appear innocuous. In the face of what we now know to be a Government-organised cover-up, was it or was it not in the public interest at the time for those facts to be made freely available?

Secondly, should such an incident happen again, with a similar cover-up, is it not the case that under the Bill a civil servant who revealed that cover-up would run the risk of prosecution? Perhaps the Home Secretary will be able to tell the House.

There should not be retribution but reward in a democracy. By that I mean public thanks for civil servants and others who speak up on behalf of the people whom hon. Members represent against wrongdoing, neglect of public duty, fraud, abuse of authority, or crime. Illegal acts—yes, even by members of the security and intelligence services—cannot and should not be overlooked in a democracy. It comes down to this: no person in a democracy should be placed above the law.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful to the Committee for the opportunity to speak, as some hon. Members have sat in the Chamber for five and a half hours wishing to take part in the debate. I echo the points that have already been made. It has been an important debate on one of the most important issues that we shall decide in this Parliament.

I support the major thrust of the Bill. There are several weaknesses in the amendments. Much of what was caught by section 2 of the original legislation will not be covered by the criminal law. A typical example is the White Paper on the National Health Service. That document was leaked to the hon. Member for Livingstone (Mr. Cook). It will not be caught by the Official Secrets Bill. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) referred to the Windscale leak. Provided that that was not a military establishment, and I understand that it was not, it would also probably not be caught by the Bill.

Many hon. Members have ignored the pillar of the Bill, which is the harm test. The prosecution must prove that harm has come from disclosure. It is a defence for a Government official who made a disclosure to show that it caused no harm to the public interest. He can also argue in court that the result of his disclosure was beneficial and that, therefore, there was no harm. Those points have been ignored by many hon. Members. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent a Member of Parliament receiving a disclosure other than from somebody who is notified, provided that the notification of that disclosure is used responsibly. That factor, too, has been forgotten. It has been argued that disclosure to a Member of Parliament will be harmful.

Hon. Members have referred to one or two examples. First, Captain Scott revealed the state of British armaments and the weakness of British tanks. That was a typical example, in which there was no harm in disclosure. Secondly, I refer to the informaton that Sir Winston Churchill received before the last war. Where was the harm in that disclosure? There was none. Civil servants would have had the defence that is laid down in the Bill.

Much of what has been said about the Bill is not correct. Hon. Members are not looking carefully at the small print in the Bill. They do not realise that the extent of its protection is far greater than many of the Bill's opponents have given it credit for.

10.15 pm

There are fundamental flaws in new clause 1 and new clause 4. Credit is not being given for the fact that the harm test goes much further than a superficial examination reveals The two new clauses provide for a subjective test. Arguments have been put forward against the Obscene Publications Act where there is a subjective test.

In the prosecution of "Last Exit to Brooklyn", there was a conviction in one area and a acquittal in another. A jury in one area decided on a conviction in regard to "Lady Chatterley's Lover", while there was an acquittal by another jury. According to the new clauses, a jury would decide on the public interest. A jury in Manchester and a jury at the Old Bailey might disagree about the public interest; a jury in Leeds and a jury in Edinburgh might also disagree. Hon. Members should imagine being a judge directing a jury; they would have to decide what the public interest was. If hon. Members had to design a directive and a test they might not think it easy.

The second argument is more important. The test in new clause 4 is the public interest. What is the public interest there? Under new clause 4 it is what the discloser decides that it will be. Subsection (1) says:

> "It shall be a defence for a person charged with an offence under this Act to prove that the disclosure or retention of the information, document or other article was in the public interest insofar as he had reasonable cause to believe that it indicated the existence of crime, fraud, abuse of authority, neglect in the performance of official duty or other misconduct."

The public interest decision is taken by the person making the disclosure. He has to decide whether something is worthy of disclosure. If he is wrong, untold harm will be done to the public interest purely and simply on the subjective judgement of that individual. A jury will consider not just the harm but the overall position. The jury will consider whether the person had reasonable cause to believe, rightly or wrongly, that disclosure should have been made. As a barrister with much experience, I urge the Committee to consider whether anybody would be convicted under new clause 1 or new clause 4.

The difference between the Government's proposals and new clauses 1 and 4 is that the Government's proposals take into account the damage and the harm to the national interest. Neither of the new clauses does so.

[Mr. Hind]

All that they do is to consider the individual making the disclosure. Through the establishment code and other provisions in the Bill, there are plenty of ways in which someone who feels that he has information to disclose, such as Captain Scott or the civil servant who briefed Churchill, can get that information over without falling foul of the Bill. I urge my hon. Friends to reject the amendments.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Hon. Members have been talking for hours about the public interest. Of course, it is central to the law as it exists and as it will be after the Bill becomes law. That is not the same as a specific public interest defence in court where the burden is on the defendant to prove something. Those who tabled the amendments are asking for something to be done against the defendant. The defendant will have to prove his innocence under the amendments that have been tabled by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee. I am against such a specific public interest defence. Therefore, I am against the amendments and the new clauses.

There is one stark, glaring and serious problem with such a specific defence, which appears to have been missed in all the discussions that I have heard. If the defence fails and the jury says that the accused is culpable, that what he did was not in the public interest, it is too late—the harm has been done and nothing can correct it. The secret is unjustifiably out. The agents are dead. There is no hauling back. That is what is wrong with a specific public interest defence.

By having such a defence, we will encourage the unstable person to leak. We will encourage the person who wants to make money out of his book to leak and then to claim that what he did was in the public interest. What is wrong with such a defence is that it encourages leaks and there is no going back, if the jury should say that it is an unwarranted defence, because the harm has been done.

The question is whether the arguments for such a specific defence are stronger than those against it. Is such a defence necessary? I believe not, and I hope that the Government will stay firm for the following reasons. First, in five out of the six categories of official information, the Government are providing in the Bill much better than a public interest defence. They are providing the test of harm, which the prosecution must prove and not the defence. The prosecution will not succeed if it is obviously in the public interest that the leak was necessary. The man will go free.

The public interest might also prevent the Director of Public Prosecutions, or whomever makes the decision, from initiating a prosecution at all, because he will take into account the public interest explanation and may say that the prosecution is not likely to succeed. In any case, a judge might stop the trial halfway through because of insufficient evidence of harm. All those are steps for the protection of the accused, which will, for the first time, be written into our law if the Bill is passed.

The trouble with a specific public interest defence is that it presumes that the matter might go as far as the defendant, who then must explain himself and, as everybody knows, it sometimes happens that an innocent defendant is not believed. The jury may say, "We do not believe this public interest defence. We do not believe a word the man has said. We believe he has lied from beginning to end." The man will then be convicted—whereas, if the test was purely one of harm, he would never have been charged, or, if charged, he might have been acquitted halfway through the case because of the inadequacy of the evidence.

Secondly, where the accused is not a Crown servant, the prosecution must prove even more. It must prove he had good reason to know that harm would be done, which is a much harder task than under the present law.

Thirdly, and this has preoccupied the House for much of the debate, in the one in six category—the case of a member or former member of the security or intelligence services where harm need not be proved—there are other reasons for saying that a specific public interest defence is not appropriate.

Fourthly, it is simply not true to say that the honest whistleblower cannot blow the whistle without being convicted of crime. It is nonsense, because he can go to the staff counsellor without being convicted. If he does not like what the staff counsellor says, he can go to the Minister without being convicted. If he does not like what the Minister has to say, he can go to his Member of Parliament and say, "I am bound by the Official Secrets Act"—*[Interruption.]* It is no use shouting. If hon. Gentlemen listen they may hear what I am attempting to say.

The whistleblower can go to his Member of Parliament and say, "I cannot tell you precisely what is wrong, but I can tell you that I am appalled at some crime, some dishonesty, some fraud, which is being perpetrated in my department." And the Member of Parliament, exercising his right in that capacity, will knock on the Prime Minister's door—if it is a Member of the Opposition and he is terrified of doing so, he can knock on the Home Secretary's door or the Foreign Secretary's door or any one of those doors in the corridor—and the matter will be examined. That is true under any Government, and authority will be given to the whistleblower to explain precisely what he is complaining about without any question of prosecution. That is how the law operates and how the law would operate after this Bill became law—*[Interruption.]* I know that my hon. Friends are in a good and merry mood at 25 minutes past 10, but it does not alter the fact that the whistleblower has a number of avenues short of going to the *Sun* or the *Daily Mirror* and saying "I have a load of secrets; how much are you prepared to pay for them?"

Security Service people are not ordinary citizens whom we are afflicting with some terrible deprivation of their liberty. When they are at work they are very special people and they know that they are deprived of the right to speak freely on security matters when they volunteer for their job, go to work for the state and take money and a pension. The public have a right to expect that those who are paid to protect the nation's secrets do just that. They know what they are about. They are not afflicted and they are certainly not afflicted when they are not betraying the country's secrets.

If a public interest defence were given to them we might have more of a slightly unstable or slightly dangerous people of the character of Peter Wright, whom hon. Members throughout the whole of the "Spycatcher" matter castigated as being a less than favourable person, even though they supported the case against the Government. For all we know the secret service may have a lot of people like that. We have certainly heard in our debates about a number of people who want to sell for

money the secrets that they have learnt in the service. If we provide the public interest defence we are telling those people that they can always contend that what they did was done in the public interest.

Lastly, if we do not give a public interest defence to five of the six categories where the prosecution have to prove harm, we cannot give it to this category.

There are some who say, quite fairly, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), that there is always the possibility that a Government will confuse what is in their interest with what is in the public interest—of course that never happened under the regime of my right hon. Friend—and because a Government cannot decide between what is in the public interest and what is in their interest, the conclusion is that they will prosecute someone who ought not to be prosecuted. That is the logical conclusion.

Ultimately, we must strike a balance and decide where the public interest lies. Is it more in the public interest to risk encouraging the misguided leaker, whose defence is that he is acting in the public interest, or to trust the Government—whatever their colour—the staff counsellor, the Minister, the Prime Minister, the Member of Parliament concerned, or the Law Officers, who are brought in at an early stage, not to hide an offence?

In sophisticated democracies, most would prefer to trust the Government, backed as they are by civil servants of undoubted integrity who would know nearly everything that was going on.

That is the case against the public interest defence.

10.30 pm

Mr. Hurd: It would be courteous if I tried to answer some, if not all, the points made during the long debate which has gone to the heart of necessary discussion of the Bill.

It was perfectly natural that critics of the Bill and enthusiasts for the amendments to it should have taken up most of the time, although there has been a healthy redress of the balance during the past hour or so. I have even caught a glimpse of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who I know thinks we have gone dangerously far in a liberal direction.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) spoke to his new clause after I had spoken; he will forgive me if I do not go into it in great detail. I criticise it on the grounds that it would leave it to the courts to decide what was in the public interest, without guidance from Parliament, and because the courts would decide cases not necessarily on the facts but on the defendant's reasonable belief that he was acting in the public interest at the time of the disclosure. He might admit that he had seriously harmed the interests protected by the Bill; he might even admit afterwards that he had wrongly interpreted the public interest—but he would still avoid being convicted of an offence and paying the penalty for his damaging disclosure.

I missed the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), but was given some account of it. I am grateful for what he said in praise of the Bill. However, I do not accept that its effect is too narrow. Of course we want to make it effectively cover the areas in which information needs to be protected. Civil servants in the Ministry of Agriculture or the Department of Health now live with the knowledge that section 2 governs the confidential information with which they deal. It would be remarkable if this Bill covered their work. The fact that it does not is a remarkable change.

In the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office, the effect is different. Civil servants in those Departments will have to get used to the idea of tests of harm. The blanket protection of the law for the confidential documents that they handle will be removed—a considerable, but different change. So much of the argument has focused on clause 1, dealing with members or former members of the intelligence and security services who are notified, that hon. Members have tended to widen a necessarily restrictive arrangement as if it covered all civil servants. That is far from true.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) always speaks with vivid recollection of the responsibilities of his former office and of the balances that must be struck. He took us through what he called the majestic language of the Franks report, to which he put his name. I cannot refrain from reminding him that that means he put his name to the passage in it that dealt with this very matter. Speaking on a different structure, Lord Franks said:

> "The prosecution should have to satisfy the court that the information fell within a category, and that it was so classified, but the court should not be concerned with the effect of the disclosure on the interests of the nation."

The idea that the Franks report can be prayed in aid of a public interest amendment is wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) concentrated on an anecdote that clearly impressed and moved the House. I hope that I can reassure him, although I do not know all the historical detail. On the basis of what he said, I can tell him that Captain Scott would have had a far better defence under our Bill than he would have had under the existing legislation. Any prosecution would have to prove that the disclosure to his father was likely to prejudice or damage the capability of the armed forces. That would be the relevant test. Of course, it could not be met in the circumstances described by my hon. Friend. Furthermore, Captain Scott would have a defence that, at the time of the alleged event, he did not know and had no reasonable cause to believe that his disclosure would have a damaging effect. Under the existing law, therefore, he stood in jeopardy, but he would not stand in jeopardy under the provisions of the Bill.

I agree with the basic point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that the Government should not be the arbiter in these matters. That is why the Bill is constructed as it is. It asks Parliament to lay down certain specific tests. It removes the need for ministerial certificates which have held up the field for so long, and it puts the jury in control, so Parliament and the jury are at the centre of the scene.

My right hon. Friend referred to the time when I worked for him at No. 10, and it is certainly true that I learned what I know and gained many of my impressions of these matters at his knee. He will not take offence if I say that I observed at his knee a remarkably rigorous attitude in these matters. If someone had come forward in those days with a proposition that the House should be asked to pass a Bill on this matter, with no ministerial certificates and no reliance on classification of documents, and which

[Mr. Hurd]

went considerably further than the structure in the Franks report and put a great reliance on juries, he would have received an icy stare.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made a number of points. He and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) put together an amazing idea—that the Bill went in tandem with the Government's refusal to appeal in the Ponting case. I am not sure how the right hon. Member for Devonport supposes that one can appeal against an acquittal; that is something that even I, as a layman, know is not easy to do. He made a point about hearings in camera and, so as not to waste the House's time, I refer him to paragraph 146 of the Franks report which deals exhaustively with this matter. He was right about judicial review. That is to say, the general law of judicial review will allow a challenge to be brought of a decision to notify a person under clause 1 and no amendment is therefore required to secure that result.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) again produced his own story. On the facts that he stated, the two men who made the disclosures would have been able to make an extremely robust defence against any suggestion by any prosecution in respect of the harm test for defence, which would be the relevant one in that case. I do not easily see how the prosecution could have sustained its case in that hypothetical example.

I do not want to repeat to the House what I said in reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) because, unfortunately, he was not here when I spoke. However, he will be able to read what I said at some length. I listened carefully to the cases that he cited. The information in the cases that he cited came from home and referred to areas not covered by the Bill, although covered by the Act. The official concerned told him that because of the Act, he could not let my right hon. Friend have the information that he wanted, but he would not be able to tell him that in future under the Bill.

My right hon. Friend raised the case where information came not from home but from abroad—for example, from the American Government or the EEC. I can reassure him on that point. I do not see, in the case he mentioned, how either the facts that would be disclosed or the fact of disclosure could possibly have jeopardised our interests abroad, so it would not have fallen within the Bill in that case either.

I have avoided going into previous cases, but in response to the remarks of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) I would say that if in the future a civil servant—not a member of the intelligence or security services—disclosed information about public safety in a nuclear installation, he could not be prosecuted unless harm was done under one or more of the specific tests and definitions in the Bill governing security and intelligence, defence, international relations and crime.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) pursued the issue of clause 3(3), which is obviously causing difficulty, and which I have failed to get across. It is simply that, even if the prosecution chose to argue that it was the fact of disclosure, rather than the contents of disclosure, which caused harm, it would in either case have to show that the disclosure passed the test of harm affecting our interest abroad. So it is not the case that the fact of disclosure would be an absolute offence; it would have to pass the test of harm.

I sympathise with my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills because when hon. Members were criticising his amendment, I heard him say, with his back rather against the wall, "Well, at the end of the day the jury will get it right." There was a moment of fellow feeling because I have had to use that argument, too. Now we have freed him from his concern with ministerial certificates, although I admit he put them in only because he thought we would not be brave enough to remove them.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: I put them in where?

Mr. Hurd: In my hon. Friend's Bill.

Mr. Shepherd: The assertion would have been that there would have been a review procedure of them. They were not the absolute doctrine that the Home Secretary constantly seems to think they were. I wish he had read my Bill originally. That would have been a help in this process.

Mr. Hurd: I did read it, and I heard my hon. Friend explain that he put in a ministerial review because he thought we would not be brave enough to leave ministerial certificates out. We have been brave enough to leave them out, so he and I can have faith in the jury.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills made an excellent speech on his Bill about the need to strike a balance between security and freedom. In everything I have heard him say—and I must have heard almost all his speeches on this subject—he has displayed no sign of striking this balance in what I would regard as a fair way. I admire his conviction, but there seems to be no sign of understanding among many critics of this Bill how information about terrorism, terrorists, counter-terrorism and the activities of foreign spies might be disclosed, with substantial damage to the protection of the community, if a door were left open in the way this series of amendments would provide. That is the point to which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) referred.

Almost all the examples we have had have been hypothetical or about past allegedly conscientious public servants being tempted to breach the duty of confidentiality because of some good that they wanted to do. But we must take into account public servants who might have less good motives—who might have bad motives and who would be tempted or encouraged by amendments such as these to inflict quite serious damage on the interests of the citizen because they felt that Parliament had given them a way to get away with it.

I have not been particularly corrupted by office to distort my view in these matters. I believe that I should be conscious of this danger and of the gain to the enemies—not of the Government but of the citizens whom we are protecting—which is inherent in this series of amendments.

Mr. Aitken: The Home Secretary should not be allowed to get away with that reply. Although the hour is late, I must criticise his lamentable answer to what has been a great debate. It has been great because those who have sat here for six hours and 44 minutes know that across the Chamber there has been an amazingly broad measure of agreement in support of the amendment. It has been

supported by a former Prime Minister, a former Home Secretary, a former Foreign Secretary, a former Defence Secretary, the Father of the House of Commons, and a broad spectrum of opinion.

We are debating a constitutional measure which needs, if it is to survive across the generations—when different complexions of power groupings will be in place in Parliament—a broad spectrum of support. To see it narrowed down to one sectional interest is a grave mistake, not just today but for the future generations for whom we are legislating.

10.45 pm

I ask myself what is the mystery behind the Government's adamant refusal to take on board the right to allow a defendant accused of breach of the Official Secrets Act to say in court, "Please, jury, listen to my case: I acted as I did because I was trying to prevent a serious crime"—a serious fraud, a serious abuse of authority, or major misconduct or wrongdoing. What is the mystery? Why will the Government not accept a right which, as I shall point out in a moment, has been in the law for over 75 years? I can find only one reason—the quite extraordinary attitude on the part of the Prime Minister that there is no such thing as an acceptable amendment when the matter of debate is in the context of secrecy or security, that on no terms and in no conditions can such an amendment be accepted. That attitude shows a worrying contempt for Parliament and I am strongly critical of it.

The Home Secretary has produced two arguments in defence of his thesis and of his great attempt to persuade us that there is a nice cuddly, libertarian little sheep, under the wolf's clothing of authoritarianism with which the Bill and his refusal to accept this amendment are masked. He has argued that at the moment, in the law as it stands, there is no such thing as a public interest defence, but that contention does not stand up to serious examination. In his winding-up speech he did not answer the point that the right is definitely provided for in the Obscene Publications Act.

More importantly, the Home Secretary neglected the point that the 1911 Act provides for a defence of public interest. That Act was probably the worst piece of legislation ever to be passed by the House of Commons, in living or even historic memory, but it had one redeeming feature—section 2(1)(a), which provided that a person could argue that he had disclosed information in the interests of the state. The idea that that is not a public interest defence is denied by the report of the 1938 Select Committee, which I quoted, and by the example of Mr. Wigram and all the other anti-appeasement civil servants who briefed Winston Churchill. It is denied by the case of Mr. Duncan Sandys, it is denied by the Ponting case and it is denied by the *Sunday Telegraph* secrets case in which I took part.

If I really want to convince my hon. Friends that something quite wrong is being done today I will take up the challenge presented to me some seven hours ago by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). He argued that the Ponting case proved that, somehow or other, the public interest defence was there and was a real safeguard. I suspect that my hon. Friends approve of this Bill because they think, "The Pontings of this world would jolly well be convicted—and a good thing too."

Now that I have had time to look the matter up in the Library, I will give a graphic example of how a public interest defence is right and necessary, and how it once worked in a grave case in 1969 in which this House was misled. I am sorry if this embarrasses some Opposition Members opposite, but it will take no more than a couple of minutes.

The hottest foreign affairs political controversy at that time was the Nigerian civil war. I was not a Member of Parliament but a journalist writing articles in which I referred to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), for example, as a young meteor. As a foreign affairs correspondent I wrote an article based on what was known as the Scott report, which was all about the Nigerian civil war and the supply of arms to Nigeria. Before publishing it I consulted a dear friend who was then a Privy Councillor and a Member of this House—the right hon. Sir Hugh Fraser. I remember to this day how, when he first read the then unpublished copy of the Scott report, he threw back his fine Highland chief's head and whooped, "This proves they lied."

He was referring to statements made in the House, some of them by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Wilson who, in relation to British arms supplies to Nigeria, told the House on 16 May 1968:

"we have allowed the continuance of supply of arms by private manufacturers in this country, exactly on the basis that it has been in the past, but there has been no special provision for the needs of war."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1968; vol. 764, c. 1397-8.]

A few months later the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Michael Stewart, said:

"The arms which we have supplied have been broadly, both in quantity and quality, what we were supplying before war began."

The *Sunday Telegraph* secret case proved decisively that those statements were at best gravely misleading. Before the war began, Britain had been supplying something like £70,000-worth of arms per year to Nigeria. When the *Sunday Telegraph* published its article, Britain was supplying £10 million-worth of arms to Nigeria of a completely different quality and quantity than before.

Sir Hugh Fraser was right to see that as an example of the House being misled and the evidence has proved him right. That example is relevant to today's debate because it was open to the defendants in that case to argue—under the right of a public interest defence which still exists in the official secrets legislation—that a major wrongdoing had occured and the House had been misled. Therefore, there was a genuine justification for them to go before a jury and claim a defence because the Scott report was published in the interests of the state to show that the House was being misled. That is a sound, solid, copper-bottomed example of why a public defence is needed, why the public interest defence is in the 1911 Act and why it succeeded then.

If we sweep that defence away now and say that we do not need it because the Government's say-so is sufficient, we throw away a small but very important bulwark of our liberties which have defended the country well in the past. The Bill is a real sign that three terms in office have made the Government unresponsive to parliamentary mainstream opinion and reluctant to defend liberties. To use a harsh term, the Government have become far too arrogant in their belief that they have a monopoly of the right point of view. The public interest defence worked in the past and it should be maintained. It does not deserve to be obliterated by the Bill and it is a great pity that the Government will not accept the amendment.

Mr. Dalyell: Amendment No. 91 heads this group of amendments. Very often senior Ministers make speeches, leave the Chamber and return before the wind-up speeches. I want to pay tribute to the Home Secretary for having been in his place since 4 pm to listen to the debate. He will have recognised that this has been a House of Commons occasion, not a party occasion.

Will the Home Secretary go back to the Cabinet and reflect that right across the political spectrum in the House there are Members who have worked hard on the Bill and who think that on this particular issue he may be wrong? There is no shame in the Government changing their minds. If the House has reached a consensus no shame would attach to the Home Secretary and there would be no crowing from the Opposition if he changed his mind. Action could be taken in the other place.

I have tabled amendment No. 91 as a symbol. Other hon. Members may think that their amendments or new clauses are better, and they may be right, but we are voting on a symbol now.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 179, Noes 267.

Division No. 73] **[10.53 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Norris, Steve
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus

Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Committee do report progress and ask leave to sit again. *—[Mr. Hurd.]*

Mr. Hattersley: I do not propose to argue against the motion, but I want to say to the Home Secretary that if we are to have a proper debate on the Bill, such as we have had today, the time will have to come when the House sits long into the night. I hope that he understands that the fact that he asks the House to rise at this late—but not intolerably late—hour must not be used as an excuse for his future conduct, whatever that may be.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Sir Paul. You were here during many of the deliberations of the Committee, and I think that you will agree that there has been no time-wasting, that no speaker, either for or against the amendments, has tried to prolong the debate and that there have been no wasted interventions during speeches. I hope that you accept that that is accurate of the past four hours and more of debate and that other clauses of great importance need to be debated, as is agreed by hon. Members of all parties.

It would be wholly unfair, in those circumstances, if the Government were to come back next week with a timetable motion. It would mean, in effect, that there would be no opportunity to discuss matters such as we have debated today. I know that the matter is outside your control, but all I am asking is that these remarks should be placed on record because it would be wholly wrong for a guillotine motion to be tabled as a result of the Government's lack of patience.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): As the hon. Gentleman has said, that is not a matter for the Chair, but he has placed his point on record.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Sir Paul. May I draw to your attention the fact that, during the last vote, which was on the character of what many hon. Members felt was an authoritarian Government, a Government Whip was listing all the Conservative Members who came out of the Aye Lobby? That is very strange conduct in view of the fact that our votes are on record. I can only assume that the Tory Whips of this authoritarian Government intended to intimidate Tory Members into voting according to the party line. Can you confirm that intimidation is a serious breach of our Standing Orders?

The First Deputy Chairman: That is hardly a point of order.

Mr. Gorst: Further to that point of order, Sir Paul. May I make it clear that the point made by the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Cryer) has no substance as far as I am concerned.

The First Deputy Chairman: All I can say to the Committee is that the debate has been in order.

Question put and agreed to.

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That at the sitting on Monday 6th February—

(1) if proceedings on any Motion in the name of Mr. John Wakeham relating to the Water Bill (Allocation of Time) have not been concluded before Seven o'clock, the Private Business set down by direction of the Chairman of Ways and Means for consideration at that hour shall stand over until the conclusion of such proceedings; and

(2) the Private Business may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

PUBLIC HEALTH (S.I., 1989, NO. 3)

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 3), a copy of which was laid before this House on 6th January, be approved.

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 21st December, be approved.

Question agreed to.

British Coal (Opinion Polling)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

11.10 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am grateful for the opportunity to draw the Minister's attention to the concern among miners at Kellingley colliery about a survey carried out by Research Services Limited on behalf of British Coal. The Minister will have seen early-day motion 328, signed by more than 150 right hon. and hon. Members, condemning British Coal for conducting the survey.

During the week beginning 16 January, a team of researchers visited the homes of some Kellingley miners, unannounced and without prior arrangement, armed with a questionnaire which, the miners thought, sought to obtain views and information that would be helpful to a private company when British Coal was privatised.

The miners were not given sight of the questionnaire, but they were asked whether they were prepared to work for a British Coal consortium, whether they would buy shares in British Coal and whether they would work for a private company. They were asked about the state of industrial relations and morale at the colliery, what bonus payments they received and what was their standard of living.

The miners' trade union is concerned about the invasion of their privacy and their homes, as is their Member of Parliament. The miners were upset that their names, addresses and works numbers had been given to a public relations company, presumably by British Coal, without their consent. They are concerned to discover that British Coal's money—taxpayers' money—can be spent on a survey for the benefit of potential private owners. They are upset that British Coal has supplied a public relations company with their private addresses and works numbers and feel that that action could be a breach of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend on the service that he is doing to members of the mining industry and the mining community. Let me add my experience to his. When the Government have closed coal mines in Nottinghamshire, lists of miners to be made redundant have been made available to private insurance companies and brokers—sometimes on the same afternoon that the miners themselves have been told. That has happened in my area and in that of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). Is that yet another example of the way in which British Coal is flagrantly breaching the privacy of those who work for it?

Mr. Lofthouse: I thank my hon. Friend for that example. I have had it confirmed by British Coal that since the survey to which I referred similar surveys have been carried out at 70 other collieries. That gives further weight to the opinion of the Kellingley miners that a campaign is under way leading up to the privatisation of the British coal industry.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): There is a great danger in these developments. Can my hon. Friend imagine a situation where this information collected by private pollsters could be used in the event of privatisation, and where those miners who have been visited and expressed opposition to privatisation plans might be blacklisted by the companies as a result of this disgraceful behaviour of British Coal?

Mr. Lofthouse: There is always danger in this type of thing. Of course, that is why we look to the protection of the Data Protection Act 1984.

One has to understand the problems of the mining communities to realise why miners feel so concerned about such surveys. Since 1984, they have seen their industry devastated by the policy of this Government. In the area covered by the Wakefield metropolitan district council, where these miners live, they have seen the loss of 11 pits and 11,000 jobs, and their workmates and friends have been thrown on the scrap heap, some without hope of any future employment. They are aware that the average age of the British Coal work force is 34. They are also aware that the miners' redundancy payment scheme is not so generous as it was previously. They are seeing their redundant colleagues hounded by the Department of Employment, which could mean the loss of the benefits that they were promised when accepting voluntary redundancies.

Mr. Meale: Is my hon. Friend also aware that redundant miners aged 50 and over have been told by employment officers when they applied for a retraining allowance of £10 plus bus fares under the restart scheme that they could not go on to the scheme, because the £13·95 payable under the pension scheme from British Coal would cease?

Mr. Lofthouse: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing that fact to the House's attention. I was aware of that problem.

The miners are aware of the threat from privatisation of the electricity supply industry, and believe that their industry is to be run down even further before privatisation, to as few as 45,000 men. This view is supported by the report of the Coalfield Communities Campaign. They are indeed in fear of the loss of their jobs. We are talking of men with an average age of 34, without any guaranteed weekly benefits when they are made redundant, and without hope of any future employment.

The miners believe that the coal industry could be privatised before the next election. I am beginning to think that their fears might be well-founded. They are concerned by the Government's track record to date, which indicates that there will be no encouragement to replace mining jobs with alternative employment.

In the area I am referring to, there has not been any Government aid to make good the loss of those 11,000 jobs. The Government have refused to grant it assisted area status, which means there are no national Government or European Community grants. There has been no input of any alternative jobs to employ those 11,000-plus former miners.

I had the privilege this week of listening to the suffragan bishop of Sherwood, giving evidence to the Private Bill Committee on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill and the North Killingholme Cargo Terminal Bill on 31 January. I sincerely advise all hon. Members, and indeed the Prime Minister and members of the Government, to take a few moments of their time to read and digest the evidence given by the bishop. In answer to a question about whether there had been any change in miners' morale or self-confidence, the bishop replied:

[Mr. Lofthouse]

"They have a certain not actual depression but a fear hanging over them that the industry is not as flourishing and has not got the future that they thought it had."

He also told the Committee about the effect on a mining community when a colliery is closed down. He said:

"It is a pretty traumatic experience. It is expected. They know it is coming and there is great sadness because a pit village without a pit is a place without a soul."

I confirm that statement. My constituency has had the same experience over the past four years.

Miners get angry and worried when their homes are invaded by public relations people asking questions about privatisation of the coal industry. With justification, they say that it is a further kick in the teeth for miners who have always stood by the country in times of need and provided the required energy and fuel.

They know that privatisation of the electricity industry followed by privatisation of the coal industry, means a loss of jobs and possible unemployment for the rest of their lives. No hon. Member can disagree with that. The miners know what privatisation means for the coal industry. They know all about profit taking priority. They know about cutting corners and slips in safety standards. They are aware of the reason some foreign companies can export cheap coal. They know that the accident rate in South African mines is eight times greater than in this country. They know also that the accident rate in American mines is four times greater. They know what conditions in Britain's coal mines were like before nationalisation; they have been told by their fathers. I never get fed up with telling people what mine conditions were like before nationalisation, because I saw them myself.

That was the climate in the mining community when the public relations people arrived with their questionnaire. The miners want me to ask the Minister some questions. I spoke to the Minister on the telephone this morning and told him of my questions. He may not be able to answer them all, and it may be appropriate for British Coal to answer some, but I hope that he will be able to answer some.

Why did British Coal commission the survey? What were the questions on the questionnaire? What was the information to be used for? Who gave British Coal authority to release miners' names, addresses and work numbers to the public relations firm? Why was I, as their Member of Parliament, refused a blank copy of the questionnaire? Was British Coal's action in breach of the Data Protection Act 1984? Is it possible that the coal mining industry will be privatised before the next general election? Why was the local area management of British Coal not aware of the survey? Why was the local branch of the National Union of Mineworkers not informed? Why is British Coal allowed to spend its scarce financial resources—in effect, taxpayers' money—to obtain information which could be of benefit only to the private sector? As I pointed out, British Coal has confirmed to me that the exercise took place at 70 collieries.

The Government have a duty to the miners to provide alternative jobs if the industry is to be run down to the extent that I have suggested. I hope that the Minister will take note of that and attempt to answer the questions which I have put to him.

11.24 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): I congratulate the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on having secured a debate on this issue, which is important to him. I know that he has had a long personal involvement in the mining industry and that he speaks from that experience and from the heart as well.

I listened carefully to what he said and, indeed, to the interventions of the hon. Members for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) and Mansfield (Mr. Meale). I shall try to cover all the points they raised. I hope that part at least of the debate will be read carefully by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Trade and Industry.

At the outset I should stress that a decision by the British Coal Corporation to carry out surveys of the attitudes of its employees is a matter that falls entirely within its day-to-day management responsibilities. It is not a matter for the Government. I am, however, delighted to reply to any concerns about the corporation's actions that are brought before the House. Indeed, I welcome the opportunity to correct a number of misconceptions and misrepresentations that have arisen over the corporation's survey of the attitudes of its employees, some of which were referred to by the Member for Pontefract and Castleford.

First, I should like to deal with a general point raised by the hon. Member in arguing that the purpose of such attitude surveys is to usurp the function of the trade union through which employees should properly express their views. Certainly a responsible and realistic trade union has a role to play in such exchanges.

In practice, as the hon. Gentleman will know, and unfortunately in the case of the coal industry, one of he unions, the National Union of Mineworkers, has effectively cut itself off from the negotiation process with the corporation by persistently refusing to accept new conciliation machinery. That machinery recognises a substantial body of miners now represented by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. This sad state of affairs makes it vital for British Coal to conduct such surveys if it is to know how its work force feels on issues that are important to the future of the industry.

I will set out some of the key facts of this survey. First, it was not the first such survey conducted by British Coal. Indeed, such surveys have been conducted for a long time. Hon. Members in all parts of the House will be interested to know that these surveys extend back over the whole period since nationalisation of the industry. That, of course, includes periods when the Labour party was in government. I do not recall, nor do I know of, any similar complaints by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford or by any of his hon. Friends about those surveys.

Mr. Lofthouse: The Minister is right. There have been surveys in the past. Is he aware that this questionnaire, which unfortunately we are not allowed sight of, had questions on it which were never on the questionnaire, before?

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Is the Minister aware that the earlier surveys were conducted on colliery premises by British Coal and that they were

completely voluntary? The Minister shakes his head. I can assure him that that is right because I conducted some of them.

Mr. Morrison: I would not for a moment suggest that the hon. Member was making an incorrect statement to the House. Some of them might have been conducted by British Coal but, as I will explain in a second, others were not.

Perhaps, I could be helpful to hon. Members by referring to a survey which was carried out in 1976 by the National Coal Board, as it then was. That was not carried out directly by British Coal, but by an arm of Imperial college, London. The questions that were asked in 1976 were similar—I accept that they were not precisely the same, as any survey will move on as time moves on—to the ones in the survey we are now discussing. The 1976 survey related to job satisfaction and security, prospects for the industry, and there were a number of personal questions relating to the age and marital status of the miners concerned. In fact, in 1976 questions were also asked about the mineworkers' wives, which did not feature in the 1989 survey. I accept that the surveys were conducted at the pithead on a one-to-one basis, as the hon. Gentleman has said, which is a difference that I accept.

Mr. Meale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morrison: I will, but I want to answer the hon. Gentleman's questions.

Mr. Meale: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that a question which was not asked was whether or not the mineworkers would agree to privatisation?

Mr. Morrison: I can confirm that. Even if I could not have confirmed it, I would almost certainly have been able to say that I can confirm it, because I believe that in 1976 the privatisation of British Coal was naught but a twinkle in the eye of the then Government. It would, therefore, have been an unlikely question to have been asked. I can confirm that it was not asked.

Given this background, I find it difficult to understand why hon. Members are so complaining about the current survey. I am looking at like with like. There is never any obligation—there was not in 1976—on any member of the public or a householder to agree to be questioned in such surveys. I am assured that this was the case with the agencies employed by British Coal, and, indeed, the code of practice that governs the operations of such agencies —it was an opinion research agency, not a public relations agency—and, which the agencies accept, specifically rules out any pressure whatsoever on members of the public to participate. When met with a refusal, the interviewers simply walk away and pass on to the next name on their list.

Moreover, the survey referred to in the early-day motion was not, as has been reported, restricted to Yorkshire or to Kellingley colliery. The survey was conducted among a sample of the Corporation's employees at some 70 collieries. Between 1,000 and 1,100 men were interviewed, representing just over 1 per cent. of the total workforce.

It has been alleged that the method used to conduct the survey amounted to an invasion of privacy. As I have already pointed out, no invasion was involved. Those who did not wish to be interviewed could turn the agency's representatives away from their doorstep, as indeed, some did. I am also advised that the conduct of such surveys among employees on behalf of their employers is a common practice.

That is particularly so among large organisations, which find it a very positive way of seeking their employees' views. Moreover—and I have specifically asked—British Coal states that it is satisfied that it has acted in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

As said, the survey was carried out on only a sample of the Corporation's work force. At Kellingley colliery, which has a work force of over 1,600 men, the names of just under 100 were provided to the research agency, of which only 30 interviews were required for the survey. I understand that only seven of those contacted exercised their right not to be interviewed. The interviewer simply walked away. There was no debate, no argument and no compulsion. Indeed, I think that the House would agree that it would be a particularly foolhardy interviewer who would seek to argue such a matter with a miner on his own doorstep.

There has also been some wide-of-the-mark speculation about the use to be made by British Coal of the information received from such surveys and in particular about whether answers might be traced to individuals or to collieries in which they worked. I have been advised, and I can assure the House, that the results of the surveys carried out on their behalf by British Coal are presented by the research organisation in statistical form only.

The data collected are analysed at area and national level, not on the basis of individual pits, and there is no possibility that the attitudes of individual miners expressed in the interviews can be traced back to them.

Indeed, this is not the purpose of such surveys. British Coal is by no means the only employer to seek by these means to have a better understanding of the opinions and wishes of its employees. It is surely reasonable for any employer concerned about the future of its company and the health, safety and welfare of its employees to be as accurately informed as possible of its employees' views on aspects which are crucial to the current operations of the company and its future. Such surveys provide helpful feedback to employers on reaction to initiatives and plans that they may put into action.

The hon. Gentleman also suggested that this survey was in part aimed at securing information that would assist the privatisation of the industry. There is no truth whatsoever in that suggestion. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made clear on several occasions, the Government's intention is that after the next election we shall privatise the coal industry. In those circumstances it was entirely reasonable for British Coal to seek to establish how this prospect is viewed by its present employees.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the Minister giving the House a categorical assurance that there will be no privatisation of British Coal this side of the next general election?

Mr. Morrison: I can repeat what I have said. The answer is, in practice, yes, but as my right hon. Friend has said—even, I think when we had energy questions on Monday of this week—it is our intention after the next general election to privatise British Coal. That amounts to the same point as the hon. Gentleman was making in the way that I think he and I understand it.

The hon. Gentleman requested that British Coal release the information obtained by such attitude surveys. This

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again is a matter for British Coal, but I have no doubt that it will read with close interest the remarks made by the hon. Member, albeit that releasing the information is not the normal practice.

Finally, I congratulate the employees of British Coal on the really great efforts they have made to put the industry back on its feet since the disastrous events of 1984-85. Whatever attitudes they may have expressed in the surveys, they have worked hard to improve productivity. This has increased by well over 70 per cent. since the strike and within this extremely creditable record there have been some really outstanding performances.

Mr. Lofthouse: The achievements referred to have come about with a much smaller work force, and many records have been broken. Those achievements have been by men accepting voluntary redundancy. Will the Minister pass on to his Secretary of State and to the Secretary of State for Employment the present position of these redundant miners aged 50 and over who are being hounded by the Department of Employment to answer questions, and so on, which could mean a reduction in the weekly redundancy payments that they were promised when they accepted voluntary redundancy?

Mr. Morrison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy was asked a question on similar lines at Question Time last Monday. I cannot remember the precise words that he used, but I recall that he responded in a hearing sense. I shall respond in precisely the same way and shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to that point.

British Coal has come a long way, in productivity terms, since those really bad days of 1984-85. Those efforts are indicative of the basic attitude of most mineworkers towards their industry. They want it to succeed. That is the attitude most needed to enable the industry to produce assured supplies at competitive prices and so help safeguard its future and that of its employees.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes before Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 3 February 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILLS PRESENTED

LICENSING (LOW ALCOHOL DRINKS)

Mr. Conal Gregory presented a Bill to facilitate the sale of alcoholic beverages with low alcohol content: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 7 April and to be printed. [Bill 58.]

SUNDAY TRADING (REFORM)

Mr. Steve Norris presented a Bill to reform and regulate hours of trading on Sundays: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 14 April and to be printed. [Bill 60.]

LOTTERIES

Mr. Roger King presented a Bill to introduce a national lottery; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 21 April and to be printed. [Bill 61.]

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Greg Knight presented a Bill to extend protection to wild animals and domestic pets; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 28 April and to be printed. [Bill 62.]

RIGHT OF SILENCE

Mr. Kenneth Hind presented a Bill to abolish the right of silence of suspects in a police station: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 May and to be printed. [Bill 63.]

NATIONAL SERVICE

Mr. Nicholas Soames presented a Bill to set up National Service for young people: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 7 July and to be printed. [Bill 64.]

Orders of the Day

Right of Reply Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.36 am

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Before going into the substance of my speech, it is appropriate to thank those who have assisted me with the Bill. I pay particular tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who introduced the Bill last year and thus pioneered the way, and to Mr. Frank Allaun, who introduced such a Bill in the past and has struggled for the concept it embodies for years. If it will not damage his political career or mine, this week, I thank also my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who has also done valuable work on the right of reply in the past.

I pay tribute also to the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, which has given me substantial assistance in introducing the Bill. I thank my sponsors, who come from all parts of the House—and particularly those with a journalistic background. They include hon. Members who would not have introduced such a Bill in the past, in the hope that voluntary methods would work, but have been convinced by deteriorating standards in some sectors of the press that the Bill is necessary.

I start by referring to two cases, both of which feature Mr. Robert Maxwell. On 2 December 1988, a headline in the *Glasgow Herald* read: "Guardian pays Maxwell damages." In *The Guardian* on 1 April 1986—and I did not choose the date—a headline stated

"Maxwell follows Murdoch behind the wire."

The article argued that it was hypocritical of Mr. Maxwell to criticise Mr. Rupert Murdoch for the measures taken by Mr. Murdoch's companies at their Wapping premises when Mr. Maxwell, it was alleged, had taken similar measures himself.

After a considerable period, a statement appeared saying that it was wrong to draw a comparison between two very different situations. To Mr. Maxwell's credit, he donated the damages paid to him to the National AIDS Trust. The point I make is that those who control the press are not all happy to tolerate the robust comments of other newspapers; they seek redress themselves. A similar story appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*, in which a former Scottish Conservative MP, Mr. Michael Hirst, attacked Mr. Robert Maxwell over his treatment of the work force.

The story said:

"What cannot be the acceptable face of management, is to bluster around sacking, re-engaging, and sacking again employees who have given years and years of loyal service. This creates desperate insecurity among the families of those who work in these newspapers. How can a workforce be expected to show loyalty and co-operation when they are the victims of irrational and dictatorial demands by the proprietor?"

Some time later in the *Glasgow Herald*, Mr. Hirst said:

"Mr. Hirst wishes to make it clear that comments which concerned Mr. Robert Maxwell, . . .were not intended to be a criticism of Mr. Maxwell's personal integrity and apologises if his remarks were so construed."

Newspaper proprietors are keen to go to court to rectify damage which they see as having been done to them. One

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might be struck by the moderation of Mr. Hirst's comments and those in *The Guardian* compared with some of the statements about people made in the press.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Has my hon. Friend noticed the almost complete absence of reporters in the Press Gallery this morning? It is as if there is a conspiracy of silence so that the public will not get to know about the Bill. That is the attitude of the press.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Press Gallery does not come into this issue.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I failed to notice what I am not allowed to see, but if I had been allowed to see it I would have seen it.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): It is fair to tell the hon. Gentleman that three of the national papers have long leaders about the Bill. There is extensive coverage in this morning's press.

Mr. Worthington: I am astonished that the Minister has had such a sleepless night; that must be the case if he has had time to read the newspapers.

I shall now deal with a typical story from *The Sun*. In the issue dated 20 January there is a headline which says, "Apology: the Navy and drugs". The apology says:

"On February 10, 1987 we published an article entitled 'HMS Junkie' in which we alleged that certain members of the Royal Navy, whom we named, had been involved in taking and dealing in drugs.

We now recognise that these allegations"—

seven naval ratings are then named—

"were totally unfounded and that those men have never had any involvement with drugs.

We would like to sincerely apologise to them, and to the Royal Navy, for those false allegations and for any distress and embarrassment caused."

That apology is on page 16 of the newspaper and deals with a story published on 10 February 1987.

It was difficult to find a copy of *The Sun* for 10 February 1987, but with the invaluable assistance of the Library I managed to do so. The headline of the story says, "drug parties on the ocean wave". I shall not read the whole story, but it mentions HMS Ark Royal, HMS Juno, HMS London and the minehunters Wilton, Hubbertson, Iveston, Bronington and Bossington. It is alleged that these are "ships of shame".

It would certainly be of interest to the public if Her Majesty's Navy had at the helm people who were crazed with cocaine, hashish or other drugs. However, it is unforgiveable that the story seems to be based entirely on the account of one disaffected seaman. There seems to be no evidence of any checking and the story names

"seven shameful sailors our source says have been involved in the Royal Navy's drug dealing scandal:".

Although the ratings are named, there are no details of any allegations.

It is unforgiveable that, for nearly two years, the integrity and honour of those naval ratings have been slurred. Clearly, the ratings first had to persuade the Navy that the allegations were untrue, and they would certainly have been subjected to considerable investigation by the Navy. Then they would have had to persuade the Navy to take up their case. The Navy against Rupert Murdoch is a fair fight, but seven naval ratings on their own against Rupert Murdoch is not a fair fight.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman intended but has omitted to tell us on which page of *The Sun* the original article was published. How much of the page did the article take up, and what prominence did the newspaper give to it?

Mr. Worthington: I regret that I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's first question because all that I can find is a photocopy from a newspaper library. Unfortunately, the photocopy does not contain the page number. However, the story is given considerable prominence. It took nearly two years for a meaningless retraction to appear on page 16 of *The Sun*.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I am interested in the two-year interval that the hon. Gentleman mentions. Presumably a full inquiry had to take place and representations had to be made to the newspaper or the Press Council. That would take some time. How would the Bill speed up the process? To my mind the Bill merely seeks to extend the time during which people can make complaints through the various channels that will be open to them. Like our ombudsman system, the whole thing could become clogged because of too many applicants.

Mr. Worthington: A newspaper would be challenged to produce evidence. If it failed to produce that evidence, which *The Sun* clearly failed to do over two years, it would have to give speedy and similar prominence to a right of reply by the people who had been defamed. The Bill refers to the time scales involved. The Bill does not seek to replace the courts, because people could still go to court —if they have the resources. The Bill would give what is admittedly a second-class form of law to the great majority of people who currently have no protection from the law.

The Bill's provisions are different from existing laws, in that it does not cover broadcasting; there are two reasons for that. Hon. Members will be aware of the difficulties about time for private Member's Bills. I know that major changes in broadcasting are envisaged, and the Minister will probably say that, given the legislation proposed for next year, the Government would not want my Bill to go in ahead of it.

The other change from previous proposed legislation is that my Bill is simplified to refer only to factual inaccuracies. There might be difficulties because of misrepresentation, partiality or omission, which are difficult to deal with in the framework. That increases the Government's difficulty in rejecting the proposal.

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): How does the hon. Gentleman's remedy compare with the existing remedy of complaint to the Press Council? He accepts that his remedy only corrects an inaccuracy and that that may be part of a much wider complaint.

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful for that intervention. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will be happy if I deal with it later. I have quite a full section on the Press Council. I hope to be able to answer his query then.

When will the Minister recognise that self-regulation is not working? What excesses will have to occur before the Government say that they must do something about this? What has been so striking in preparing the Bill is that no

one now says that there is not a huge problem. What is the problem, and why are the proposals to refer to the Press Council so inadequate?

A market problem is at the base of the issue. After the domination of television—and television is the major means by which people get information about the world—newspapers have had to choose between news, analysis and entertainment. Some have chosen entertainment. Some newspapers such as *The Sun* and the *News of the World* have shown that they can be extremely popular and successful in terms of readership by going down market. By following that commercially successful route, they are putting obligations or pressures upon other newspapers to do the same. That means that papers require a diet of ever more outlandish stories, featuring familiar topics such as royalty, sex, soap stars, and so on.

To attract readers, one has to be ever more outrageous. The logical outcome of that pursuit of readers and outlandish stories has now appeared, and it is called *Sunday Sport*. We used to have the old dictum that "dog bites man" is not a story. "Man bites dog" is a story, and now the logical outcome of that is "man has baby". It is difficult to see how much further one can go in an attempt to find a story.

Because they are newspapers and not comics, they must use real people. I am told that adults on the Tokyo underground read comics. Adults on the London Underground read tabloids—not all the tabloids, but some tabloids—with stories about real people.

Fact is expensive to produce. Fiction is cheaper. In the market war there is a new meaning to the old phrase "necessity is the mother of invention". People are now being used as bait to get more readers. It is right that newspapers should compete in the market. No Opposition Member would argue that they should do anything other than compete. But the Minister himself said last year that even in a free market it is wrong that the press should be able to defame with impunity. That is happening at the moment, and we must change the rules.

The market is impelling newspapers to behave in that way. They have chosen a style that sells newspapers. There is no way that they will stop that style because of a future sermon by Louis Blom-Cooper QC. It will be a good, estimable sermon from a man whom I deeply respect, but it will have no impact on market forces.

Kenneth Morgan, the director of the Press Council, has admitted that the Press Council and its work has been put at risk not by extreme politicians of Left and Right but by the conduct of the press itself. The tabloids are in a circulation war driven by market forces. We must change the nature of that market.

If papers invent news—lie about people—then, and only then, must people be given a right of reply with the same prominence. That would considerably lower the appeal of such newspapers, but it is by the decision of those newspapers if the right of reply is printed. Many newspapers get their stories right and practise good journalism. Those which invent stories about people do so because of incompetence or malevolence, not because they are honourable pursuers of the traditional and important role of the fourth estate in seeking to expose inadequacies in society.

Hon. Members might say that the press will learn its lessons from recent damages in cases in which juries have shown their disgust. The Elton John case award was £1 million. I refer also to the Carmen Proetta case, the Queen, and, going back a little now, the Jeffrey Archer award of £500,000. Such people can use the courts because they have resources behind them. There is now a great risk that papers will realise that it is too expensive to attack those with resources, and will turn more on the defenceless, and ask "Is this person able to sue?"

They already do that. In my research for the Bill I was shocked by how often I heard the expression "you cannot libel the dead". People wrote to me about the distress which the demolition of the reputation of their loved ones had caused them. We are seeing simply the worst kind of bullying journalism. Not only the dead but the majority of people in this country fall outside the protection of the laws of defamation.

At the moment, all we have is the Press Council. No one with money and sense would use the Press Council, because there is an alternative route. I say that because the Press Council is owned by newspaper proprietors, and half its membership comes from the newspaper world. But that does not include journalists from the National Union of Journalists who, as a vote of no confidence some years ago, withdrew from the Press Council. It has never worked properly. It disobeys the fundamental rule of justice that the judge or jury should be distant and impartial and should not be connected with those who bring forward a case.

The Press Council's first legitimate objective is to defend press freedom. It cannot also be the body that defends people against the press. I could not propose the abolition of the Press Council. The Press Council has a legitimate role to defend the press or lay down decent standards of conduct for journalists, but it cannot be the body that protects those who are abused by the press. Because of its methods, the Press Council is massively flawed.

Mr. Renton: I agree that the withdrawal of the NUJ from the Press Council was an important but retrograde step. Has the hon. Gentleman seen the letter from the docklands branch of the NUJ that appeared in *The Times* on 27 January, which not only advocated the return of the NUJ to the Press Council but said that NUJ membership of the Press Council would be debated by the union's delegate meeting in April, proposed by the docklands branch and representing many journalists on national newspapers?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): That is the Wapping branch—the Sky pilots' branch.

Mr. Renton: Perhaps that is the answer.

Would the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) like Labour Members who are members of the NUJ to use their influence to persuade the NUJ to return to the Press Council? There is clearly some movement in that direction.

Mr. Worthington: The Press Council would be strengthened by the presence of the NUJ, but I doubt whether that would strengthen the Press Council's adjudication role. The structure of the Press Council is fundamentally flawed, and while the presence of journalists on it might be welcome, it would not remedy those flaws.

In 1988, the Press Council received 1,395 complaints, 888 of which were withdrawn. I am convinced that the major reason for that withdrawal was lack of faith in the

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procedure. Not only were 888 complaints withdrawn, but 228 were disallowed; well over 1,000 of the 1,395 complaints made did not come before the Press Council. A mere 4 per cent. of complaints were upheld.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Press Council goes to some lengths to persuade people to withdraw their complaints? Sometimes people have not withdrawn complaints voluntarily but have been given many reasons why they should do so. The 78 or so cases that were successful is a large increase compared with four or five years ago, when the figure was seven, eight or nine. That change occurred only because of the pressure brought about by measures such as the one that my hon. Friend is proposing.

Mr. Worthington: I was unaware of the efforts that the Press Council made to persuade people to withdraw complaints.

Mr. Ashton: I have been before the Press Council, losing one case and winning another—somebody took me to the Press Council and I took them before it. People tend to believe that they will have an interview at the Press Council. That is not so, because they have to write evidence, receive it and write back. It involves typing many thousands of words, which the average person in the street has not the secretarial help to do.

Mr. Worthington: That leads directly to my next point. The Press Council does not investigate itself; it merely passes correspondence. Some newspapers deliberately refuse to reply promptly. That is not only my view but that of the outgoing chairman of the Press Council, Sir Zelman Cowen. He said:

"Editors and those working with them must respond quickly to Press Council procedures on complaints. There are too many cases of delayed response, some of them quite disgraceful, and this contributes significantly to delays in adjudication."

What other faults are there in the Press Council's procedures? If one complains to the Press Council, one must sign a waiver saying that one will not take legal action. Newspapers have all the legal assistance they require, but the complainant cannot be represented by a lawyer. An oral hearing can be allowed at the request of newspapers, but not at the complainant's request. Above all, the Press Council has no teeth, only moral authority. I confidently predict that the Minister will say that we should wait for the new chairman to put these things right, but he has already said that he wants no teeth for the Press Council.

The Press Council has existed for 35 years. In 1962, a Royal Commission on the Press said that either the Press Council should reform itself as a matter of urgency or the Government should step in to establish a statutory body. In 1977, another Royal Commission said:

"It is unhappily certain the the Council has so far failed to persuade the knowledgeable public that it deals satisfactorily with complaints against newspapers."

It will be difficult for the Minister to convince us that tomorrow will be the answer; mañana wears off after a while.

In 1973, some editors said that the Press Council was feared, respected and obeyed. Today, it is not feared, respected or obeyed. The part remedy must be a statutory right of reply, with no ifs, buts, by your leave, or by permission of the editor. If a newspaper tells untruths about someone, he should have the right to have it corrected by the same newspaper, with the same prominence. I wish to stress that I am convinced that this will be preventive, and that newspapers will be more careful. Many of them will be completely unaffected by this legislation. It is clear from complaints to the Press Council, which are only the tip of the iceberg, that many newspapers do not bother the Press Council and give rights of reply.

I can foresee no future in newspaper-appointed ombudsmen. The job must be distinct and objective. The ombudsman must be distanced from the body against which a complaint is made. It lacks credibility for newspapers to appoint their own managing director as their ombudsman. This is not window dressing, but shows the cynicism and depths to which some standards have sunk.

Some ombudsmen appointments have more credibility. The *Times of India* recently appointed an ombudsman—the former Chief Justice of India. It agreed that it would abide by his decisions, and his remit includes even the news that was not printed. Its editor hopes that his paper will be run so successfully that the ombudsman will not be necessary.

Many journalists will welcome the Bill. It has been striking in preparing the Bill that, after I have given interviews, journalists have said, "I hope it succeeds." They are conscious of how difficult it is to work within a framework in which the editor or proprietor is not seeking the truth but asking the journalist to find a story.

The Bill is against not good, investigative journalism but false accusations. We are in favour of investigative journalism when the facts have been checked and corroborated.

The Bill is a modest measure that follows the example of other countries: my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) will deal with that aspect later. It deals only with factual inaccuracies.

It is interesting that in 1985 the Guild of Newspaper Editors said that there were difficulties about issues such as misrepresentation. It said that factual errors may be speedily established and remedied. Let us not hear it said that the Bill is not workable. It is an attack not on press freedom but on those few proprietors and editors who abuse their power. It is an extension of press freedom, whereby the wrongly accused can answer back, and in future that will be regarded as an essential civil right.

Another feature of the Bill is to set up a press commission. The Press Commission would have 21 members and would be set up in the way that we set up many tribunals. It would hear cases in which there is a dispute between an editor and a complainant. It would be independent. I see it as a relatively small body, but its size, once again, would depend on the newspapers. If the body had work to do, it would have the staff to do it; if there was no work, it would have no staff. The system will be self-regulating. If the newspapers behave, they will not have to go to the Press Commission.

The Bill also provides for a right of reply adviser, for the reasons described by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton). Many of the people who complain to the Press Council are not lettered, accustomed to go to court or to deal with official bodies. It is important that such people should receive assistance in the preparation of their case as a good piece of consumer

legislation. It is also important that the right of reply adviser should be separate from the adjudication function of the Press Commission so that it is clear that there is objectivity.

Another feature of the Bill is that the rectification of the inaccuracies of an original statement should be given prominence in a newspaper and that there should be speed. We propose a maximum of 28 days. Other proposed legislation has suggested seven or 14 days and we recognise that that might be too tight, but we must have pressure to receive a reply quickly.

I shall deal fairly quickly with the other points in the Bill because I know that other hon. Members want to speak. Legal aid should be introduced for defamation cases. We shall hear a speech from the Minister,—I am sorry to be prescient, but I have heard it before—saying that that would be too expensive and that, apparently, in the constituencies of other hon. Members there are many people who are unhinged or unbalanced and who will use legal aid to spend public money in an irresponsible way.

I am perfectly willing to listen to the Minister explaining how a quick route in defamation cases can be introduced or that a screening device can be worked out for excluding meretricious cases. But it is unacceptable in a free democracy that 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. of the population have no redress under law. If the Government say that they cannot accept legal aid for defamation cases, they are saying that we live in a society that excludes the majority of people from legal redress in defamation cases.

Mr. Garry Waller (Keighley) *rose*——

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I call the hon. Member for Keighley.

Mr. Darling *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I beg pardon. To whom was the hon. Gentleman giving way?

Mr. Worthington: To my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), but I have no prejudice against the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller).

Mr. Darling: Is my hon. Friend aware that when anybody applies for legal aid, no matter what the subject, he has to establish probable cause, so that if someone sought legal aid to raise an action for defamation, he would have to satisfy the legal aid committee that he had probable cause? That screening would stop vexatious or frivolous complaints. There is no reason, therefore, why legal aid should be denied in this category when in many cases, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) has rightly said, it is a case of David against Goliath, in which the odds are heavily stacked in Goliath's favour because David does not have the stones to throw.

Mr. Waller: I agree with the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) that it is unsatisfactory that such a large proportion of the population should be disqualified from bringing defamation cases because of financial circumstances. But it is correct to say that Governments of both parties have been reluctant to embark on the step he has suggested because of the cost. Has the hon. Gentleman considered the Green Paper on contingency fees that was produced recently by the Lord Chancellor's Department? Does he agree that contingency fees might be one acceptable way not only to screen out those cases where there is no basis for going to court, but to proceed without considerable costs falling on the public purse?

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful for that intervention. There are ways of solving the problem. For the Government to say that they are willing for the majority of people to have no legal redress is simply inadequate. I hope that the Minister will give some deep thought to that issue, because many hon. Members recognise that the present law is wholly inadequate in that respect. For the Minister to say, "We can't afford it," or, "Public funds can't be made available for that purpose," is a deeply inadequate reply.

Clause 9 is included on the assumption that the rest of the Bill is passed. It is recognised that, at present, some of the awards for alleged damage are frankly excessive. A growing body of opinion is upset about the amount of damages given to some "public" figures compared with the damages received in criminal damage cases or for industrial injuries. At present, the only deterrent for defamation is the amount of damages that juries are handing out. If the law were rectified and the Press Commission were established, there could be a case for saying that judges should decide the amount of damages. Clause 9 is dependent on the rest of the Bill.

I hope today that the Minister, in his cheery way, will not give us the Home Office's 35-year-old speech on the topic.

Mr. Renton: The vintage speech.

Mr. Worthington: If the Minister were to look in "Roget's Thesaurus" for synonyms for vintage, clapped-out would be one of them. What shall we hear in his speech? We shall hear that some newspapers are deplorable, but that we must wait for the Press Council to get its act together. He will say that the Government may have to act one day, but not yet, and that there is a new chairman of the Press Council, so he must be given a chance. But patience and moderation do not work with some personalities. The school bully does not recognise reason. Patience and moderation do not work against the sheer power of market forces in which the tabloid newspapers are trapped. Perhaps the Minister will tell us when he will recognise that matters have gone too far. The sponsors of the Bill recognise that matters have gone too far and the Minister must do better than he did last week, when his speech reminded me of "Alice in Wonderland".

We must take action to prevent ordinary people from being abused. Such abuse is not a necessary evil of a free society, as the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) said in 1983 when he was Minister of State, Home Office. The much respected Hugo Young of *The Guardian* said this week:

> "The very function of journalism is being defiled by the reckless transgressions of the biggest operators."

No good newspapers will be affected by this legislation. Good journalists have nothing to fear.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman referred to the respected journalist Hugo Young. May I remind the hon. Gentleman that in Hugo Young's column the week before last he said that if newspapers went on the way they were

[Mr. Renton]

now, politicians would soon come to be believed more than journalists. Does the hon. Gentleman think that that would be a good or bad thing?

Mr. Worthington: There we have a trailer for the Minister's cheery reply.

In any questioning democratic society there is the expectation that people will legitimately be sceptical and cynical about politicians, and that is quite right. Journalists, some of whom consider themselves to be on the side of the people, have achieved such a reputation that they rank below politicians in the public opinion polls. I see no reason for that state of affairs, and I should like to end it.

The Scottish editor of *The Sun*, Mr. Jack Irvine, recently wrote to *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland* of a journalist's obligation to check his facts and to endeavour to produce a balanced report. Mr. Irvine has it absolutely right when he says that no journalist who did that would ever appear before a press commission. Those who do not should be obliged to give the right of reply to those about whom they have been wrong.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In view of the large number of hon. Members who are seeking to catch my eye, I appeal for brief speeches.

10.21 am

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I hope that I shall set an example with my brief speech. I congratulate the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on two grounds. First, I extend the traditional congratulations on his good fortune in coming high enough in the ballot to have a chance of introducing legislation which may be passed by this House and, in due course, by the other place—a good fortune that I enjoyed some years ago. Secondly, the whole House will congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the reasoned and reasonable way in which he advanced his argument. Those arriving in the Chamber with neutral opinions—I am a romantic, and assume that that happens from time to time—will have found themselves persuaded by his eloquence.

I do not regard the Bill as a change of law. It is merely a change of structure to enable us to establish what is already the law of the land—that people shall not be traduced or libelled in public print. That must remain the law of the land. In practice, however, the right under that law can be exercised only by a minority—arguably a small minority—of the population. We have created a structure and said that this is the law, yet in every real sense we have denied people the opportunity of exercising their rights under that law.

The Bill sets out what should be a quick and relatively simple system to replace a system that does not work. Of course it will be possible to point to inevitable grey areas here and there; it has already been suggested, for example, that the process may take a little longer than envisaged. We accept that, but we nevertheless need to establish the structure. We know for certain that the Press Council does not deal, and has not dealt, with matters properly or—perhaps a greater criticism—even fairly and that the time for waiting for it to reform itself must surely be over.

One question that we must all ask ourselves is how much influence newspapers have in moulding opinion. After all, if they have no influence at all, we might all be spending our Friday mornings doing something else. A survey conducted in 1986 showed that 50 per cent. of people did not believe what they saw on television; only 25 per cent. believed what they read in the tabloids and only 2 per cent. believed what they read in what might be termed the saucy end of the tabloid market. That was before the emergence of *Sunday Sport*, so we can only guess at what the percentage might be now. The fact remains that people who have been libelled, who consider themselves to have been seriously misdescribed, understandably believe that the message in the newspaper goes out to a large number of people by whom it is believed in whole or in part.

The Bill has already been described in some quarters as an attack on press freedom. I do not see how one can accept that argument unless one considers that freedom to be the absolute freedom to write anything, any time, about anybody. I do not think that any hon. Member in the Chamber believes that. I reiterate that, in theory, the law already provides for the defence.

No responsible editor or journalist would object to correcting matters of fact. Some time ago the Guild of British Newspaper Editors announced that it supported the principle of always correcting errors. We are talking again about errors of fact and not about opinion. A newspaper may describe one of my constituents in a variety of ways that suggest a strong opinion but may not adduce false facts in doing so. That distinction is critical.

One of our main purposes in the House is to protect those who cannot protect themselves. In a sense, all of us are here not to protect the powerful, who do not need our protection, but to protect those who cannot protect themselves. The Brazilian philosopher Frere said that to be neutral in the battle between the weak and the powerful is to side with the powerful.

This is a small Bill, simple of intent but necessary and overdue. It has my full support as a sponsor; I wish it godspeed and I hope that we shall shortly send it on its way.

10.26 am

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I hope to follow the commendable example set by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) by being brief. I am a fellow sponsor of the Bill and, like him, I begin by sincerely congratulating the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), not only on the drafting and presentation of the Bill but on the very acceptable manner in which he presented his arguments to the House.

Throughout our history, it has been an essential and paramount role of the House of Commons to check from time to time the imbalances of power and the abuses of power in society. In previous centuries we had to curb the powers of the monarchy and the barons. In the past decade, we have repeatedly been asked to pass legislation changing the balance of power between trade union bosses and others. If there is one striking imbalance of power in our society today, it is the growing power of the press barons, and it is entirely right that we should address

ourselves to whether their power has become excessive in relation to the rights of the ordinary citizens, whose rights we are here to protect.

It is no coincidence that two hon. Members who have drawn top places in the ballot for private Member's Bills this Session have chosen issues relating to the press as their subject. I, too, believe that the power of the press barons has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished.

The ordinary concern that has been expressed, and will be expressed later in the debate, about the power of press ownership will be exacerbated when we debate the White Paper on broadcasting next week. It appears to me that that White Paper contains open opportunities for that power to be further extended into other areas of mass communications.

When we consider two events that have happened in recent days, it is clear why so many of us object to the cross-fertilisation of ownership between broadcasting and the press. Let us take "Death on the Rock". There is no doubt in my mind that the coverage of, and the attack on, that Thames Television programme by Mr. Murdoch's *Sunday Times* was related to his desire to weaken the prestige of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the existing programme contractors. Unquestionably there was a correlation between the two.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) is not here as I mean no attack on him, but the only story occupying the front pages of two of yesterday's tabloid papers, *Today* and *The Sun*—wiping out everything else in this country and the world—was the news that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby had been sacked from a position on the Opposition Front Bench which most of us did not know he possessed. It is malign and dangerous that newspapers of that power and circulation should give such prominence to trivial stories for one reason only—that it gives publicity to the launch of the Sky channel.

I know that the Minister of State, Home Office, is also responsible for broadcasting. The House will have to be extremely vigilant over the next two years or so when legislating on broadcasting matters. I am very glad that the Home Office has already backtracked slightly from the text of the White Paper, but it has a long way to go and both sides of the House will come down on the Government on this matter.

Mr. Renton: I appreciate what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, but I must correct him on his point about backtracking. That is not right. We made it absolutely plain in the White Paper on broadcasting that we were laying down a set of principles to militate against cross-media ownership and a concentration of ownership. However, we also made it clear that they were only principles and that we welcomed thoughts and comments from outside to enable us to add more facts and more flesh to those principles. That is the course on which we are engaged at the moment.

Mr. Steel: I am delighted to hear that. I have just given the Minister some facts and illustrations which I hope will assist him in that desirable process. However, he has still a long way to go and we shall continue to assist him to move in that direction.

I said that I would be brief and I have digressed slightly from the immediate purpose of the Bill. We all welcome the new vigour of the Press Council and its new chairman. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie went through many of the defects of the Press Council's composition and procedure and there is no need for me to repeat them. Many serious newspapers suggest that we should not advance the Bill and we should not legislate because we should give the new chairman of the Press Council a chance. I have great admiration for him and I wish him well, but the message that must go out from the House today to him and his colleagues in the press and the Press Council is that time is running out and we, as elected Members of Parliament, are not prepared to sit by and watch the constant abuses of the citizenry of this country by the press and do nothing about it.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie referred to the Younger committee on privacy. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) will correct me if I am wrong, but I recollect that the Younger committee came into being partly because at that time there were three private Members' Bills about the press. The Younger committee concluded:

"on balance there is no need at present for a general law of privacy."

I think that the words "on balance" and "at present" were very important. Since that committee reported in 1972, the excesses of the press have become worse. That is why I am attracted by the proposal in the Bill for a statutory Press Commission to investigate and check the behaviour of the press.

I give the House two examples. I was appalled to hear that at Lockerbie some representatives were running round offering children money if they would obtain photographs of their dead friends. Such behaviour is utterly unacceptable to the House and something should exist to stop it.

If I may make a personal reference, some years ago two journalists appeared in my village pub, which is just across the road from my house, and started asking questions about my family. The publican very sensibly said, "If you have come here hoping to get any gossip about the Steel family, you are wasting your time." She got the response, "Would it make any difference if we showed you our cheque book?" Her reply was, "Yes, you can get out now." But not everyone is that strong minded and we have to be vigilant about such behaviour by the press.

Moreover, there is a new development about which I should warn the House, which is sub-contracting in the press so that newspapers can say perfectly honestly, "It was not us." Freelance agencies, which are not employed by newspapers, go round offering money, knowing that if the offer of money and the plying of drink obtain a story they will be well rewarded by the newspaper in question, and if they do not succeed, the newspaper can disclaim any responsibility. A press commission should look into such behaviour.

There are many objections to leaving matters as they are. One is that the delays in getting redress from newspapers are colossal. In my own case, of which many right hon. and hon. Members will be aware, it took one year and three months to settle out of court an action against *The Sun* and the *News of the World*. Justice delayed is justice denied, and one benefit of the system that the Bill proposes with a Press Commission is that such cases would be removed from the courts. If redress can be achieved quickly through a press commission, the administration of justice in this country might be pushed along a little more swiftly.

[Mr. Steel]

There is also the issue of the excessive costs. It is very expensive to pursue a case of defamation. In my case at the very last minute there was a good deal of argument about the enormous legal costs. The argument was not about the cost of the settlement but about the legal costs. Of course the costs incurred by the other side must also be considered. I agree with the hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller), who mentioned the Green Paper on contingency fees, and perhaps that will be relevant to our consideration of the Bill. In the meantime, the proposal in the Bill for an extension of legal aid to cases of defamation is sound, as is the proposal that the Press Commission should be able to insist on what is called similar prominence of any correction in the newspapers. Far too often, as we see in the Press Council's adjudications, some glaring and obvious prominent wrong is put right by an obscure paragraph tucked away in a subsequent edition of the paper.

Even as a sponsor of the Bill—I had nothing to do with its drafting—I do not pretend that it is absolutely perfect as it stands. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie will have to accept an amendment in Committee to make sure that we eliminate trivial complaints. The Bill as drafted is also wide open to the green ink brigade to raise trivial complaints against newspapers, but I am sure that that can be dealt with in Committee.

The Bill is well worth a Second Reading and further examination in Committee. If we keep up the pressure on the press to put its own house in order, the Bill will have served its purpose, but I very much hope that it will succeed in becoming legislation.

10.37 am

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): When I first joined the publishing house of which I am a director, there was in the reception area—I think that there still is today—a large poster stating:

> "This is a Printing office
> Crossroads of civilization.
> Refuge of all the arts, against the vagaries of time
> Armoury of fearless truth against whispering rumour
> Incessant trumpet of trade
> From this place words may fly abroad
> Not to perish on waves of sound
> Not to vary with the writers hand
> But fixed in time having been verified in proof
> Friend you stand on sacred ground
> This is a Printing office."

Many publishers would like to put forward such a notion. I speak as a publisher and as a liveryman of the Stationers and Newspaper Makers of the City of London. That is the sort of notion that we like to put forward and that the newspapers romantically put forward about themselves.

Hugh Cudlipp, writing a book about 50 years of the *Daily Mirror*, wrote:

> "This book is the story of the newspaper with the world's greatest daily circulation—London's Daily Mirror . . . Millions cherish that tabloid journal, swear by it, regard it as their daily Bible; others loathe it, curse it, reject its news and views as the modern works of Satan."

I suspect that for many years—when the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and others were first involved in journalism—newspapers were like that. However, things then changed. Newspapers had to start to compete with television and commercial radio. That had a double effect because they had to compete for both entertainment value and advertising revenue. As we all know, a large percentage of the cover price of newspapers is subsidised by advertising revenue for which newspapers now have to compete. As the promoter of the Bill, the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) said, many people now read newspapers as much for entertainment as for news, and often the two aspects become blurred.

A French newspaper editor conducted a survey of the way in which the French press presented the British royal family. It is not very different from the way in which the British press presents them. He produced the following statistics: between 1958 and 1972, French newspapers reported that the Queen was pregnant 92 times, had 149 accidents, nine miscarriages, took the pill 11 times, abdicated 63 times, was on the point of breaking up with Prince Philip 73 times, said to be fed up 112 times and on the verge of a nervous breakdown 32 times, and so the statistics continued. I suspect that the British press does not contain such a high number of reported problems, but it is not too different from the French. Those of us who watch the difficulties caused by the press to the Princess of Wales are amazed that she and other members of the royal family have the patience to put up with some of the innuendos and lies reported by Fleet street. According to Fleet street, she is constantly suffering from numerous bouts of slimmers' disease, severe post-natal depression and continuous violent rows with her husband, the Queen, Prince Philip and the Princess Royal, and gets ticked off for her misbehaviour on formal occasions.

When the press cannot legitimately include any innuendo in its story, it makes it up. One example appeared in the *Daily Mirror*—a newspaper that is often somewhat self-righteous. In 1983, it published a front page exclusive headlined

> "Diana and the little old lady"

It began:

> "Princess Diana regularly visits an elderly woman who lives in a tiny terraced house. It is one of Diana's best kept secrets and she looked taken aback when she was spotted leaving the house in a London suburb yesterday. She said, 'I have been to see an old lady friend.' The detective walked with her towards the black painted front door which was unlocked. Diana pushed it open and closed it behind her."

That is the type of fairy-tale that we expect about the royal family. The following week, the *News of the World* published an exposure and correctly reported that Princess Diana had been attending dancing classes in a studio in Chiswick. It appeared that the little old lady was 46-year-old Merle Park, the ballerina who runs the studio.

For those, like myself, who become slightly confused about fact and fiction in relation to the royal family, it becomes more amazing in relation to some of the soap operas on television. I have a confession to make. I sometimes wonder whether I am culturally qualified to be a Member of Parliament. The last time I saw an episode of "Coronation Street" was when I was in my teens and I do not think that I have ever seen an episode of "Neighbours". The way in which Fleet street treats programmes such as "Coronation Street" is amazing. Fleet street creates an off-screen soap opera of the actors' lives. Over a short period, Mr. Peter Adamson, who played Len Fairclough in "Coronation Street", was charged with assaulting two small girls in a swimming pool but later acquitted, Violet Carson, who played Ena Sharples, Jack Howarth, who played Albert Tatlock, and Peter Dudley, who played Bert Tilsey, had died, Doris Speed, who played

Annie Walker, suffered a prolonged illness, Pat Phoenix —Elsie Tanner—was stricken with pleurisy and left the series and Anne Kirkbride, who plays Deirdre Barlow was prosecuted for possessing cannabis.

Those facts may have been mildly interesting, but they did not deserve front page stories sprinkled with words such as "shock", "trauma", "drama", "disaster", and "tragedy". Fact and fiction can become merged. For example, one day *The Sun's* tantalising stories such as

"Big Mac Boy Killed By Laughing Knife Maniac"

and

"Riddle of Wife in Death Ride on M1"

were surpassed by front page headlines such as "Hilda Ogden Mugged." Was that the preview of some future script in which the indomitable Mrs. Ogden would be set upon, or did it refer to an event that had actually taken place? The answer is that Jean Alexander, not Hilda Ogden, had been robbed of a wedding ring. It was not her own ring but the worthless brass prop that she wore in the role of Stan Ogden's wife. Is that worth banner headlines on the front page?

Sometimes, the confusion seems to affect the actors. When Peter Adamson, who played Len Fairclough, heard that he was to be written out of the script, he said that he thought that the future story line would suggest that he was having a secret affair. He said of his television death and secret affair devised by his bosses:

"It's nothing more than a cheap, ridiculous, smear campaign. Their motive is to blacken my name even further. They want any sympathy the fans had for me to be destroyed —to make the name of Fairclough a dirty word."

The idea that Granada television was plotting a "sex smear campaign" against Mr. Adamson was preposterous, and even if it was doing so against the fictional character of Len Fairclough, it would hardly reflect on Mr Adamson. Fact and fiction merge so that people like me who do not have time to watch such programmes become confused. That may not be too terrible. The question of whether Len Fairclough the character and not Peter Adamson the actor was involved in the "sex smear" on "Coronation Street" may not hurt too many people.

The situation becomes serious, however, when newspapers resort to straight lies. Many hon. Members will recall one such example involving Mrs. Marica McKay, the widow of Sergeant Ian McKay, who was posthumously awarded one of the two Victoria Crosses of the Falklands campaign. When the awards were announced, the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* carried interviews with the widows of the dead soldiers. The *Daily Mirror* presented the article as an "exclusive" while *The Sun*, always wanting to be one ahead, announced that it had a "World Exclusive". That was the newspaper's first lie. Under the headline

"The Pride and Heartbreak of Two VCs' Widows"

the story began:

"VC's widow Marica McKay fought back her tears last night and said: 'I'm so proud of Ian, his name will remain a legend in the history books forever.' . . . Hugging her children at their home in Rotherham, Yorkshire, she said: 'I'm proud of Ian's Victoria Cross . . . but I'd exchange all the medals in the world to have him back.'"

If one were to reflect whether someone in Mrs. McKay's circumstances would say of her dead husband

"his name will remain in the history books forever",

the answer would be no. What had happened was that some secretaries in *The Sun's* offices were asked to think up quotations of what they would have said in the circumstances and some obliging sub-editor fitted them into the text.

One would have thought that *The Sun*, found guilty of an obvious fraud, would apologise but it nearly escaped without criticism. The story came to light only because the editor dated the story by the phrase:

"fought back her tears last night."

On the night in question, Mrs. McKay was not at her home in Rotherham but in the Howard hotel in London talking to representatives of the *Daily Mirror*. Not a little jealous of its own exclusive, the *Daily Mirror* in a leader entitled

"Lies, Damned Lies *The Sun* Exclusives",

castigated *The Sun* for its cheap fabrication.

The affair was only referred to the Press Council by *The Observer's* diarist, who encouraged his secretary, Caroline Metcalfe, to complain to the Press Council. It was then that *The Sun* topped the lot and displayed a loose grasp on reality. Instead of admitting and regretting the falsehood, *The Sun* attempted to mitigate its action by complaining that its journalists had not been able to talk to Mrs. McKay because she was with the *Daily Mirror* reporter. The *Sun's* editor said that the staff were under strict instructions not to allow any harrassment of the widow and went on to describe an unpleasant scene at the Howard hotel. Sadly, it did not occur to anyone at the Press Council to point out that the unpleasant scene at the hotel was almost certainly caused by the appearance *The Sun* reporters.

I have a little more to say about Mrs. McKay and the way in which she was treated by the Press Council because it was to the Press Council that Caroline Metcalfe, *The Observer* secretary, addressed her complaint—a case of dog eat dog. How does the Press Council treat these things? How does it respond? The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) had occasion not long ago to make a complaint to the Press Council in which he was successful. He made the complaint against a newspaper called the *Midland Chronicle*. The *Midland Chronicle*, in a sensationalised article—so the hon. Member complained —had alleged that several hundred of his constituents who lived on a local estate had been branded as prostitutes, pornographers and wife-swappers.

The complaint was resoundingly upheld by the Press Council which, in one of its most uncompromising adjudications, inflicted the severest censure on the newspaper. On the basis of admissions by the editor, it found that the article had been totally inadequately researched and was a deplorable example of sensationalised journalism of a kind likely to bring the British press into disrepute. That adjudication is among the strongest ever issued by the Press Council, and one would expect that if anyone were satisfied with its performance it would be the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East. On the contrary, however, he was largely dissatisfied with the experience—for very much the same reasons, I imagine, as those of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel).

For a variety of reasons, it was more than nine months before the actual hearing, and there was a further delay of six weeks before the decision was announced. Obstruction and delay were occasioned by the Press Council's formulation of the complaint. There was an initial exchange of three letters. The complaints secretary asked repeatedly on what basis the complaint was being made. I

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

should have thought that when a constituent has complained about the people of a whole estate being branded as prostitutes, pornographers and wife-swappers, it would be fairly obvious on what basis the complaint was being made.

The report of the upholding of the complaint was not given prominence comparable with that of the original distortion: the offending newspaper tucked the report of the decision in an inside page although the original story had been a front page lead. We all ought to reflect that those people were fortunate in having the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East as their champion—not everyone would have been so fortunate.

That takes us back to Mrs. McKay and the way in which the Press Council dealt with her. By any account, the reference to an interview that had never taken place, on a matter of some importance, was a straightforward lie. When Mrs. Metcalfe wrote to the Press Council about the *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* she said—and it is the clearest letter—

"I would be grateful if you would regard this as a formal complaint and take the appropriate action."

What reply did she get from the Press Council? This is what the Council said:

"Thank you for your letter . . . which is not being treated at this stage as a formal complaint but as an inquiry.

It is not clear from your letter whether you wish to complain against *The Sun*, the *Daily Mirror*, or both. Could you clarify this?

I would ask you to bear in mind that a complaints committee would be no better placed than yourself to assess the truth of two conflicting newspaper stories unless it is provided with independent evidence supporting one version. If you wish to pursue a complaint, would you be able to provide such information for the complaints committee?"

The original letter was clearly expressed as a formal complaint. The Press Council, unhelpfully, treated it as an inquiry to be parried with a request for clarification of the obvious. The Press Council, with all its claims to respect and obedience in Fleet Street, indicated that it was no better placed than an ordinary member of the public when it comes to discovering what goes on in newspaper offices.

The other point that emerges is that it is quite clear that the Press Council does not treat these as matters for investigation. It says that it investigates cases, but it makes it the accuser's job to prove the story. In the context of the case I have just mentioned that would not be very difficult. One has only to pick up the telephone and ask Mrs. Mckay whether she actually made the complaint. In fact, in the end it was not the Press Council which eventually proved conclusively that what had been said was a lie; it was *The Observer*, which managed to get in touch with Mrs. Mckay, who said, "I have never spoken to *The Sun*—I know that, they know that, and you can imagine what I think of the paper." So eventually the truth came out.

Two points need to be made about the Press Council—points which, perhaps, have not been made with sufficient force in this debate. First, the constitution of the Press Council states that its first objective is the preservation of the estabished freedom of the British press. As a liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers, I appreciate that all organisations of this kind throughout history have been set up to protect their members' ancient rights and privileges, and clearly that is what the Press Council is seeking to do in another guise. So the Press Council, which has no powers beyond the force of its own arguments, devotes much of its publicity to resisting those who would thrust legal powers upon it.

So far as I am aware, in recent history there has been only one significant study of the press. I refer to the report of the Third Royal Commission on the Press, which was published in 1977. That commission concluded that, unhappily, it was certain that the Press Council had so far failed to persuade the knowledgeable public that it dealt satisfactorily with complaints against newspapers, notwithstanding that this has come to be seen as its main purpose. That was in 1977. The McKay incident occurred in the mid-1980s, and I am sure that other hon. Members will wish to refer to other cases.

What is the best way forward? Legislation is being debated today. It is fair to point out that the Third Royal Commission on the Press in 1977 said:

"We believe that the press should not be subjected to a special regime of law, and that it should neither have special privileges nor labour under special disadvantages compared with the ordinary citizen. That argues against a special measure for ensuring a right of reply. We prefer a non-legal method of securing corrections."

That would be fine if one had confidence in the way in which non-legal methods worked.

I believe that the Bill should be given a Second Reading, and at this stage I look upon it wearing my hat as a liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Stationers and Newspaper Makers wishing to see the highest standards of press journalism. Wearing my lawyer's wig I will reflect, when the Bill comes back for Report and Third Reading, on whether what it does is enforceable. If it were within the power of the hon. Member proposing the Bill, I would suggest that he might think about referring it to a Select Committee, because one of the other useful things that the Bill could achieve would be for the House to call to account some of the press, the Press Council, the Guild of Journalists and others as to their specific views on this measure. That would be a useful exercise, but it is a matter for the hon. Gentleman.

I enter this caveat, and I give the hon. Gentleman one piece of information, with which I shall conclude. The caveat is that, clearly, journalism is not a profession—it is the exercise by people of the right to free expression. That right being available to all cannot really be withdrawn from some. The last time that the House, so far as I can discover, sought to impose duties upon newspapers as to what they might or might not print in this way was attempted by Cromwell in 1643, when he appointed 27 licensors chosen from "the good and the wise"—schoolmasters, lawyers, ministers of religion and doctors—who ordered books and newspapers containing political errors to be burned by the public hangman. As hon. Members can imagine, that system became a means of fraud and political favouritism and was abolished in 1695. Historical precedents of attempts to regulate the press by law are thus not the happiest. Nevertheless, it is clear that a considerable body of opinion in this country and in the House is perturbed about the way in which the press operates today. There is a widespread view that the Press Council has not been discharging its duty properly, and in those circumstances the Bill is entitled to have a Second Reading.

Finally, I want to share with the House one piece of information that I discovered in my research for this debate. Consistently, and for a very long time, the number

of viewers of "Crossroads" has been very much greater than the number of votes that the Labour party ever gets at a general election.

10.59 am

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Those of us who have been participating in this longest running relay race are delighted that at long last my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) seems to be taking up the baton for the last stage and reaching the finishing post today. We sincerely hope so, because this has been going on for a long time. With the increasing evidence that a wide body of opinion wishes to see some such restraint placed on the press, it would be invidious if the House were to reject that strong public feeling.

As one who has both worked for the press and, at various times, suffered at its hands, I fully appreciate that in an industry where people are writing for that day's edition mistakes are occasionally made. Most are genuine errors because of the speed at which journalists are expected to work. With the growth of new technology, that speed has increased. I fully understand that genuine mistakes are made while writing quickly for that day's edition.

Today I had the misfortune or perhaps the good fortune to pick up *The Sun*. It is not usually my first choice of reading, but it was drawn to my attention that there was a full-page editorial on *The Sun* speaking its mind. It is headed, "Your right to know". There is a cartoon with a three quarters naked body and a sign up saying, "Minister of Bonking" with Big Ben in the background. Obviously, *The Sun* photographer is placed at exactly the right spot. The caption reads:

"Why we will fight the hypocrites and humbugs of society."

The suggestion is that Members of Parliament are particularly interested in protecting their own good name and that the Protection of Privacy Bill last week, which was unfortunately defeated, and today's Bill are simply ways that they have put forward to protect their good name. All hon. Members can discount that. We are perfectly capable of protecting ourselves. We are speaking for the vast number of people who are wholly unable to protect themselves against the excesses, particularly of the tabloid press.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): As the hon. Lady is not a regular reader of *The Sun*, did she notice how well it protected itself at this time last week? Immediately following the debate on privacy when *The Sun* was savagely criticised for specific examples from all directions, its response was to exercise a curious right of silence and not to allow a single word of the debate to appear in its columns the following day.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right and I thank him for drawing our attention to that omission.

Again, today, *The Sun* has omitted to explain what this debate is about, although today's editorial is about the right to privacy. It is worth reading some of its more hypocritical lies. It states:

"So what about the Sun? Do we make mistakes? Of course we do. Sometimes they are our own fault. Sometimes we are deceived by liars and phoneys.

And by God do we pay for them!

Whatever the cause, we accept full responsibility for any inaccuracy in the columns of this newspaper. We try to put things right as fully and quickly as possible.

To help do this better in the future we have appointed an independent Ombudsman to investigate complaints. The Sun publishes around 20,000 news items a year. They produce a handful of libel suits."

The Sun wholly omitted to mention that few people can take out libel suits. That is our point today.

Four years ago I was forced to take out a libel action against *Private Eye*. Had I been able to get a quick retraction of the inaccuracies which appeared, I would never have embarked on the long action against it. It took two years and a considerable sum before I got a retraction and, naturally, compensation. But that never fully compensates for the damage that such an attack does to the person involved and his or her immediate family. Most people want a quick retraction. They do not want to go through the pain and trauma of a libel action if that can be avoided. The whole point of the right of reply is a quick retraction of the inaccuracies that have appeared.

The Sun's suggestion that a libel action is open to everyone who feels maligned by *The Sun* is a distortion of the truth. It is that paper which today is guilty of hypocrisy and humbug, not Members of Parliament who are attempting to do something about an intolerable situation. The editorial ends:

"For the Sun's part we shall fight to stay exactly as we are.

It is not just our struggle.

It is the struggle of all those concerned for freedom in Britain."

We all know what sort of freedoms *The Sun* believes in—the freedom to attack innocent people without giving them the chance to reply unless they take out an action for defamation.

I have the dubious distinction of having been both a journalist and a Member of Parliament—the two most derided professions in Britain. I read a nice piece of doggerel by Humbert Wolfe which is worth repeating:

"You cannot hope
To bribe or twist
Thank God the
British journalist
But, seeing what
The man will do
Unbribed, there's
No occasion to."

While I would defend the majority of members of the National Union of Journalists, a growing number of journalists are forced, for one reason or another, for example, pressure from proprietors who want to increase sales, to denigrate the standards of their profession.

Like my hon. Friend, last year I attempted to introduce a right to reply Bill. We never had the opportunity even to debate it in the House, but there was much opportunity to debate it outside. I wrote to all local newspapers asking people to write to me if they had examples of the way the press had treated them or of not having replies printed to correct inaccuracies. I received hundreds of letters from people all over Britain, giving examples of how they felt they had been maligned, ill treated or unfairly presented. They were not from Members of Parliament, business men, big organisations or powerful people, but from ordinary people who felt that they had not been given a fair deal.

The examples are good, but I do not want to cite them by name because these people have suffered enough. One man lost his business, home and reputation, and was forced to make 250 employees redundant after a television

[Mrs. Clwyd]

news story attacked the product that his company supplied. I appeal to the Minister to ensure that we have legislation that forces broadcasters to be more responsible. Sales plummeted by 70 per cent. overnight. People refused to pay for work completed and the man received countless demands from past customers to take back the work done. The result was disastrous; a lifetime's work destroyed, he said. He took his complaint to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. It was upheld, but the result was a tiny correction at the back of one of the broadcasting magazines a year later. Five years after the event, the news story's claims have been shown to be groundless.

Another case concerns a family from Wales who were shocked and deeply distressed after they saw the headline of a news story reporting the inquest into the death of a son's common law wife. They felt that the heading

"Divorcee 34 dies after Drink and Drugs Session"

was at best meaningless and irrelevant and at worst tantamount to a smear, which could only cause great pain to those closest to her who were already suffering inconsolable grief. The coroner found no evidence that the woman, who died from a combination of anti-depressant drugs and a small quantity of alcohol, had intended to take her own life. The family's letter of complaint to the local newspaper was printed, despite being marked "Private."

There are countless similar cases that I could recount, but let me take a few lines from some of the hundreds of letters that I received last year:

"I think the Bill is of considerable importance and long overdue in the light of the quite appalling depths to which much of the tabloid press has sunk."

"I support absolutely—right up to the hilt—your efforts to obtain redress for everyone (rather than those with the money to buy it.)"

These quotations come from individual letters:

"The introduction of such an Act would be a democratic step forward, putting us in line with many other western countries."

"The Haemophilia Society is particularly concerned about the quality of reporting, especially with reference to AIDS. We therefore welcome any attempts at a Right of Reply."

"A statutory Right of Reply . . . would do a great deal to break down the current dominance of the media by restoring equally important democratic rights to those who are reported about and to the consumer."

"The Press Council doesn't have the teeth it should have. When it comes down to it fair play is simply something that is at the discretion of editors. Sometimes you get it, more often you don't."

"The Press Council in my considerable experience is totally unhelpful and unresponsive to the individual complainant and is wholly geared up to treat the Press with advantage."

Mr. Roger King: I have listened carefully to the hon. Lady, but I am not clear about how the Bill will put those problems right. Those reports will still appear in newspapers and they will still cause pain and hardship, if they are inaccurate. It will take some time before any redress appears in the press, by which time the damage will have been done. Surely we should aim at improving the standards of journalism in the first place, which must mean beefing up the Press Council instead of having recourse to all this additional red tape.

Mrs. Clwyd: The hon. Gentleman is determined to be King Canute this morning. He is ignoring all the arguments for change that have been put forward. There is an overwhelming feeling that the Press Council cannot do what it was set up to do, that it cannot protect the ordinary consumer. If the hon. Gentleman has not learnt that lesson, he has not been listening to the debate.

Mr. Ashton: Is it not a fact that the thought of having to print two or three pages of letters replying to allegations and having to clutter up newspapers with replies will be a severe deterrent to any editor once the Bill becomes law?

Mrs. Clwyd: That is absolutely right. The aim is to obtain a swift reply. That is the whole point of the Bill. We want a swift reply to that which is inaccurate, and that is what the Bill would achieve.

I can give another example to show how the Press Council dealt with a very serious complaint and how ineffective its ruling was. It concerns a professor at Oxford University, Professor Colin Blakemore, who was subjected to bomb scares and threats after the *Sunday Mirror* published an article that was found to be exaggerated and unfair.

Professor Blakemore was subjected to a front page story and a centre page spread in the *Sunday Mirror*. The Press Council said that the *Sunday Mirror* article was exaggerated, unbalanced and unfair. During the year, or even longer, that it took for the Press Council to make its ruling, Professor Blakemore and his family were subjected to the most extreme vilification. Reporters camped on their front door step; photographers with long lenses went into their garden; they received obscene telephone calls; all sorts of nasty things were posted through their letterbox. When the Press Councill finally published its ruling, it was to be found on page 39 of the *Sunday Mirror*, along with the gardening tips and the bingo. Unless one is interested in gardening and bingo, there is no way in which one would turn to page 39 of the *Sunday Mirror*. It was a deliberate attempt to suppress a very serious condemnation of that newspaper.

I spoke to Professor Blakemore at the time and found that he was so incensed by the treatment of his complaint that he was considering taking out an action for defamation. However, he did not realise, as many other people do not realise when they go to the Press Council, that if one does not like the Press Council's ruling one can no longer take out an action for defamation. One's rights are waived. He was doubly incensed, both by the length of time that the Press Council had taken to rule in his case and by the fact that at the end of the day he received very paltry recompense for all the suffering that had been caused to him and his family.

After a further protest to the *Sunday Mirror*, it eventually published—in lower case print on the second page—the Press Council's ruling, but at no time did the *Sunday Mirror* apologise to Professor Blakemore for the distress that had been caused to him and his family.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie made a very strong case against the Press Council. My dealings with the Press Council, particularly with Ken Morgan, have been very amiable. I pay tribute to the considerable amount of work he has done for the Press Council over the years, and I know that it is much to his personal regret that the Press Council does not have more teeth. I wish that I had the same optimism as the Minister of State, Home Office. I suspect that he will exude the same optimism today—he will say that everything will be all right because the Press Council has a new chairman. The Minister has been telling us for some time that

legislation will be introduced in response to the failure of the press adequately to regulate itself on a voluntary basis. I know that many Ministers have expressed their support, both in public and in private, for a Bill of this kind, and I am certain that if Conservative Members were allowed a free vote on this issue there would be overwhelming support for it.

I intend to deal briefly with the experience of other countries. In a conversation that I had with the Minister of State a year ago, I remember that he expressed reservations about the way in which the system was working in other countries. At least eight other European countries have the equivalent of the right of reply. The fear of the British press is neurotic. I have talked to the Guild of British Newspaper Editors and to the editors of national newspapers, both quality and tabloid, during the last 18 months. Their neurotic fear is that a legal right of reply would swamp newspapers in a tide of time and space-consuming complaints, but that fear is not borne out by the long experience of countries such as West Germany, where the system works perfectly well and does not impinge on the true freedom of the press to investigate, report and comment honestly.

Mr. Ground: I am aware from the last Royal Commission report that West Germany has operated a right of reply successfully for some years, but as the hon. Lady referred to other countries having operated such a right of reply successfully, will she tell us which other countries have done so?

Mrs. Clwyd: Certainly. They include Canada and the United States, where there is either a right of reply or an independent ombudsperson, and France. I shall illustrate my point later by explaining the experiences of those countries. It is regrettable that the Minister has not drawn on the experience of other countries during our previous debates—not even to argue against the right of reply—but I think that he will find that experience proves the opposite of the case that he puts.

In France, the right of reply for both private citizens and representatives of organisations has been enshrined in law since 1983. Under article 13 of the Press Freedom Act editors are required to insert, within three days of receipt, the replies of any persons named or referred to in a daily newspaper or periodical article, on pain of a fine. The reply must be inserted in the same place and type as the article to which it refers and there must be no alteration. During elections, the three-day limit laid down for insertions is reduced to 24 hours for newspapers.

Since 1975, the law in France has been extended to broadcasts on public radio and television, although it applies only to individuals, not to representatives of organisations. During the three years before 1979, the right of reply was accorded to only 19 people on television and 10 on radio. It could be said that to introduce a law that applies in only 29 cases is not a strong argument for that law, but the important point is that its supporters say that its very existence has probably stopped hundreds of such offences being committed on air.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, a right of reply is central to state press laws—and has been so since the time of Bismarck in 1871. Any person affected by a factual statement or printed work can send the editor a signed statement of reply within three months. The reply must appear in the same section and typeface as the original offending text and will be printed as a letter to the editor.

The largest selling newspaper in West Germany is *Bild* with a circulation of about 5 million a day. It is owned by Axel Springer, whose editorial policy is hostile to the Soviet Union and hawkish in relation to arms negotiations. However, despite that, the newspaper estimates that only 50 counter-statements are published in *Bild* each year. The magazines—*Der Spiegel* and *Stern*—are both popular and report that they draw 80 demands for publication of a counter-statement each year, but that only 15 appear as such. About 20 are changed by mutual agreement and appear in the letters page and about 45 do not appear, either because the individual or organisation does not bother to pursue the issue once the publisher has refused to comply or because they lose the injunction procedure after taking the case to court.

In six West German states the right of reply has been adapted to radio. The reply must be broadcast in the same reception area and at an equivalent time as the original. As in the case of the press, the broadcasters are not swamped with demands for air time. Whatever the reason for the small number of complaints in France and West Germany, the figures should allay the fears of newspaper proprietors in Britain that there would be a flood of complaints if such a measure were introduced in this country.

As we know, the right of reply has been introduced many times as the subject of private Members' Bills and has been defeated every time. I appeal to the House to put right what is clearly a serious wrong in British society. No one wishes more than myself and, I am sure, all former journalists in the House, that newspapers would put the matter right themselves. But how much longer can we wait?

I appeal to the Minister to take heed of the enormous feeling among the British public that they can no longer tolerate the excesses of especially the tabloid press, but also of some of the quality press. Broadcasters are certainly not excluded from that criticism. The growing problem of cynical and deliberate misreporting and misrepresentation and of the editorialising of phoney facts is too serious to be left any longer to the owners of the press in our country.

11.25 am

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I am mindful of your plea for brevity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and recollect that Disraeli said, "When I am preparing for a five-minute speech, it takes me two weeks; a ten-minute speech takes me three days, and a two-hour speech takes almost no preparation at all." I shall try to avoid that trap.

In the previous Parliament I introduced a ten-minute Bill on the law of confidence to try to give some legislative weight to the recommendations of the Law Commission on the law of confidence. As co-chairman of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, I have always maintained that, along with a strong freedom of information Act—I trust that the House will pass one one day—there should be adequate protection for the individual citizen in relation to both his privacy and the accuracy of reports about him.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), not so much on his good fortune—I have always thought it odd to congratulate an

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hon. Member simply on the spin of a wheel or the dexterity of a Clerk's arm in drawing a particular number from a hat —as of the cogent way in which he introduced his Bill.

The Bill reflects widespread concern, of which several examples of evidence have been cited. In my own approach to this I should like to bear on the observation of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), who said that he is still sufficient of a romantic to believe that some of us have come to the debate with an open mind. I do not see this as whipped business—it is very much a matter on which hon. Members of all parties can be open minded and take their own view. We can do that because so much of what has been said is unexceptionable to many hon. Members. There are unarguably appalling examples in the popular press of cynical, unwarranted, cruel and damaging reporting. My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) and other hon. Members have given illustrations of inexcusable and appalling reporting which, as we know emanates from one section of the press—but they are no more excusable for that.

I have often thought that if there were any way in which the Post Office could be persuaded to withdraw the category of "registered newspaper" from a number of those journals and treat them as the comics they are, and if we could ensure that when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is considering extending VAT he draws a clear distinction between newspapers and comics and puts the latter—*The Sun*, the *Daily Star* and the *Daily Mirror*—in that comic category, he would be doing us all a favour. However, unfortunately, that is not a precise enough definition to assist us today.

I should like to draw a distinction in the examples that have been given so far. Some are matters merely of value judgments by editors. It is often said that one will never lose money by underestimating the taste of the American people. Whether or not the same applies in this country is not something I would want to discuss with my constituents. Suffice it to say that in our endeavours to restore accuracy, we should never confuse our arguments for that with the right of editors to make value judgments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury, who, sadly, is not in his place—but I do not criticise him for that—made a jolly amusing speech, in which he cited the way the popular press confuses the characters in soap operas with the real life actors who portray them, and how they interweave reality and fantasy in a way that is nonsensical, if amusing. However, provided such newspapers do not stray into printing inaccuracies and telling lies, people should be free to buy them if they choose.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) should be careful when he gives the recent example of the stories carried on the front pages of two tabloid newspapers concerning the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) because, if the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me saying so, that story was, as far as I know, factual; secondly, it taught me something that I did not know before—that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby held an Opposition post. Those stories also made interesting observations about the Leader of the Opposition's rather schizophrenic attitude to the management of his Front Bench team and to the interface between that team and the free market. *The Sun* and *Daily Mirror* did us all a political service by drawing out the important lessons to be learned from the unfortunate episode in question.

I admit to having a love for a certain brand of Sunday journalism. Several marvellous examples of it have already been given. My favourite, which appeared in the *News of the World* many years ago, was a story headlined

"Nudist welfare man's wife runs off with Chinese hypnotist from Co-op bacon factory."

What I love about that item is that, far from confusing me, it tells the whole story in its headline. It also contained every single element that sells the *News of the World*. It was marvellous. If that is the kind of newspaper people want to buy to read with their Sunday lunch, so be it. That is not a matter for us, and I urge right hon. and hon. Members not to concern themselves with amusing but irrelevant examples of an absence of taste, questionable judgment and the interweaving of fantasy with reality that makes up so much of the bulk of the popular press.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The hon. Gentleman's speech is amusing, and much of it is to the point. However, does he agree that newspapers such as the *News of the World* are often guilty of gross invasion of the individual's privacy when they print titillating gossip? Such items may be nothing more than passing fantasy to those of us who glance at them, but they can do lasting damage to families, and often to the children involved. I believe that, coupled with a right of reply, there should be a restriction on invasion of privacy by newspapers.

Mr. Norris: I can honestly tell the hon. Gentleman that there have been few occasions during my time in the House when I have found myself in complete agreement with him. However, this is one of them. I was sorry that the Protection of Privacy Bill did not succeed in getting a Second Reading. Such legislation, combined with a measure of statutory ground for the law of confidence to underwrite the extraordinarily inadequate legislation we already have relating to people's privacy, is essential.

The hon. Gentleman hits the nail on the head because, in discussing the Bill, we may overlook those occasions when the press publish something that is true but is none the less extraordinarily damaging personally to the individuals concerned, and where it must be plain that that damage far outweighs any notion of public interest that might be served by such disclosures. Goodness knows, right hon. and hon. Members are vulnerable enough to such practices—where what is of interest to the public must be distinguished from what is in the public interest. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is right when he asserts that the right of privacy is so important, because that goes beyond factual accuracy, as defined in clause 1 of the Bill, and can touch on the argument that accuracy per se is not in dispute.

I believe that, so far, the whole House is in accord. I hope that we shall not hear any speeches seeking to present the complacent view that really there is nothing to worry about. I say to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) that she can be certain that no Conservative Member takes lightly the present state of the gutter press —which is what it so often invites itself to be called. In any event, I wish to advance the debate further than merely exposing the extent of the nonsense that is often published. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie posed the more important question of what remedies are available now that the problem has been identified.

Reference has been made to the work of the Press Council. It is common ground between right hon. and hon. Members, and it is indefensible to argue otherwise, that, so far at least, the Press Council has proved singularly toothless. I cite as an example the Terry McCabe case involving *The Sun*, when it was clear that *The Sun* wholly and cynically disregarded the Press Council's findings—but it did worse than that. It reached the stage of rejecting the only authority that the Press Council has sought unto itself, which is the moral authority of its own pronouncements. *The Sun* said, in effect, "Fine—we understand all that the Press Council says—but the man is still a rogue," and so on. Such behaviour is insupportable. Given that there is no evidence—certainly not from the appointment of *The Sun's* own ombudsman—that that newspaper is changing its fundamental attitudes, one must question whether changes in the Press Council are likely to bring about the improvements that are needed.

Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper has an immensely difficult task. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie suggested that Mr. Blom-Cooper's words would be fine and his message cogent and one which the overwhelming majority of people would want to hear—and hoped that the press also would listen to it. However, the hon. Member was also right to introduce the important concept of profit. As long as the Press Council says it does not wish to impose financial penalties on offending newspapers, whatever chairman is imposed on the Press Council or invited to serve it—and Mr. Blom-Cooper may feel that it is an imposition—and however powerful may be that chairman's words, and no matter how frequently they are repeated, the Press Council's efforts will be as naught compared with the desire of newspaper proprietors to continue selling their salacious newspapers.

Mr. Roger King: My hon. Friend mentioned *The Sun's* appointment of its own ombudsman in rather dismissive terms. It may be a dismissive appointment, but as that ombudsman has only just been appointed, is it not reasonable to allow him a little time to see whether he has any teeth?

Mr. Norris: I acknowledge my hon. Friend's observation, and in a few moments I shall expand on some of the practical difficulties of implementing the Bill, which may mean that in the immediate future we shall have to hope that the reorganisation of the Press Council and unilateral endeavours of one kind or another by newspaper proprietors to put their own houses in order will produce improvements. I am somewhat cynical on both counts. As long as such rubbish sells newspapers there will be proprietors who will want—as the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie acutely observed—to use fiction rather than truth because the stories are juicier, there is much more public interest and they sell more newspapers. We must consider what we can do about that.

What are the remedies? I have dealt with the Press Council, but there is also the law of defamation, which has not been much spoken about so far in the debate. Why is the law of defamation not used more? The first reason is time and the second reason is cost. I shall deal with both those matters. It is not necessarily important on Second Reading to go into the minutiae of a Bill. One of my reservations about the hon. Gentleman's Bill relates to the sheer impracticability of clause 4(4), which says that 28 days will be allowed for dealing with complaints. However, there is an escape section in the clause:

"unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so within that time limit."

That escape section would need to be deployed very quickly, or an army of officials will need to be appointed to the proposed Press Commission. This is not an easy matter and I fear that the Bill poses a dilemma about time. There is no qualitative test in clause 1, no qualification on triviality or seriousness and that flaw in the Bill would need to be rectified in Committee. If it is not, thousands of people will go to the Press Commission saying that they want an opportunity to put matters right. However, access will be restricted to cases in which a judgment is made by the commission about seriousness and the Bill may well exclude the very people who are worst affected personally and who most feel the emotional consequences of misrepresentation.

Mr. Worthington: We recognise that in the early stages of any Bill there is likely to be a test period, and that during that time there may be more complaints about the Bill than there are later when things settle down. Does the hon. Gentleman accept the Bill's prime intention, that when newspapers know that when they get things wrong they will have to print a reply, they will make an effort to get things right? That would staunch the flow of complaints to the Press Commission.

Mr. Norris: I shall try to answer the hon. Gentleman exactly because I have reached that matter in my speech. In endeavouring to fulfil the romantic desire of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) I did not approach this from a partisan standpoint. I am attempting a logical analysis. I recognise the accuracy of the description by the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale of the green ink element. He amusingly described that in an article as the "white plastic carrier bag" phenomenon. We all know about constituents who arrive at the surgery with burgeoning bags of letters.

We all understand that phenomenon, and to some degree it is a rather sad fact of life. Many people believe themselves to be the subject of some grievance or other, some great wrong or injustice. I can see such people flooding to the Press Commission to ask it to put right what they see as a massively important grievance. Those people will have no difficulty whatever in defining the terms of clause 1(1) about the correction of "any inaccuracy in editorial material" affecting them. We are into that dangerous field of misrepresentation, partiality and omission. What is the truth? We have been asked to keep our speeches short, and if any hon. Member attempts to define truth he should bear in mind your sensible stricture, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The clause sensibly attempts to deal merely with factual accuracy. That is commendable, but there is a lack of qualification of the degree of seriousness. If the clause is to have any import it will have to be revised. My hon. Friend the Member for Northfield was accused by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) of making a Canute-like intervention. Canute's rather interesting and long-lasting exercise on the coast was to show his court the fallibility of a mortal king, but it is taken to convey the

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idea of trying to resist the irresistible. If we are not careful, the Bill's proposers may put themselves in the position of King Canute.

Mr. Roger King: I should like to hear my hon. Friend's views on a major issue. Will he consider investigative journalism and the reporting of accidents of which we have had so many recently, the last one being the M1 aircraft crash? The banner headlines that day might well have said, "Engine explodes", or "Engine failure causes accident". Does my hon. Friend think that, under the terms of the Bill, Pratt and Whitney would have been entitled to say in banner headlines the day after the M1 accident that the engine did not explode? That is how I understand the Bill and why I say that there will be problems if we allow it to proceed.

Mr. Norris: I hope that my hon. Friend will develop his argument if he is lucky enough to be called. The important issue that he raises is one of the reasons why I want to give the Bill a Second Reading. The Committee will have to do a great deal of work to resolve that matter.

Mr. Worthington: How could one possibly believe that, if a false headline accused Pratt and Witney of being responsible for a crash, Pratt and Witney would go to the press commission? It would go to the courts.

Mr. Norris: That allows me to move immediately to the final part of my speech. As I have said, there is an existing remedy for such cases. However, the difficulties with the remedy are temporal—I have dealt with that—financial. That is the simple risk that an ordinary citizen must take if he or she wishes to commit the massive funds that may be necessary to mount an action of defamation against a large international newspaper group.

The answer to the problem lies in the recent Green Paper on the reform of our legal services and the concept of the contingency fee. A litigant will go to his professional advisers and say, "I believe that I have an absolutely clear case in law. I do not have the resources to prosecute the case, but, if you are sufficiently persuaded by the evidence that I can lay before you, can we arrange for you to deal with this case on a contingency fee basis?" In simplistic terms, it is no win, no fee, which will minimise the risk to the litigant.

That achieves two objectives. First, it sifts the trivial and vexatious—the green ink and the white plastic bag—from the serious. That is a welcome mechanism. Secondly, it allows a wronged person to have practical access to that important part of a newspaper proprietor's anatomy to which it is necessary to have access if one wishes to change facts and attitudes, and that is the area immediately adjacent to his pocket. Of late, with the Archer award, the Elton John award, the Koo Stark award and others, the courts have shown that they are prepared to deal with cynical trivialisation and lying. That is where the practical remedy lies.

I commend to my right hon. and hon. Friends, first, the idea that the Bill should be given a Second Reading, because it deserves one. We deserve to see whether some of the real difficulties in the Bill, which I am sure that its sponsor himself acknowledges, can be put right. Secondly, I ask my hon. Friends to press for the implementation of the Green Paper proposals so that litigants who currently do not have resources can have a mechanism by which they can take on the press barons and start rectifying the great wrongs that are currently being done to them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Having appealed for short speeches, I now appeal for shorter speeches.

11.52 am

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I support this modest and long overdue Bill. I shall say some serious things about this serious Bill, but I shall begin on a lighter note. The last time I debated the press was at the Oxford Union, where I moved a motion criticising the role of the British press. I say that with some embarrassment, because I do not think that that is a place where Left-wing Socialists should find themselves. It is a story against myself. Opposing me in the debate was a former Member of the House, the then editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, William Deedes. In the debate, I referred to the misreporting by *The Daily Telegraph* of a 1983 election rally that I addressed with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). The article referred to fighting that had broken out in the gallery at that meeting. My right hon. Friend will know, as I know, that no such thing took place, but it was given great prominence in *The Daily Telegraph*.

I telephoned and demanded a right of reply. I got as far as the assistant editor. Six months later, at a debate I flung the incident at Bill Deedes and demanded an answer. I got it. He said that he entirely accepted my version of the story, and that, at 10 o'clock on Monday morning, he would summon people to his office. "Heads would roll," he said. "At 12 o'clock," he said, "the NUJ chapel would call a strike and I would have to reinstate them."

I made my name in the city of Bradford in a discussion on the press. It concerns the National Union of Journalists and two cases that illustrate what this debate is about. To establish myself in the Labour movement in Bradford, I joined the Bradford trades council. We had a resolution from the NUJ dealing with a case in Brighton. It involved two foster parents who had cared for a young girl for several years. That resolution became a big issue in the press. A press campaign was waged to change the law on the rights of foster parents. That may have been correct. It was obscurely reported in the newspapers that the mother neglected the child and was completely irresponsible. In a serious paper we read of the life of the women who had been subject to enormous strain and problems. We certainly had two sides to the story. The other case was never put. The NUJ went to the Bradford trades council and demanded that the law be changed. I felt that it should be done in a more careful and considered manner. The chairman said, "Does everyone agree with that? Is it unanimous?" I said that I opposed the resolution.

I referred to a women called Mrs. Raum. She became involved in a mass media campaign. She was a landlady—a widow—who drew income from rent. She became a national hero in the popular press. It said that she had a terrible tenant who paid her only modest rents, would not accept a rent increase, and took her to the rent tribunal. The tenant's side was never put. The tenant was an east European refugee who came to this country as a victim of Hitlerism. He had a modest job as a waiter, working in a restaurant. He was hounded by the press and physically assaulted, his house was broken into, he was harassed at

work, but his side of the story was never put. I raised the matter at the trades council. After discussion, the resolution was withdrawn.

That happened 20 years ago. That waiter was incapable of defending himself. The same was true of the mother who wanted her daughter back. People are hounded. They do not have the right to reply, and they have no means of reply. The situation is far worse today.

I shall slightly upset my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington), as I shall say a few words about the power of the press. Hon. Members do not want a succession of politicians dealing with their own personal experiences, but my family became the centre of press attention. It is an awesome, terrifying experience to have 50 people camped outside one's modest house in a small village. Those people terrified not only my family but the neighbours. Some people were camped outside all night. They thrust cameras through the windows and hounded my children. My son was badly beaten by Fascist cowards who could fight only on the basis of four to one. His jaw was fractured and he had to be put into hospital. My daughter's education was ruined because of the hounding that she received at school. My wife was spat at and refused service in shops. We received hate mail with razor blades sewn into envelope seals. I have received letters containing swear words and communications addressed to "the Trotskyist bastard, Bradford." It is a terrible experience for one's family to live through that.

I am a politician and a member of a movement. I have some ability and some experience of how to reply. How much worse is that experience for an ordinary member of the public who is not used to conversing with the media, debating or expressing an opinion or is unable to turn to friends and allies for support? It is much more important that people have the right to reply in those circumstances.

I should like to make some criticism of the parliamentary lobby and the Press Gallery. One of the accusations that we often make is that journalists do not read clause 3 of the NUJ code of conduct—which says that they should check their stories—or other clauses in the code. How many stories emanate from correspondents talking to hon. Members not about hon. Members but about constituents? In the past, those stories have been taken as gospel and retold in the local press.

Some years ago, I attended a meeting in Newcastle. Over the previous four or five years, the only time that I had been to the north of England was to visit the firm Corning, which is better known to Sunderland as J. A. Jobling or perhaps to hon. Members as Pyrex heat-resistant glassware. I went there purely as part of my job and intended immediately to travel home. When I arrived, I found the television and radio, press, and accounts in the local press saying that I was part of a Left-wing plot to pinch the seat of an hon. Member in Newcastle, Gateshead or Sunderland. Following her bitter experience in 1982, my wife was not prepared to let this issue go. She phoned every editor and television and radio company involved. She tracked down the story to a lobby correspondent, and by using threats of going to the Press Council and of suing—we certainly could not have afforded to sue—we tracked down the lobby correspondent, who said "I got the story in good faith from a Member of Parliament and I will not disclose his name." I do not think that people have a right to such protection.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I should like to underline the point that my hon. Friend is making. Some lobby correspondents get the correct story, but deliberately issue it as a false one. I have a good example of that. My hon. Friends who represent Liverpool constituencies sent a letter to the Soviet ambassador asking whether, when Mr. Gorbachev visits Britain, it will be possible for him to visit our city. The letter was sent to most lobby correspondents so that they knew what we were doing. The article in the local paper—in inverted commas and under the name of a lobby correspondent here—says:

> "And the MPs . . . also made clear they also wanted Mr. Gorbachev to be made aware of the 'unjust decision in imposing surcharges on Mr. Hatton and the 48 other councillors'".

Of course, Mr. Hatton was one of the 48 councillors involved, but we never mentioned his name or invited Mr. Gorbachev to see Mr. Hatton, who is no longer in the Labour party—and I am not saying whether that is right or wrong. That part of the article is in inverted commas and appears to be a quote from the letter, but it is untrue. My hon. Friend is right to say that that is the sort of thing with which we must deal.

Mr. Wall: One must give a little flavour of one's experiences with journalists and the way in which they operate. During the period that I was under attack, I went to a party—an entirely non-political party—that was being held by a friend of mine of many years. I was talking with two female neighbours of his in the kitchen and it suddenly dawned on them who I was. They said, "You're the fellow who has been in all the papers." I was a little embarrassed and reluctant and said "I am, but I do not want to discuss politics." One of them said, "Did you know that the *Daily Mail* sent a reporter to knock on every door in our village"—which is adjacent to mine—"to ask whether anyone knew anything against you or your wife?" When I challenged the *Daily Mail* about this some weeks later, the reporter merely said "You were clean, weren't you?"

I was given a substantial pay rise by the newspapers, which implied that I was a well-paid Socialist who had a company car. I was quite pleased, but even that had its problems. My colleagues went to the firm's personnel department and demanded the same money as I was getting and all hell broke loose. My bank manager wrote to me and said "If you are earning all that money, and as you have an overdraft with me, why do you not pay the money to us?" My wife wanted to know where I was keeping the other woman.

A reporter telephoned the chief executive of my company, who is a highly successful man and has made an even bigger name for himself recently. He was not sure whether it was the *Daily Mail* or the *Daily Express* that telephoned him. The reporter, a fellow trade unionist from the NUJ, asked him, "Why have you not sacked him?" He said, "He is not employed here as a politician but as a houseware buyer. He does his job well enough and we have no reason to interfere with his political life." He then asked the chairman of this £180 million a year company, "Are you a Trotskyist?" That shows the sort of journalist with whom we must deal.

The power of the press is being more and more concentrated. I am sure that in last week's debate attention was drawn to the well-known fact that we have six multi-millionaires running newspapers—Murdoch,

[Mr. Wall]

Maxwell, Lord Stevens, who runs United Newspapers, Viscount Rothermere, who runs the Associated Newspapers Group, Conrad Black and Tiny Rowland. There are also the Guardian group and the Independent group. Six multi-millionaires who represent multinational companies have enormous control and ownership of not only the national press but the local press, magazines, printing, independent television and radio and, tomorrow, satellite television. I am not sure that we shall hear so much opposition to satellite television, given that two fellow hon. Members have achieved salaries of £30,000 a year. Nevertheless, that is an awesome concentration of power.

That power is used to defend a system that gives the owners their privileges and income. The Maxwell group says that it supports the Labour party, but its support is limited by the condition that the Labour party adopts and carries out policies according to the interests of Maxwell and the ideas with which he agrees. It is difficult enough if that awesome power is used against a political party, but it is a terrifying power when it is used against the individual. The least that we can do is defend the individual's right of privacy and give him the right of reply.

I believe—this is not Labour party policy—that we must devise a democratic alternative to one-party state control—such as is used against the media in eastern Europe and other countries—and what we have in Britain, which is an unbridled press run by unbridled commercialism and dominated by a handful of multi-millionaires and the large advertisers.

This is my view, not the view of the sponsors of the Bill or of the Labour party. We must move towards public ownership of the printed medium, we should subsidise it publicly and we should allocate money on a basis such as a percentage of the vote that each party receives at the previous general election. We shall never have fairness for the individual until we have such a system. The least that we can do is to support the Bill.

12.11 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): Every hon. Member who has spoken has his stock of inaccuracies that were either not corrected or corrected too late. Every hon. Member has a stock of stories about objectionable journalists. I agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) when he said that there was something to worry about, and every speech that I have heard this morning supports that proposition. I asked the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) what the relationship would be between the Press Council and the Press Commission that he proposed. I did not receive a clear answer and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not seem to be in the Chamber at the moment. However, I see his hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) nodding to the effect that he will convey messages.

I am still puzzled by the roles of the Press Council and the Press Commission as they emerge in the Bill. Many stories were told, including those of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), who referred to examples of thoroughly bad conduct by journalists. But it is important to realise that the examples of reporters at Lockerbie trying to obtain information from the relatives of victims and the objectionable investigative journalism to which the hon. Member for Bradford, North referred will not be caught by the Bill. The Bill is confined to the correction of inaccuracies. There will still be a role for a body such as the Press Council with power to investigate more general complaints about the conduct of journalists. I should be worried if the Bill were passed in its present form without alteration of the powers of the Press Council or clarification of the roles of the Press Council and the Press Commissison. The public would be confused by the two competing rights to complain to the Press Council or the Press Commissison.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): My hon. and learned Friend is right. An additional problem is the relationship of the new quasi-judicial body to the libel laws. Has my hon. and learned Friend any views on that?

Mr. Ground: The question of libel and the power to get to the bottom of allegations and to investigate the truth thoroughly are matters that we shall consider in the debate. I shall touch on them later in my speech.

One matter that should be considered if the Bill receives a Second Reading is whether such powers should be given to the Press Council rather than to the Press Commission. I can see a case for giving them to the Press Council, if the House decides that it should continue to exist, but whether it is right to create such powers in an additional body—the Press Commission—is a matter about which I have reservations.

I was concerned to hear the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie refer to providing a second-class form of law for those who have no protection at present. It is attractive, when the present system is inadequate, to do something that is better than nothing. But that is a dangerous principle when we are considering people's rights to which we attach importance. One of my problems about the Press Commission is how it will decide the accuracy and inaccuracy of matters in contention. I am worried about the limitation on the number of witnesses that is proposed and I want to know how the Press Commission is to arrive at the truth when there are matters in contention.

I wonder whether the sponsors of the Bill were encouraged by the number of complaints in France and West Germany, to which the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) referred, and whether that has led them to think that it would be an easy task to perform here. I wonder whether a number of part-time members, who would be entitled to a reasonable amount of time off, might find the time off that was available was pretty unreasonable when they had finished considering complaints.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. and learned Gentleman talks about having time off, but I have never seen him before.

Mr. Ground: That is an objectionable comment and I shall ignore it.

Mr. Flannery: It is true.

Mr. Ground: It shows the degree of inattention that some hon. Members have shown to our proceedings. I

resent the suggestion that the hon. Gentleman has made. The attention that he has paid to debates may be somewhat at fault.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I am sure that, as a lawyer, the hon. and learned Gentleman would rather that all these matters went to court and provided more revenue for lawyers, but if these matters went to court rather than to the commission the result would be long delays, inordinate expense and an uncertain pattern of judgments.

Mr. Ground: I have no objection to creating tribunals for the enforcement of rights. Much of my practice as a barrister is before tribunals—the hon. Gentleman may object, but they, too, provide work for lawyers. That is not the point about which I am concerned. I am concerned about the provision of a satisfactory remedy. I accept that a tribunal with adequate powers would be perfectly adequate for that. But the proposer of the Bill set it up on a second-class basis and we are entitled to wonder whether that is what we want.

The last Royal Commission on the press was surprised by the number of complaints that had been received and by the huge amount of correspondence that the Press Council had had in connection with complaints. In its report in 1977 it said:

"The files also show that a considerable number of letters is often needed before a case can be considered by the Complaints Committee."

The commission will be bound to go into a great deal of correspondence and there will be considerable work. The hon. Member for Bradford, North and I have many Asian immigrants in our constituencies and we are aware of the many publications in immigrant languages. Those immigrants show a lively interest in controversial matters, on which they can be quite argumentative at times and on which they often have very different points of view. They would certainly want to be included in any right afforded under the Bill. The commission would therefore need facilities for translating from immigrant languages such as Punjabi, which would further complicate and add to the burden of the commission. I seriously wonder whether the task of the commission has been underestimated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) quoted from the Royal Commission's remarks about the Press Council. Not much has been said in favour of the Press Council today and it is therefore fair and right to record the fact that the Royal Commission report was in some respects quite complimentary about the work of the Press Council. Paragraph 20.3 said:

"Though we make many criticisms in this chapter, we emphasise at the outset that their virtues are great and we record our recognition of the service which the Press Council has given to the community for nearly a quarter of a century."

All hon. Members will have seen huge numbers of corrections of inaccuracies in newspapers—in part they are the result of the work that the Press Council has done or of its presence to adjudicate upon complaints.

The Royal Commission carefully considered the question of the right to reply. I am somewhat surprised that no hon. Member has so far dealt with the reasons why the Royal Commission concluded that it did not want a right of reply in the press. There are sound democratic reasons connected with freedom for that decision.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman is not intending to quote selectively from the 1977 Royal Commission report and he is making an interesting and constructive speech, but the very paragraph that he quoted went on to talk about the right of reply in the following terms:

"Since the system has worked for a number of years in West Germany, we see no practical reason why it should not do so here. The right provides a prompt remedy, acts as a sanction and promotes accuracy of reporting."

I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman will concede that that was also the commission's view of the right of reply.

Mr. Ground: I agree that the report was critical of the Press Council in a number of respects and accepted that, if the system worked well in Germany, it could be made to work here, although not necessarily so easily. I accept the principle that if we wanted it to work, it could be made to work here.

Although the Royal Commission was very worried about abuses by the press and the inadequacy of the Press Council, it failed to conclude that we should have such a legal right of reply because it was anxious about the interference that that would involve in the ultimate freedom of the press. It therefore shrank from the idea of any form of intervention in the operations of the press by a third party. That is an important constitutional consideration which the House should be examining. One has only to remember the debates that we have had in the House this week to realise that the idea of appointing Home Office nominees to issue corrections to factual inaccuracies in the press is a constitutional innovation about which we should be very careful. I am glad to see the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie back in his seat. I suggest to him that, if the Bill goes further today, we should seriously consider whether the power should be given to the Press Council rather than to a body that will be the creature of the Home Secretary and composed of nominees. That would be constitutionally less objectionable because the Press Council is set up in the tradition of self-regulation which has been an important feature of our constitution and way of doing things for many years.

Difficult questions are involved in determining whether legal aid should be granted for defamation actions. The right course for private clients who have been wronged by newspapers or on the radio is often not to spend their money and time on bringing proceedings. That applies even to those who have money, who have a good case and would get damages. That is a perfectly proper decision for the private individual to make. It is questionable whether legal aid should be granted for defamation cases, given the present availability of legal aid. There are many cases that come before tribunals—for example, the social security commissioners—for which legal aid is not at present available even though they involve important benefits and professional representation could be extremely beneficial.

Several Governments have shown considerable sympathy for the idea of extending legal aid to the social security commissioners' decisions and to other tribunals. The inspector who decided on the Windscale inquiry recommended that there should be some form of legal aid, or at least public funding, for objectors to a proposal for the processing of nuclear waste. When people have had fears about the use of nuclear power and there have been important questions to be ventilated the objectors have often not had the resources to canvass their objections at an inquiry. Serious suggestions have been made that public funds should be made available to such objectors. At

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present none of those causes has legal aid and in my hierarchy of priorities they are stronger causes for legal aid than the pursuit of every action for defamation which would be recommended in accordance with the principles of legal aid.

I was also puzzled by the comments of the proposer of the Bill about juries. He told us that he wants the press to be punished in some way or at least rectified in its bad behaviour, but when in a few isolated cases the courts awarded substantial damages for defamation he suggests that the decision on those cases should not be in the hands of juries. If those damages had been wholly wrong or so unreasonable that they were completely out of line with other decisions on damages, the victims of those awards —the press—would have had a perfectly good right of appeal. It is interesting that the newspapers concerned either did not exercise that right or were unsuccessful in a number of cases. I ask the proposer of the Bill to consider that aspect of the matter because it seems to conflict with his main objectives.

I am not altogether convinced about the Bill. I see considerable difficulty and constitutional objections on the lines that I have discussed, but I am still listening to the arguments because the matter requires pretty urgent consideration by the House and by the bodies responsible for the press.

12.30 pm

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Like other hon. Members, I welcome the Bill, which is long overdue, and congratulate the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on introducing it. As a journalist of 20 years, I believe that all serious journalists will support the measure. I know that many journalists are deeply ashamed of the discredit brought upon the profession by the behaviour of some of its members.

The press has had many years to put its house in order. It has chosen not to do so, so it is not entitled to object to the fact that the House is now taking such measures. I am also a former editor of *Tribune*, a modest but distinguished publication, an honour that I share with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). We always corrected mistakes as soon as they were drawn to our attention. That tradition was passed from editor to editor. Furthermore, however rough the going got—and my right hon. Friend and I had our differences—we always gave the right to reply to anyone of any political shade who wished to respond to anything we published in the paper.

I welcome the Bill as someone who briefly displaced my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) in *The Sun* demonology as the most odious man in Britain. My attempt to secure justice for the six innocent men convicted for the Birmingham pub bombings—which, I must be fair, received a fairly sympathetic press—provoked a front-page lead in *The Sun* headed:

"Loony MP Backs Bomb Gang"

I made no complaint about that. Indeed, I have it framed and hanging on the wall of my study. However, it is certainly one of the functions of the lower end of our press to hound dissidents. In a free press we expect journalists to dispute people's views, but it is unacceptable for journalists to go searching through the private lives of people who take a position of principle outside the consensus in the hope that they can be discredited or smeared in some back-door way.

Anyone denounced in that way will know that such denunciations trigger off a huge wave of hate mail from some of the disturbed people who read papers such as the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, *The Sun* and the *News of the World*. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) gave us some rather graphic examples from his own case. Such letters are sometimes accompanied by threats of violence and may even result in actual physical assaults.

To illustrate my point, I shall quote two of the most extreme examples that have come to my attention in the past few years. The first concerns a young man, Peter Tatchell, with whom I was on the same parliamentary short list for Bermondsey in 1981. He is a decent, hard-working young man who would have made a good Member of Parliament. He lives modestly in the council flat in Bermondsey where he has always lived. His selection provoked an unprecedented wave of hatred, during which no falsehood was too outrageous to repeat.

I shall quote from a recent article in *The Independent*, which some hon. Members may have seen, in which Peter Tatchell set out the effect that the campaign had on his life subsequently. He described it at greater length and more graphically in a good book, "The Battle for Bermondsey". In the article, Peter Tatchell described what happened to him in the years following the campaign. He said:

"For the journalists who wrote the stories I am now old news and they have largely forgotten me: the bigots whose prejudices they aroused have not. Over the last six years I have experienced organised campaigns of harassment in which people have had such things as carpets, refrigerators, hearing aids, kitchen cupboards and encyclopaedias delivered to my home. Bricks have been thrown through my windows, swastikas painted on my front door, my locks have been jammed with superglue and nails, and rubbish has been dumped on my doorstep.

I have received everything in the post from dog droppings to bullets, razor blades, white feathers, sexually sadistic diagrams, invitations to my own funeral and newspaper photographs of myself embellished with drawing of daggers in my throat and guns blowing out my brains.

My phone has brought me a stream of obscene late calls and death threats, including middle-of-the-night calls where the caller very calmly and quietly utters a single word associated with death, such as coffin or morgue, and hangs up.

I have been punched and spat at in the street, threatened with knives and broken bottles on the Tube: I have had cans, wood, screwdrivers fruit, coins, paint and stones hurled at me from passing cars . . .

While riding my bike I have been driven into the gutter by motorists shouting abuse, usually along the lines of: 'F--- off back to Russia, you communist poof' . . . Since returning to my pre-Bermondsey employment as a freelance journalist I have found that my ability to earn a living has been damaged. On one occasion, when seeking a job as a television researcher, it was suggested that though I had good professional credentials the 'negative public perception' of my character made employing me a problem. I did not get the job".

He said that it is impossible for him to be

"selected again as Labour parliamentary candidate. Even those within the Labour Party who tell me they think I would make a good MP have hesitated to support my selection because they fear the Press coverage during the Bermondsey by-election has made me unelectable."

That is a shameful episode in recent political history. Many people of all persuasions, including other candidates in the Bermondsey by-election, have remarked upon it.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I was the Conservative candidate, otherwise known as the sacrificial lamb, in the Bermondsey by-election. It brings great shame on all journalists that members of the press treated Peter Tatchell in such a way and deliberately lied, particularly since they knew what they were doing—they admitted as much to me. Those who did so included people whom I had otherwise thought to be respectable journalists and some now work on heavyweight newspapers. I agree with all that the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Mullin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. It is to his credit that, despite any political differences we may have, he recognises such behaviour for what it is.

One point that has not been mentioned very much in the debate is that such behaviour is not, I regret, confined to journalists who work for the popular press. There are journalists who work on the so-called heavy newspapers who succumb to such behaviour.

The low point in the campaign against Peter Tatchell was the front page headline in *The Sun* which read:

"Red Pete goes to Gay Olympics"

That was an entirely false story. On other occasions, photographs were touched up to make him appear effeminate, and all sorts of false suggestions were made about him, with the result on his life that he has described.

No attempt was made to correct any of the untruths, despite the fact that they were repeatedly drawn to the attention of those responsible for them. The Press Council, even though it was told chapter and verse about the matter, took months to reply to complaints and refused to intervene. It suggested that the matter should be taken up with the newspapers concerned, even though initial letters to it had made it clear that that had already been done without success. The result of the election is a matter of record.

The other example I wish to quote arises from a strike of train drivers in 1982. Any prominent trade unionist involved in an industrial dispute knows that he or she and his or her family are liable to become the target in a carefully organised wave of hatred aroused by our so-called free press. We know that it is the press that inspires the hatred because many of the death threats and much of the abuse are accompanied by newspaper cuttings.

In the spring of 1982 the train drivers' union, ASLEF, invited me to look through the hate mail prompted by the media coverage of its dispute with British Rail earlier that year. The hate mail filled nine thick files, and it was an enduring monument to the dark forces that are at the beck and call of our free press.

The hate mail began on 4 January, when *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* printed pictures of the cottage in Essex of Mr. Ray Buckton, who was then the general secretary of ASLEF. It was headed

"Who has two homes, three cars and does not go to work by train?"

That was the headline in *The Sun* over a grossly misleading account of Mr. Buckton's lifestyle. The facts were that Mr. Buckton rented from the union a modest house in Edgware, owned a cottage in Essex and had one car.

The arson threats began immediately:

"What a lovely little swallow's nest for a petrol bomb"

wrote one *Daily Mail* reader. We know it was a *Daily Mail* reader because he had taken the trouble to append the cutting. Across the bottom he had written

"Won't that thatch burn."

Many of the arson threats were delivered direct to the cottage; the *Daily Mail* had thoughtfully provided its readers with the address. The telephone calls to ASLEF's head office—incidentally, this was well before the strike began—started a few days later. "We hope he has got a good insurance policy on his cottage," said one caller on 12 January. "We know where the cottage is. It will be up in smoke" said another.

The first strike took place on 13 January, and the *Daily Express* got in on the act with a front-page story headed

"No wonder Ray Buckton is smiling—rail strike leader goes to work by car."

Underneath was a picture of a smiling Ray Buckton, who was said to be

"not unduly worried about being tagged the most unpopular man in Britain".

This prompted, among the more printable letters, one which said

> "Dear Mr. Buckton,
> How does it feel to be the most hated man in Britain? I think you and your drivers are the most selfish, traitorous, despicable, opportunist bastards in the community. I know what you look like and I am going to wait outside your union office one evening and when you emerge I am going to smash your face in."

Between them, the *Mail*, *The Sun* and the *Express* sell 8 million copies a day. From the day on which that strike started, the readers of these papers were not permitted access to a dispassionate discussion of the issues involved. I appreciate that we might disagree about the issues, but the readers were not offered either side of the story. Instead, they were fed a daily diet of lies and misinformation, and in some cases they were openly incited to violence.

To begin with, most of the poison was directed at Ray Buckton personally. By contrast, no newspaper thought that the lifestyle of the British Rail chairman, who was then Sir Peter Parker, relevant to a discussion of the dispute, and it is a fair bet that Sir Peter had a friendlier postbag.

Meanwhile, letters from angry commuters all over the country poured into ASLEF. They came mainly from addresses in Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire, and seemed to be written by fans of the BBC's "Any Questions?" Anonymous letters were variously signed "Taxpayer", "Pensioner" or "Disgusted of Claygate". General Jaruzelski seemed to have a number of admirers in Surrey. One person wrote

"If you were in Poland at the moment, you would probably be shot, and a jolly good thing too."

Many *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* readers seemed to be under the impression that ASLEF was a tool of the Kremlin. The level of debate was not very high.

"Horrible Red, go back to Moscow",

one *Daily Mail* reader scrawled across a cutting from the paper.

"Dishonest rat, go to Russia",

another had written across a Cummings cartoon from the *Sunday Express*.

By the time the strike entered its third week *The Sun* turned even nastier and launched a major campaign to criminalise all train drivers. On 2 January under the front page headline, "Taken for a ride", the paper carried allegations suggesting that train drivers were fiddling work rosters and drinking on duty. The source of the allegations was two young assistant drivers who apparently had been offered up to £300 for their story. One is quoted as saying:

[Mr. Mullin]

"Thanks to Ray Buckton and ASLEF . . . a driver or assistant due to work on his rest day is paid double time for lying in bed asleep."

The story was also given two inside pages under the heading

"The drivers earn double time just by lying in bed",

which was printed in letters 1½ in high. No sub-editor saw fit to clothe the quote in quotation marks or even to introduce a hint of qualification. The message was clear; all train drivers are on the fiddle.

By the next day cracks had started to appear in the story. It emerged that one of *The Sun's* sources, Max Wallace, had appeared in court that very week charged with falsifying work records. That embarrassing news was broken to readers in a story tucked away at the bottom of an inside page, ingeniously headed:

"Accused Max stays firm over fiddlers."

Pride of place was given to a story across two pages headed in letters 2 in high:

"Whose head do I kick in?"

That was alleged to be a quote from an anonymous train driver, summing up his mates' reaction to the *Sun's* revelation. The message was clear: train drivers are not only fiddlers, but they are violent.

A few days later it emerged that the other source of *The Sun's* story, Geoffrey Leighson, had twice been sacked by British Rail for unsatisfactory work and bad time keeping. That news was witheld from readers. At King's Cross railwaymen hit back, in the only way they knew how, in defiance of their union. They blacked the handling of Murdoch's newspapers—a far more effective method than complaining to the Press Council. As a result two ASLEF officials were awarded a half page right of reply in *The Sun* for the five pages of vitriol which had previously appeared.

Mr. Roger King: The hon. Gentleman is recounting stories of about seven years ago. I expect that he will be bringing forward more up-to-date stories. Will he, for example, denigrate the vilification of P and O management by newspapers for its alleged conduct over the Townsend Thoresen disaster? Will he join in the defence against the vilification heaped on London Regional Transport executives, who were somehow considered wholly responsible for the King's Cross fire? In the event they may well have had some responsibility for it, but they were tried in the press without any right of reply. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in saying that they, too, should have had a fair hearing.

Mr. Mullin: Yes, I hope that what unites the hon. Gentleman and me is the belief that anybody, however strong or controversial his views, should be allowed a fair hearing. The basis of democracy is the free flow of information. The electorate is permitted access to all views contending for recognition and can choose between them. That cannot occur if only one view is presented. I shall be as robust as the hon. Gentleman in defending anybody who suffers in the same way. I am sure that the management of P and O did not suffer as some of these people did. Whether or not it did, I shall certainly defend anybody denigrated in this way.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I wonder whether my hon. Friend or the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) has any evidence whatever that the P and O chairman ever made a complaint which was not published. That would be very different from the railwaymen.

Mr. Mullin: I do not know about that, but if the hon. Member catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, he will undoubtedly help us on that.

The hon. Member for Northfield said that the stories happened seven years ago. They did, but matters got a great deal worse and today hon. Members have described many incidents that have happened since then.

I shall resume the story of ASLEF. Two detailed accounts show the effect that this has on people's lives. *The Sun* felt that it deserved to be congratulated. It published a page of readers' letters under the headline "Well done our Sun", which was subtitled:

"At last someone has had the courage to tell us the truth."

It had been a great week for British journalism.

By now the hate mail was flooding into ASLEF's head office. The switchboard was jammed with abusive telephone calls. The staff had to be locked into the building. For them it was nothing new. In past disputes they had had excreta and bloodstained rags pushed through the door and eggs thrown into the building. Several newspapers carried incitements to violence against train drivers—even the *Sunday Telegraph*, which is not a popular paper or one that we associate with the gutter press. In the *Sunday Telegraph* of 17 January 1982 Auberon Waugh advised train travellers to carry a stout length of rope

"in case it becomes necessary to hang the driver."

Mr. Roger King: He was being humorous.

Mr. Mullin: That depends on one's sense of humour and on which end of the rope one happens to be.

Mr. Flannery: To bring matters up to date, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) wants, some time ago I asked a Minister a perfectly civilised question about what had happened in Gibraltar. The following day in *The Times*—which has the same owner as *The Sun*—a huge cartoon appeared that showed me with a bottle of blood in my hands. On it was printed the word "Victim". It also showed my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy), who had asked a perfectly ordinary question about Gibraltar. All hon. Members who ask similar questions are subject to that treatment. I shed a little blood in the last war and I would defend liberty in this country once again, as I did before.

Mr. Mullin: Whatever may be the intention behind incitement of that kind, we know the results. The results are violence and people are threatened. On 2 February 1982 the *Daily Mail* carried a cartoon depicting a courtroom scene in which the jury were garlanding with flowers a man who had been accused of beating up a train driver.

I have gone into the matter in some detail because it is important to understand the kind of an effect that such stories can have. That story could be replicated, if properly documented, hundreds of times over. Anybody in this country who raises his head over the parapet on what appears to be an unpopular issue is liable to be on the receiving end of similar treatment.

I suspect that some hon. Members on both sides of the House—I do not say this by way of criticism, but it is more likely to happen to Opposition Members than it is to

Conservative Members—have been subjected to similar treatment. The people who control our media know that they have at their beck and call some very dark forces that can be unleashed at the drop of a hat and that can make a misery of the lives of anybody with guts. It does take guts, sometimes to raise one's head over the parapet.

Mr. Carrington: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mullin: Forgive me. I have given way a couple of times and, as other hon. Members wish to speak, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), I am afraid that I cannot do so. I want in particular to accommodate my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw.

We should be deluding ourselves if we thought that only *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail* were guilty. It is not just a handful of gutter newspapers that are involved. I recollect the attempt by the *Evening Standard* in an unscrupulous front page headline a year or two ago to link CND with the IRA. In a free country it should be possible to believe in the removal of nuclear weapons without being branded as a supporter of the IRA. That is a very modest ambition. No supporter of the removal of nuclear weapons from this country—I am glad to say that those supporters include a few Conservative Members—will complain if their views are debated robustly in the press, but they do not expect to find themselves associated with terrorists.

Some of the best smears appear in *The Times*, which is also a Murdoch paper now but it was not always so. I recollect a regular smear. I recollect also that it cropped up during the debate on the Common Market referendum. A diary story appeared in *The Times* suggesting that one of the children of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was being looked after in the private wing of a hospital. What that had to do with the debate on the referendum God alone knows.

I recollect also that in 1981 at the time of the deputy leadership elections for the Labour party, *The Times* ran what affected to be a full-page profile of the three candidates. I should point out that the journalist who wrote the article was not responsible for the following incident. Indeed, he told me afterwards that a paragraph had been removed from his story and the following paragraph inserted. It affected to list the assets of the candidates and stated:

"City sources speak of a Stansgate Trust registered with the Bank of Bermuda"

of which members of the Benn family were supposed to be beneficiaries.

That appeared in a full page article in *The Times*, but was not put there by the journalist who wrote the rest of the story. When I rang the Bank of Bermuda to check, it said that the story was not only not true but that nobody from *The Times* had telephoned the bank to find out whether there was such a trust. It proved extremely difficult to obtain a retraction from *The Times* and when it appeared, it was modest. I do not know the explanation of where that story came from to this day. Perhaps it should have been referred to in our recent debate about the security services.

When I first went to Saigon as a journalist to cover the Vietnam war, I was surprised to learn that the person who for years had reported from Saigon in *The Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* under the name of John Draw was not John Draw, but Nguyen Ngoc Phac, a captain on the general staff of the Saigon army, responsible for press relations. In case anyone could be in any doubt about that, I should add that he could be seen appearing at the Reuters office to file his copy, still in his uniform.

I was a young and naive journalist and when I got home I took that matter up with the editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, then Mr. William Deedes. After some delay I received a reply stating that it was true that Mr. John Draw was really Nguyen Ngoc Phac, but that the editor did not believe that he was an officer on the general staff of the Saigon army. However, *The Daily Telegraph* forgot its lie later because someone else wrote in, pointing out the same thing, and received a reply saying, "Of course, it is all true. It is old hat—we told Mr. Mullin about it years ago."

Mr. Ashton: What has that got to do with the right of reply?

Mr. Mullin: It was a giant fraud perpetrated on the readers of *The Daily Telegraph*—a newspaper which claims the highest standards.

I welcome the Bill although there are certain omissions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw pointed out, there are no mechanisms for dealing with the last of those several examples, although I concede that there is a mechanism for dealing with the other examples. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) referred to cheque book journalism, with which at the moment there is no mechanism for dealing. Perhaps that will be dealt with in Committee.

The Bill is not the whole solution, but it is a step along the road towards a free press. However, in due course we must look at some wider issues, such as whether in a democracy it is right that most of what we see and read is controlled by half a dozen multinational companies or extremely wealthy citizens. Although that omission is not relevant to the Bill, I give notice that that subject must be dealt with in due course.

12.58 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): It may be for the convenience——

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I hope that this is better than last week.

Mr. Renton: I heard that. I can assure the House that it is not the same.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I now explain the Government's view of the Bill—*[Interruption.]* Well, that paragraph is the same.

I agree with the extremely interesting remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris). There is little point in congratulating the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) merely on his success in winning the ballot, but I join hon. Members of all parties who have congratulated the hon. Gentleman warmly on the reasonable and moderate way in which he commended his interesting Bill to the House.

Today's debate on a Bill that will give the public the right of reply, to correct inaccuracies in the press or in broadcasts, may be described as the second round in a three-round boxing match between the House of Commons and the press. The first round was last Friday, when my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) failed by a mere two votes to get a closure and therefore a Second Reading for his Bill, which dealt with the intrusion of the press into the private lives of

[Mr. Renton]

individuals. Today's debate is the second round. If it ends in time—after the speech that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), that is less likely than it was—we shall enter the third and final round, with the Bill of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) to remove pornography from the press and the work place.

Everyone who has taken part in the debates on both Bills so far will agree that the fact that the House has devoted two consecutive Fridays to matters of the press is a healthy reminder to editors and proprietors of Parliament's close interest in press standards. As I said last Friday, I have great sympathy with those who complain about press hounding of individuals, be it by invasion of their private lives or by publishing wholly inaccurate remarks. The truism,

"It must be true—it was in the papers—"

is one that we all ridicule today, but the fact remains that if a comment appears in the newspapers many people remember it and may come to assume that it is true.

It would be wrong for the House, in its current and justified burst of indignation against the press, to think that this is a completely new area of concern. A friend in the press, knowing that I was to speak in last Friday's debate and today, kindly lent me a copy of a book entitled "The Life and Death of the Press Barons"—and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick, and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) used the phrase "the press barons" in his interesting contribution. That book brings home to me that, from the very beginning of popular journalism, there has always been a wish to increase circulation by publishing sensational and even prurient news.

"The Despatch" started in America in the 1830s, and its radical publisher gauged the tastes of an expanding market to perfection, with the promise that his newspaper would be

"a repository of all the gems and treasures, and fun and frolic, and news and occurrences of the week. It shall abound in police intelligence, in Murders, Rapes, Suicides, Burnings, Maimings, Theatricals, Races, Pugilism and all manner of accident by flood and field. In short, it will be stuffed with every sort of devilment that will make it sell."

Mr. Austin Mitchell: That sounds like page 3 of *The Daily Telegraph*.

Mr Renton: The truth is that in search of circulation, sometimes to pander to salacious interests, sometimes for power and to shake Governments, and sometimes for sheer devilment, ever since popular journalism started in the last century newspapers have regularly published stories that intrude on people's privacy and reputation.

Such practices were not confined to the tabloids. As the hon. Member for Sunderland, South rightly reminded the House in his lengthy speech, *The Times* itself played a considerable part in the history of popular journalism. In the last century, its famous editor Delane claimed that it resembled the church in the middle ages—

"Enlightener of the people's consciences, a check against the abuse of power, a monitor against the vices."

That was Delane's boast. His tactics worked, and *The Times* sold twice as many copies as all its rivals put together. One must face the fact that the story today is not greatly different. Sales of *The Sun* and *News of the World* soar, while those of more serious newspapers stagger. To paraphrase Hilaire Belloc, their sins are scarlet but their papers are read.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am interested in the historical perspective, which causes one to look at the future. Given that the printed media and broadcasting tend to influence one another, does my hon. Friend believe that the Broadcasting White Paper to be introduced next week will tend to raise or lower the standards of the British popular press?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend tries to lead me down an interesting path. I should like to follow him but we are to have a debate on Wednesday on the broadcasting White Paper, and it would be more convenient if I dealt with such matters then—if I am fortunate enough to catch Mr. Speaker's eye.

The question of the powers and responsibilities of the press has as long a history as the press itself. The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie said in his interesting speech that papers were becoming ever more outrageous so as to attract readers. I hope that I have got his words right. Standards change in books and magazines just as they change in newspapers. Many things are printed today in all three of those areas of the media that would have greatly shocked and surprised many people a generation ago. Because of the change in standards it is hard to find a test of obscenity that can keep up with the pace of the times. That was why two of my hon. Friends tried to redefine obscenity in private Members' Bills that failed to get the support of the House.

The question before us is whether standards have changed to such an extent that it is right to look beyond the self-regulation of the Press Council, with which I shall deal later, to a novel form of legislation. I think that we all agree that those of us in public life are prone to public agitation about press matters. To appreciate that, one has only to look at the history of Bills which sought to change this area of the law. There was a great deal of debate about that last Friday. In many cases we have only ourselves to blame. How many times has an assiduous Member sent the text of his remarks to a local paper, only to find that the well-crafted paragraphs of his beautifully structured argument are left out in favour of the unwitting double entendre in the opening sentence? A former hon. Member, making a serious point in which he believed passionately, once began by saying, "There's a lot of bloody fools out there—and they deserve representation . . .". Fortunately, I do not think that he took himself so seriously as to demand a right of reply to the columns of humorous coverage that ensued.

No one denies that a problem exists, and that the question before us is that of how to deal with it. Before I move to the general principles of the Bill I shall spend a few minutes dealing with the practicalities or impracticalities of what it proposes. This takes up the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest and in an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). They spoke of the dangers of newspapers being flooded with trivialities. We have to consider seriously what could happen to the front page of a newspaper if the precise restrictions of the Bill were followed through. Clause 1(3) of the Bill says that when a person exercises his right of reply to correct an inaccuracy,

"The correction must be printed free of charge, it must be given the same prominence as the original item, and appear at the same place in the publication."

What would be the effect of that on our national press?

I have with me a copy of yesterday's front page of *The Times*. The top headline says,

"Mitchell cannot work for Sky, says Labour leader".

In heavy one and a half inch print there is the headline,

"Kinnock sacks top aide for taking TV job".

I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) in the Chamber and hope that he will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. The third headline says,

"'Hypocrisy and . . . bigotry' anger Tebbit".

Those three headlines take up about eight inches of space. At least three people could demand a right of reply to that conjunction of headlines. First, the Leader of the Opposition could claim that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, with all due respect to him, was not a top aide.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I would want the right of reply to that.

Mr. Renton: I am coming to that.

Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition could claim that it was not because his colleague worked for Sky, the Murdoch channel, that he was sacked, but because as quoted lower down on the same page,

"the sight of a senior Labour front bencher interviewing and attacking and generally trying to take apart Labour colleagues and policies was inappropriate and would totally confuse the viewers."

I rather doubt that it would confuse viewers. I think that viewers are already utterly confused about Labour policies—for instance on defence or the future of trade unions. The editor of *The Times* would be able to argue that part of his report was factually correct, but at least there would be a serious case for the Leader of the Opposition to argue that he should have the major headline in tomorrow's issue of *The Times* stating, "Mitchell sacked to keep Labour colleagues intact".

Then there is the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. He was a journalist with Yorkshire Television and the BBC. He is the author of several good books including "Can Labour Win Again" and "Four Years in the Death of the Labour Party". To him is attributed the reply on television that he did not belong to an organised political party, he belonged to Labour. He must have a case for demanding a right of reply. As for the hypocrisy and appalling bigotry which so angered my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), it is unclear whether that allegation applies to the leader of the Labour party or to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, who would surely want to clear himself of the possible accusation that it was he who was the appalling bigotted hypocrite.

I say this to the House in all seriousness because it is the type of consideration that the House must bear in mind. There is, finally, the position of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford. The third headline clearly implied that he was angered. Was he? He is one of the most prominent men in our party and he is well known for his calmness, his quiet nature, and his smoothness of behaviour. Having taken a job on the same current affairs programme as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, he may well wonder whether his own reputation will suffer as a result of the headline attributing anger to him.

On the basis of the hon. Gentleman's Bill, one could expect three correcting headlines tomorrow morning—all on the front page of *The Times* and occupying a great deal of space along the lines of, "Mitchell not allowed to savage Labour", followed by "Tebbit: I am never angry", and last, perhaps as a counterweight, "Hattersley allowed to take job with Maxwell".

Mr. Worthington: I am grateful to the Minister, who is fulfilling my prophesy about his cheeriness but irrelevance on this. Several issues are involved. Why did the Guild of British Newspaper Editors say in 1985 that factual inaccuracies would be easy for them to deal with whereas misrepresentation or partiality would not be easy? Why is it that in no country in which right of reply legislation has been introduced is there a scenario such as the Minister described? Why does no country want to get rid of right of reply legislation on the basis that it is unworkable?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman cannot dismiss my comments—which might be a little light-hearted given that it is a Friday afternoon—as not going to the heart of the problem. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) and the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) raised earlier the possibility of the right of reply being used to correct matters that are, in essence, trivial and not serious, but about which they felt deeply. I do not think that the Bill addresses that, and if it reaches Committee it should be closely examined. The serious principles of the Bill are one thing, but it is another whether the hon. Gentleman's proposals are practical.

Mr. Roger King: The scenario that my hon. Friend depicts may be worse than he suggests. The headlines retracting yesterday's headlines in *The Times* may appear not the day afterwards but in four or five week's time. By the time a complainant has gone to various committees and commissions and permission has been given to print a retraction, we would be reading revised headlines about something that happened months before.

Mr. Renton: I take that point. It is one of the aspects of delay in the bureaucratic processes that the Bill suggests.

There is a serious core to this subject. The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale mentioned the disgraceful incidents following the Lockerbie accident. I have sympathy with those who have expressed dismay, not only in this debate, about the willingness of some editors to print ill-researched, factually inaccurate reports and their reluctance and subsequent great delay in printing corrections or retractions. We have heard many well-known examples of that in today's debate. Although we accept that the newspaper industry is competitive, competition should be able to take place without damaging lives, reputations and families through insensitive and misleading reporting.

The motives behind the Bill can be admired, but the subject does not lend itself to straightforward or uncontroversial legislation. We shall not oppose Second Reading, as we did not oppose the Protection of Privacy Bill last week. I assure the hon. Member for Cynon Valley that there is no question of the Government trying to whip votes on this.

The Government have a number of reservations about the philosophy of statutory control over the press and the procedures set out in the Bill. In some measure, the principle of the right of reply is rather like motherhood

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and apple pie: everyone agrees with it in principle—it sounds very nice in the broad—but the problem lies in how to make it work in detail.

It is clear beyond doubt that a person who is the subject of inaccurate reporting in the press should have an opportunity to set the record straight. That, as the chairman of the Press Council said in 1978, was a "moral entitlement." It is questionable whether moral entitlement should be turned into a statutory right, as the Bill seeks to do.

Three Royal Commissions since the last war have argued strongly against giving responsibilities to the Government or Parliament for the conduct of the press. The most recent, in 1977, recommended against a statutuory right of reply. It said:

"The Press should not be subjected to a special regime of law, and should neither have special privileges nor labour under special disadvantages compared with the ordinary citizen."

I should point out to some supporters of the Bill that if the Government had introduced a measure on the same terms as that put forward by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, the Opposition would certainly have attacked us bitterly on the grounds that this wicked Government were destroying the cherished freedom of the press. Let them look carefully into their own hearts before assuring me that that is not so.

I have further reservations about the establishment of a statutory Press Commission. Do we really need another quango alongside the Press Council, or does the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie envisage the Press Commission replacing the Press Council? Could we be sure that a body born of legislation would attract greater responsibility from, or foster greater responsibility within, the press?

My fear is that there would be, on the contrary, a danger of any idea of self-discipline being abandoned and of everything being treated as acceptable that did not render editors actionable in law. There is the further point, made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston, that the 21 commissioners on the Press Commission are to be appointed by the Secretary of State for Home Affairs. That is a generosity on the part of the honourable Member, but it rather surprises me. I remember certain concern being expressed by the Opposition when we recently appointed Lord Rees-Mogg to be chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council. More recently, there has been a little dispute about the appointment of Lord Chalfont as the deputy chairman of the IBA with, particularly, the new leader of the Social and Liberal Democrats working himself up into a froth of indignation about the so-called patronage that lay behind this appointment. If my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, despite his well-known impartiality, good judgment and sense of discretion, were to be given the powers to appoint all 21 members of the Press Commission, I would bet my bottom dollar that within a day or two after the chairman had been announced by my right hon. Friend we would have an early-day motion signed by a large number of Opposition Members complaining bitterly that the chairman of the Press Commission had been chosen only because he was a poodle of the Government and that he was bound to have an interest in the suppression of the rights of Members of Parliament, quite apart from being a director of all sorts of companies which clearly had South African business interests. There is nothing surprising about that. It lies within the natural order of things that Opposition Members will tend to become steamed up, at least about sensitive appointments made by the Government. When they do, they tend to forget that the deputy chairman of the BBC is a former and very senior Labour Treasury Minister.

Would a statutory body be any more likely than the current Press Council to secure the involvement of journalists? The best service that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie could do to his cause would be to seek to bring the National Union of Journalists back to membership of the Press Council, from which it withdrew at the start of the present decade. He may be interested to note that the NUJ has displayed a penchant towards self-regulation, having set up its own ethics council. I am pleased to see a recent letter in *The Times* from the chairman of the docklands branch of the NUJ.

Mr. Mullin: The Wapping branch.

Mr. Renton: Yes, the Wapping branch, which is leading the NUJ where the rest of it fears to follow. The chairman writes:

"The Ethics Council is now generally admitted not to have been a success."

That is a statement with which all hon. Members can agree.

"As a result NUJ membership of the Press Council has returned to the agenda of both bodies and a Motion to that effect is to be debated by the Union's national delegate meeting in April, proposed by the Docklands' branch which represents journalists on the Sunday Telegraph, the Daily Telegraph, the Times, the Sunday Times, the News of the World and the Sun. The branch believes that ordinary journalists should have the right to refer issues to the Press Council."

That is an attitude that I, as a member of APEX—the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff—thoroughly support the NUJ in believing.

That leads me to the point made by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston. He asked how the proposals that we are debating fit in with the Press Council. I still believe—these are the remarks that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie rightly anticipated—that the present system of voluntary self-regulation for the Press Council, however imperfect, is a more effective and appropriate form of control than could be provided by legislative action at present.

Mr. Michael Brown: I do not understand how my hon. Friend can stick to the line that he took last Friday, especially in view of the "That's Life" programme last Sunday, which dealt with the case of a mother who had had to put up with a story in the *Sunday Sport* alleging that her daughter had turned to stone. The mother raised the matter with the Press Council but the council did nothing. And what about the actor who committed suicide because there was no redress in the case of the *News of the World*? The Press Council cannot help. Two incidents reported on "That's Life" last weekend pointed to the failure of the Press Council.

Mr. Renton: I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has had the opportunity to make those remarks—in case he does not

get in later in the debate. I fully understand his point. Hon. Members have said today—and in our debate last Friday, for which my hon. Friend was also present—that the Press Council is a toothless tiger and some have made remarks even more uncomplimentary. To my hon. Friend it is self-evident that the concept of self-regulation has come under very great strain as a result of certain newspapers' attitudes towards the council.

I fully agree with the remarks that have been made about the appointment of an ombudsman. If a newspaper is to appoint an ombudsman to examine complaints from readers or from those who feel that their privacy has been damaged by what it has printed, there is no point whatever in its appointing someone from its own ranks, such as a managing director or senior editor. If the ombudsman is to have any credence at all, he must come from outside. He must be an established person with an independent reputation. Otherwise, he is being asked to be poacher one day and gamekeeper the next, which will not work in the newspaper world any more than it works in other walks of life.

Mr. Worthington: I wish to return to the case referred to by the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—the case of scleroderma in which it was alleged that the patient had turned to stone. That case was put to the Press Council and was turned down. It was featured on the Esther Rantzen "That's Life" programme last weekend. In this week's edition of the paper there will be a declaration that the *Sunday Sport* now accepts that it was wrong. It will give the right of reply to the Raynaud's society and money will be paid to that society. But the point is that the Press Council upheld the *Sunday Sport's* decision in the first place.

Mr. Renton: I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, which is clearly endorsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes. The hon. Gentleman said in his opening remarks that he thought that the Press Council was fundamentally flawed. In that respect I do not agree with him. As my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest said, there is a difficult task ahead for the new chairman, Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper—a man for whom the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie said that he had deep respect. The Press Council is openly anxious to improve its image and procedures, and that must lead to improved effectiveness.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Renton: With respect, my hon. Friend has not been here for the whole debate. Many other hon. Members wish to speak. I think that I have been generous in giving way.

The new chairman, Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper, has already begun to develop radical and imaginative ideas for reform. I know that it will not be popular on either side of the House if I say that I believe that he should be given a chance to make his influence felt and raise the profile of the Press Council before we take action that could effectively undermine the future of self-regulation of the press.

The Bill also seeks to extend legal aid to actions for defamation, for which it has never been available. That is because such actions are intrinsically precarious and uncertain and more likely to prove trivial or ill-founded. How many of us would at some stage have sought to avenge in court a minor slight, an error or inaccuracy about ourselves, our wellbeing or competence, if legal aid had been available? I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about a reasonable case. I am not a lawyer, but I understand that that concept is clearer in the Scottish courts than in the English courts. The Government's view is that even if the general mechanics against unmeritorious proceedings could be strengthened in defamation cases, they still could not provide against the potential waste of public funds on ill-advised proceedings.

I have outlined briefly a number of reservations about the Bill as it stands. Of course I remain conscious of the interest that the topic has for hon. Members, particularly as the debate comes only a week after that on the Bill promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester. To return to the point that I made earlier, those who live by the press in the interests of press freedom must be prepared occasionally to be wounded by the press, to suffer a misquotation or an allusion to the less flattering aspects of their anatomy, and those cases must be distinguished from those in which the urge for ever more intrusive investigative journalism or sensationalism cause genuine distress.

I do not believe that the Bill will make that distinction, with its attendent problems of what is or is not accuracy in editorial material. I do not consider that the Bill will necessarily help to improve matters. The thought of calling in 21 press commissioners to determine the question of factual accuracy, with a right of reply adviser providing assistance to complainants, all adds up to a picture of bureaucratic complexity in an area that is essentially one for very personal, subjective and speedy judgment.

This is a matter in which the House of Commons, however aggrieved it feels on behalf of its own Members and constituents, must keep a sense of proportion. I had a good deal of sympathy with the *Sunday Express* two weeks ago when it wrote:

> "Are there not far more effective ways of punishing editors who invade privacy unnecessarily? Like refusing to buy their rubbishy newspapers".

I know that life is not that simple—I cited the increasing circulation of *The Sun* and the *News of the World* earlier—but I suspect that the answer lies with a more effective and quick moving Press Council, and I ask the House to bear in mind, as my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) did, the difficulties that are inherent in the Bill as it stands.

1.33 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I am grateful for the opportunity to put the Opposition's view on the Bill. With some caution, I am pleased that the Government will not formally oppose it at this stage, although I am concerned by some of the Minister's remarks and I shall return to them later.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on choosing the subject, drafting his Bill so shrewdly and on a really excellent speech which has received compliments from both sides of the House. The House should also pay tribute to the sponsors of the Bill, several of whom have spoken well in its defence. Others have waited all morning to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. That shows the genuine interest and support that the Bill has received in all parts of the House. In particular, we should pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs.

[Mr. Mark Fisher]

Clwyd) who has done so much to further this cause. I was also delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie paid tribute to a former Member of the House, Mr. Frank Allaun, who tried to introduce such a measure in 1981 and 1982 and has continued writing about the issue in the press.

It has been an excellent debate and hon. Members have given some moving examples. There has been little serious disagreement, and hon. Members who have disagreed have generally made interesting and constructive suggestions. The House agrees that there is abuse by the press which does great damage to individuals, and that the inability of individuals to put the public record straight is an injustice that often produces sad and dangerous consequences. I do not wish to weary the House with too many examples but in case anyone is in doubt, I shall cite one example with which Conservative Members may have sympathy.

A Conservative county councillor, who does not wish to be named because his case is still before the Court of Appeal, was a rising star of his local authority and chairman of several committees. In May 1987, four newspapers—three national, *The Sun*, the *Daily Mirror* and *Today* and one local—ran a story claiming that the man had been absent from council meetings because he was being treated for AIDS.

The councillor did not have AIDS, nor was he HIV positive and he has medical proof of that. There was absolutely no truth in the rumour. However, he could not obtain a retraction from the newspapers.

He won his case because he had sufficient resources to take it to court. He was awarded compensation and costs, but two of the newspapers have appealed.

In order to pursue that case, the man had to sell his house and now stays with friends and relatives. He had to leave his job because of the constant phone calls. His health has broken down and his career in local politics is finished. He has been broken by a completely false report in the press. That cannot be right.

There seems little disagreement in the House about the fact that the present system does not work. Tributes have rightly been paid to the integrity and record of the new chairman of the Press Council, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, and the earnest and sincere work of the director, Mr. Ken Morgan. However, most people agree that the present system does not work well, and that includes those who are sceptical about the alternative. The House must decide whether there is a better system and, if so, whether the Bill provides it. Most hon. Members agree that there must be a better system and that the present one is not adequate.

The case for the Bill is simple. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie kept it short and simple. He has limited it to factual inaccuracies in the press. Much of what has been said in the debate has not taken that into account. The key element of the Bill is that there must be legal aid. The Minister criticised that. My hon. Friend has sought to present the Bill in the most reasonable way so that the House can accept the legal right and place it on the statute book.

The Bill is not a weapon to be used against the press and it will not punish them—though sometimes, as hon. Members have said, they push us dear to want a punishment. Mr. Richard Ingrams, the publisher of *Private Eye* said, smugly, that his motto was "publish and be sued". That may be an amusing and epigramatic remark for the publisher of *Private Eye* to make, but if the publisher or editor of a national newspaper were to take that sort of cavalier attitude he could do considerable damage.

The Bill is not a charter for aggrieved pedants who are willing to go to court over every dot and comma. There are dangers of that happening, but I believe that they can be worked out.

Many of us will think that it sad that the Bill will not raise the quality of press reporting. It will not stop some of the malpractices that we have heard about today such as door-stepping and cheque book journalism. It is concerned solely with factual inaccuracies. Many of us, such as my constituent Mrs. Denise Morse, would like it to stop such practices. She is a young woman who is dying from leukaemia and has raised £1 million while fighting the disease. She has been tortured by the press some of whom have sat on her doorstep for the past three months. When she sought to celebrate Christmas with her children early because her doctors said she would not live to see it, the press thought that it made a good story. They went to her door, knocking on it all day, asking: "Can we have a picture?" Her home and her marriage are now broken. Is that right?

The Bill will act as a deterrent, a bench mark. That is the intention. Its success will be that it will not be operated very much. Contrary to what the Minister said, it will not clog up the works enormously. Certainly, all the indications from other countries where the right of reply works are to that effect. Hon. Members have already touched on that aspect, and I do not think I need to elaborate.

Germany and France have had the right of reply for over 100 years. Belgium, Austria, Greece, Finland, Norway and Sweden all have different characteristics in this respect—there is not a uniform right of reply—but none of those countries has problems, such as the Minister touched on, about the press being too pedantic, too impossible, and simply having the papers full of rights of reply. Indeed, when one talks to journalists from those countries one gets the impression that the opposite is the truth.

In France, opinions differ about the effectiveness of the system, but it is not used very much. It is not that the hersant press in France is not very strident and sensational; it is, but it is probably not of the same quality, or lack of quality, as the popular press here. The point is that the system acts as a deterrent, and certainly most people on the continent would feel that the conclusions to draw from its lack of use there is that it is effective as a benchmark and a deterrent.

Mr. Ground: Is it not the case that Sweden actually has a press ombudsman who is a judge and who goes back to work as a judge after he has done his stint as ombudsman?

Mr. Fisher: As I understand it, Sweden has both a press ombudsman and a press commission. Indeed, some Conservative members will take comfort from the fact that those are voluntary, rather than statutory, arrangements. I am not saying that there is a uniform system, but all those countries have legislation enshrining a right of reply.

I believe that my hon. Friend has proved the need and has proved the good sense of his measure. But obviously

we have to take into account the case that has been made against it—and there has been some criticism, some of it, as I have said, very interesting and contructive.

There has certainly been great criticism outside the House. It is noticeable that even the libertarian press, the quality press—the Minister referred to three leaders this morning—while discussing the matter, has almost unanimously said "We understand, we sympathise, but not now. We must find a voluntary way." Traditionally, the press has been enormously hostile to any legislation. The best part of the press adopts that attitude, because it fears a gag on press freedom.

But this is not about the freedom of robust, interesting and even partisan comment; what we are talking about is the freedom to report factual inaccuracies. That is no freedom at all. As Adlai Stevenson said, "You have confused the free with the free and easy"—and that is a very big distinction indeed. But the press, traditionally, has been very critical, and obviously we have to take that into account. That, indeed, is the context. It is interesting that, in spite of that barrage from the intelligent press saying "Don't do this", hon. Members throughout the House have said that we ought to go ahead.

Let me come to some of the very interesting criticisms. Some have said that this is going to be too cumbersome and too slow. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) at the beginning of his intervention, seemed to be saying that 28 days was far too slow. In contrast, the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) said that he feared that it was too fast and would not lead to good decisions. That sort of thing can be worked out. The hon. Member for Epping Forest also said that there would be too many complaints—a case made by other Members also. But that is not the experience abroad.

Some of the most interesting points were made by the hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), who raised specific queries about the relations there might be between the Press Council and the commission, the problems of trivia, which undoubtedly is a serious one, how inaccuracies would be decided, the limitations on witnesses, and the procedures of the Press Commission. These are all important and interesting things that must be given proper consideration in Committee, but I do not believe that any of them damage the principle of the measure, and I believe that, though they are worthy of great consideration, they should not deter us from giving the Bill a Second Reading.

Both the Minister and the hon. Member for Epping Forest queried the idea of the Government appointing press commissioners. I sympathise with the Minister. I suspect that if the Government did that, I would be one seeking to table an early-day motion. But that is because this Government's record on abusing Government appointments of governors of major bodies is poor. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The Minister, charming man that he is, waves that aside. Interestingly, Mr. Ludovic Kennedy's autobiography documents the story of how his wife, Miss Moira Shearer, was proposed for the board of governors of the BBC and was accepted by everybody all the way up as a highly intelligent, interesting, objective person, but, we understand from Mr. Kennedy, the Prime Minister said, "She's not one of us and she can't have the job." That is a cramped, crabbed view of who should represent the public interest. The Government's record is not good. I am afraid that I must disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie, because while this Government are in office I should be reluctant to give them power to appoint more people. Again, we can argue the toss about that later.

The Minister's remarks concern us because if we do not get the support or lack of hostility of the Government, the measure is lost. The Minister has a delightful manner. He seemed to suggest that he had sympathy with the principle of the Bill, but some of his remarks were less constructive. I am glad that he will not oppose the Bill and I hope that his remarks were noted by his hon. Friends, particularly the hon. Member for Northfield. Any attempt by Members to talk out this measure after the unanimity of this debate would wholly misjudge the mood of the House, and it would be viewed badly by both sides. It is one thing to disagree with it and wish to pursue it in Committee. We respect that, but to talk out the Bill would be to misjudge the mood of the House.

The Minister said that the Bill would not be practicable and he used the what-if-everybody argument, taking as an example an interesting news story yesterday and saying that many different aspects of it could provoke the right of reply. He knows well that that is a long-standing debating trick. He must also know that the record of right of reply legislation abroad does not give any credence to that argument. He cannot find a single example in the foreign press to substantiate what he said. He asked whether the measure would work and what effect it would have on headlines. We can discuss that, but that is no reason not to give the Bill a Second Reading.

There are few criticisms of the principle of the Bill. Hon. Members asked whether the laws on defamation and libel were not already adequate. They are not. They are only for the better off. One has to have access to considerable resources to make use of those laws. Although the new ideas on contingency fees being floated by the Government are interesting, they are only in a Green Paper.

There is scepticism about a statutory body, and that is a fundamental problem. The Minister saw constitutional problems with legal aid. We recognise that they are substantial and are of principle rather than practical application. Nevertheless, it appears from our debate that the problem is large enough to make us tackle those problems in Committee. We need to consider this measure further.

It has been argued that the press can get it right by themselves. There is no sign that that is the case. Everything that has been said suggests that over the past 10 years the abuses of the press have grown worse rather than better. Such indicators as we have, for example the number of complaints to the Press Commission rising considerably to more than 1,000 a year, bear that out.

A case has been made for a press ombudsman. That undoubtedly exists on American papers, such as the *Washington Post*. It is interesting that *The Sun* is introducing it. It is hard to believe that anyone appointed by Rupert Murdoch will be fearlessly independent. I suspect that the House will wait with bated breath to hear the first independent judgment of *The Sun* ombudsman, taking his master fearlessly to task. If we hold our breath that long, we shall all die of suffocation. There is no evidence that the press will get it right. Sir Zelman Cowan, the former chairman of the Press Council, said:

> "If newspapers persist in such behaviour, they will surely jeopardise ... the future of self-control in British newspapers."

[Mr. Fisher]

The mood of this debate suggests that they have already jeopardised their future and that we need to do something about it.

The Minister made the most substantial point of all. He said that we should give the Press Council one last try, particularly as it now has a very distinguished and well-respected chairman in Sir Louis Blom-Cooper. He commands great respect and it is no reflection on Sir Louis Blom-Cooper when we say that we do not believe that the Press Council will be able to get it right. The Press Council's structure is too cumbersome, bureaucratic and timid. It is not the right vehicle. It is a council for the press to defend the interests of the press. The council was not set up to defend the rights of the individual.

The 1962 Royal Commission said that the press should reform itself or statutory changes would be imposed. The 1977 Royal Commission said exactly the same. The 1984 Royal Commission introduced fast track corrections to improve matters but they have not done so. Both the House and the country are now impatient with the Press Council.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman says that fast track correction is not working. Does he not think that the reason for that is that the existence of the fast track correction system is not well known enough?

Mr. Fisher: Details about the Press Council are generally not well known enough and not well understood. That has been illustrated by many remarks. The Press Council does very little to make itself user friendly or available. I should welcome the Press Council giving greater publicity to its activities and helping people to make use of its facilities. However, I do not believe that the Press Council is the right vehicle or body, or that it has been given the right powers to address the many problems that face us. Surely the time has come for us to address those problems and place something on the statute book.

We are discussing whether the Bill should be considered in Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie has done everything that he can, both by his manner of presentation and by the skilful and shrewd way in which he has pitched the Bill, to make that easy. The Bill gets to the nub of the problem; there ought to be a benchmark, a right of reply for individuals, to protect individuals. I suspect that that is the mood of the House.

If we are to protect people such as that Conservative councillor whose case I mentioned, we need to protect them by means of a measure such as this. The Opposition support it. We believe that it should be part of a package of press reform to protect the individual. There should also be a right of privacy Bill, though not the Protection of Privacy Bill that was introduced last week, a freedom of information Bill and reform of the law of confidentiality and of the official secrets law. In addition, there should be moves to curb the concentration of newspaper ownership, but in that package the right of reply for individuals is absolutely essential.

The House will decide today whether it is right to legislate now. Newspapers are abusing their power. Individuals are getting hurt unnecessarily. Can the House help? The answer must be, yes—by ensuring a fair right of reply to correct factual inaccuracies.

The question for the Government, particularly in Committee, is whether they really care or whether their free market philosophy in other matters is also to apply to this question. If they do not back a measure such as this they will be opening up the free market to distortion and inaccuracies. That is not what the Minister or the Government ought or should want to do. It is not a matter of leaving it to the free market, because in this case the free market hurts. The House ought to legislate. Readers outside Parliament expect us to do something about it. We owe it to them to do it.

The hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) made a telling point when he said that the purpose of the House was to raise grievances on behalf of individuals and to try to protect the weak against the strong. Very few people in our media are stronger than the press barons and we have seen today that, in relation to them, individuals are weak. We, the House of Commons, owe it to those people to try to correct the imbalance. I hope that all hon. Members will join us in the Lobby, if we are given the opportunity, and support the Bill by giving it a Second Reading.

1.54 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I rise to give the Bill broad support. I say "broad" because I recognise that there are great difficulties in trying to do anything on this issue.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) must take note of some of the comments made, especially by his hon. Friends, some of whom have verged towards what I would call censorship and seek to interfere in the interpretation of newspaper stories rather than dealing with newspaper stories that are completely inaccurate or fictitious. We should concentrate on the latter two categories—not on the interpretation of newspaper stories.

The Member for Clydebank and Milngavie referred to the footnote problem and to the fact that footnote corrections to newspaper stories can appear years after the original article. However, as other hon. Members have said, there is more to it than that. One important point is that the footnote is so small and is hidden away. If there is to be a right of reply, it must be a suitable right of reply. If *The Sun*, the *News of the World*, the *Daily Mirror* or *The Sunday People*—Maxwell's newspapers are at least as bad as those produced by Rupert Murdoch—devote three or five pages to smearing and telling lies about an individual they must know when they do it that the right of reply will involve three or five pages, including the front page. If such newspapers found that several times a month they had to devote their front page to an apology, in big letters, with big lurid photographs of the editor, perhaps they would think twice about smearing members of the public.

We need to protect individual citizens—that is one of the jobs of Members of Parliament. Hon. Members can largely look after themselves, but stories nevertheless appear about them. I shall refer to one. I apologise to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), who is not in his place, for not having cleared this matter with him. Two weeks ago he was smeared in the *News of the World*. I do not know or care whether the article was true. However, as the article appeared on three pages of the *News of the World*, it hardly matters whether it was true because everybody will believe it because he has read it in

the newspapers. If a reply is justified and if the hon. Gentleman asks for a right of reply, it must be given the same weight.

I refer now to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I heard him speak at great length, both this week and last week, about what the Press Council could do to improve itself and that we must give it a chance. If the Bill goes into Committee and we discuss this matter in the future, I hope that my hon. Friend will elaborate on what he wants to see from the Press Council. If the Press Council can do the job of protecting individual citizens, I want to hear how, because it must be acknowledged that it is not doing so at the moment. We need either the route that to which the Minister referred or the route suggested in the Bill. At the moment there is nothing.

I should like to make two points about the press. First, too many journalists drag down the standards of the majority who seek to report the truth. I shall relate two stories which illustrate the problem of journalists who do not understand the difference between truth and fiction.

When I worked for BBC television news, I spent some time in Montevideo during the Falklands war, and was present when the first of the hospital ships returned carrying a number of wounded British soldiers and seamen. After I filed a story to London, I got into terrible trouble with the BBC's foreign desk because I had missed "the key shot." I was told that the front page of *The Sun* —the newspaper that backed our boys—carried a close-up photograph of a sign reading "Hello Mum". The caption to that picture stated that the sign was held aloft by a pathetically wounded British soldier managing to summon strength enough to hold up his sign for the cameras. I was asked where that shot was in the BBC bulletin that had gone out the night before.

When I examined the video material that we had shot, I discovered where that sign was to be seen. It was in a shot that we had used—held aloft by a burly rating with arms like Popeye's, smiling at the cameras—just having a bit of fun, and there is nothing wrong with that. The journalist who filed *The Sun* story knew that ne was lying. It may not have been an important item, but the fact remains that the journalist knew that he was lying. If he lied on that occasion, no doubt he will lie on others—one cannot rely on that journalist to tell the truth.

My second example adds to the remarks of the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), with which I thoroughly agree, about the Bermondsey by-election. I intended to make much the same comments. As a candidate of a party that would have great difficulty in winning the Bermondsey by-election, I naturally had great difficulty in persuading the press to take seriously anything that I said. I do not complain about that. After the by-election, however, a journalist who is still a member of the press lobby said, "I am sorry about the way that we treated you—I really want to apologise, but we had to ignore you so as to make sure that we got the result that we wanted and that the Labour party did not win that by-election." That was his job. He did not mind about the truth—he had a job to do, and he went ahead and did it. One cannot rely on that journalist, either, to tell the truth.

Many journalists are too lazy to tell the truth. I will criticise a journalist whose work I enjoyed reading, in a newspaper that I enjoy reading. I refer to Colin Brown and *The Independent*. Mr. Brown writes marvellous and interesting stories about the House, but I have yet to read one of his reports in *The Independent* without finding a silly inaccuracy, when anyone working in the House or in the press lobby ought to know better. They are usually unimportant and trivial mistakes, but they still mean that Mr. Brown, like many other journalists, is too lazy to find out the truth. If such journalists cannot be trusted, the Bill is needed.

It is not just right hon. and hon. Members who need protection from the press but the public—and it is they whom the Bill seeks to protect. I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading and will consider and amend it in detail in Committee, as I wish to do.

2.3 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Madam Deputy Speaker, you will remember an old guy called Bill Blyton who used to be a Member of the House and eventually finished up in the Lords. In Annie's Bar, he took every new Member of the House to one side and said, "If you want to get your name in the papers, go down Whitehall and take your trousers off—and if you want to get your photograph in as well, let them have a look in your pockets." He was absolutely right.

Many right hon. and hon. Members have courted publicity. The Bill is not about protecting politicians, the famous, or others who have open to them every avenue for self-protection. The Minister dos not do the Bill justice with his tales of Kinnock, Tebbit and Sky Television. The Minister knows damn well that that is not what the Bill is about. Politicians and those in show business who look for publicity, and thrive on it, know the mechanics and how to look after themselves.

The hon. and learned Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) referred to the libel laws. We should start asking ourselves a few questions about those laws. Why do the more famous cases such as that involving Jeffrey Archer get to court in 18 months, whereas those involving even famous politicians such as my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) take three years? Others take even longer. Who jumps the queue?

Then there is the matter of paying money into court. The Minister knows that the system works only for the famous. It works because newspapers are terrified of what juries will award and settle out of court. We have had the Koo Stark settlement and the Jeffrey Archer settlement and the rich and famous are making more money than they should. That is no consolation or help to the ordinary housewife and other people who are suffering. A headline in last week's *News of the World* says,

"My 3-day blind date sex romp".

That is a story about an ordinary housewife who went on a blind date and then went to bed with the guy. Another headline says:

"Blind date Judy was such fun in bed."

That woman's life is destroyed. Probably the guy with whom she went on a blind date went to the *News of the World* and sold his story. There is a picture of her in the paper and all her neighbours and people in her town now know about it. There is also a picture of two nice-looking children. Those young lads will have to suffer innuendo at school and their lives have been utterly destroyed. Those people are not rich or famous, and that has been done to them for the sake of a cheap headline in a national newspaper which has probably 12 million or 13 million readers.

A story in *The Sun* yesterday says:

[Mr. Joseph Ashton]

"Sorry boys, your daddy was a girl.

Three men turned up to their 74-year-old father's funeral—and found out for the first time that their old man was really a woman."

The boys were adopted and the story said that their father had,

"switched sex in the 1950s so he could work with all-male jazz bands."

Think how it destroys a family when at a time of grief they know that everybody in the street, in the pub, their families and those with whom they work have read such stories. They are devastated by such cheap-jack stories. In *The Sun* on Monday, there is a headline that says:

"Telly snooker ref, 57 falls for cutie of 24. John cheats wife".

Nobody had noticed before that he refereed snooker matches on television. Such headlines and stories appear time and again and they are destroying innocent people.

We heard in the debate about a Member of Parliament who was mentioned in the *News of the World*. He is a friend of mine and I hope that he goes to law, takes the *News of the World* to the cleaners and is awarded devastating damages. That avenue is open to us and we know what we are doing, but the people that I have mentioned do not. As the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) said, people are treated in much the same way now as they were treated in the 15th or 16th centuries when people were tortured, locked in dungeons or had their heads chopped off. The newspapers are judge and jury, there is no trial and psychologically the punishments are every bit as savage as the torture that was carried out in olden days.

The newspapers do not carry stories only about the loony Left, although they did during the run-up to the last general election when they carried stories about councillors in London. Those stories were disproved in the famous "Hits and Myths" book published by Goldsmith's college, which showed that stories about black bin liners and other such stories were outrageous lies and inventions and that journalists were being paid to invent stories to denigrate London councils and councillors.

We heard earlier about the story of a man who became involved in a picket line dispute and because of that his past was revealed. Many years before he had been convicted of an offence but it was well out of time. He went to the Press Council but got no satisfaction. My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie and I were on a programme about this on Birmingham television, and the studio was full of people with complaints. I do not have much respect or time for Sarah Keays, but she was right to confront the *Daily Mail* woman who rang her and told her that the paper wanted to do a piece about her. Miss Keays said that she did not want to comment and was told, "Even if you don't we shall still print the piece about you, so you might as well say something." Miss Keays's comments were turned upside down and she was faced with a large article in the paper inviting readers to,

"Tell us what you think, address your letter to Keays."

In addition to the "non-interview" the paper got three pages of letters.

The newspapers pull every stunt in the book. Yet, it is amazing how thin skinned journalists are when such things happen to them. The lady from the *Daily Mail* was very upset when she was confronted about what she had said. There was also the famous instance of the editor of *The Sun* being upset because he was not satisfied with his double glazing. He bored everybody stiff, telling them what a rotten firm it was. Sir John Junor of the *Sunday Express* was stopped by police on his way home. What a tragedy it was. The editor of *The Mail on Sunday* was stopped in his car by the police the other week. There were 4,000 words in reply. He went on the Kilroy show. Robert Maxwell sues for libel as soon as anybody says a word against him. They are firm believers in retaliation. When it comes to anybody else, anything goes.

The Minister might examine the suspicion of a sinister connivance between the police and some tabloids in getting stories. For instance, how did the tabloids manage to get the news that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's wife had been breathalysed, within hours of its happening? She did not put it in the newspapers. No reporter or press agent was hanging around. Somebody at the police station—whether for money or otherwise—tipped them off.

There is the case of a famous football manager. I shall not mention his name as it would be embarrassing for him. He was cautioned for kerb crawling—cautioned, not charged—and he denied the caution. It was splashed in four-inch letters across the front page of *The Sun*. He had a £90,000 a year job but because of the publicity he was sacked. He would have been better off going to court. At least he could have defended himself. He could have had a lawyer, but instead he was tried by innuendo. Who tipped off the paper? He was cautioned at 9 o'clock. He said that he was looking for a place to park. Maybe he was—he had a perfect right to do so. The following morning, it was splashed all over the front page of *The Sun*. That man had no rights. He took legal advice and his lawyer said, "You might not have been found guilty if you went to court, but you were cautioned so you cannot sue for libel." That man has no recompense. There is no way for him to appeal or complain.

That is the cheque-book journalism that was mentioned earlier. It is not often done by people employed by newspapers—it is done by freelance bounty hunters who concoct stories, knowing that there is a ready market, even if their story only involves Mrs. Brown down the road.

I know of two cases. The first—I will not say where it happened—involves a miner who was fined for parking in the wrong place. There is nothing wrong with that. The only thing was that he was wearing silk stockings, a suspender belt, and other women's clothing. *[Interruption.]* It is funny—OK—but that man had to quit his job at the pit and move to another town. He had to uproot his wife and kids and take them somewhere else just because of a £20 parking fine. We see that sort of thing all the time.

Another case involves a woman whose husband was mentally unstable. She was at a new year's eve party and she was doing the can-can. He went outside and committed suicide. That point came out at the inquest, and a local paper splashed it across the front page. It was not enough that her husband committed suicide she was made to look like a tart who had forced him to do it. That is a 20-year sentence for people. They have no right of reply and no right to complain. They cannot go to court. They are isolated.

We have heard how the press can surround and literally lay siege to a person's house. Hon. Members have told us what can happen. There is absolute licence to vandalise. Gengis Khan killed people and ruined lives. Hon.

Members have seen the lack of attendance in the Press Gallery. There have been virtually no reporters present. There will be nothing in the papers tomorrow. They will say, "Play it cool, play it quiet, say nothing," and go back to their old habits next week.

As hon. Members know, I am a journalist, and I was taken before the Press Council by somebody who complained. I thought that I had made a serious point about gipsy children—how half of them do not reach the age of five because of pre-natal neglect—but somebody objected. It is a complicated business, but I lost.

I complained to the Press Council myself when a newspaper splashed across its front page,

"Ashton's vote gives £11,000 pay award to MPs."

There was a majority of one, but the newspaper said that it was my particular vote. In reality, the increase was only £8,000, but that did not matter either. On that occasion, the Press Council found in my favour. Reading *The Daily Telegraph* three months later, one would have thought that it was the other way round; it was impossible to believe that I had won the case.

It is almost impossible to look casually at a report by the Press Council and see what the outcome of a case was. The Bill will not prevent people taking libel actions in court, but will be a deterrent to editors, who may have to cut up their papers with letters from people saying "You have got it wrong, this is unfair, I am not having it and I demand that you print my side of the story." Any journalist knows that space in a tabloid newspaper is at a premium. If a tabloid wants a story containing 500 words and the reporter sends 510 words, it will chop 10 words —usually the last 10, which makes a nonsense of the story. Space is valuable for advertising, so the last thing that editors of tabloid newspapers want is to print a page full of letters of reply. That will stop this sort of nonsense. The competition is so ferocious that the tabloids will go more and more down-market. We must hit them where it hurts —in their valuable advertising space.

2.17 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfields): I have listened to all the speeches, apart from when I had to make one or two excursions outside, with much interest. Although I understand the motives behind the Bill and fully sympathise with them, I do not think that it will correct misreporting or improve poor editorial standards, which is so desperately necessary.

My hon. Friend the Minister presented the Government's view cogently and hit the nail on the head many times. In theory, the Bill will solve the problems, but in reality I do not think that it will. Hon. Members have recounted previous press excesses. We heard of the Bermondsey by-election. We had a trip down memory lane about the fraught conflicts with the National Union of Railwaymen, with all that that meant for public relations, attitudes to the electorate, people in the community and union workers.

None of the problems will be resolved by the Bill. Some dreadful remarks were made and published at the time of the Bermondsey by-election and such reporting will continue. Bad stories and bad journalism will occur irrespective of the right to reply. The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) recounted stories such as "Your dad was a mum." That may have been factually right. It may have been a devastating shock to the family to read about it on the front page of a tabloid with a circulation of over 4 million, but the fact remains that the story might have been right. Although we can condemn it as appalling journalism and bad taste, there is little right of reply to correct what has been said.

If there is a need for a right to reply, the press will not concede it readily or willingly. It will have to go through the new procedure that is proposed in the Bill, which will take time. The press will concede readily that it has someone's age or surname wrong and it will, no doubt, offer a retraction in the newspaper in the same space, style and prominence in which it appeared in the original article —which was probably insignificant. But newspapers will seek to uphold the main story through every avenue that is open to them under the Bill. That process will be long if newspapers keep asking for more time to produce evidence. The damage will have been done, the report will have been written and the publicity will have been felt up and down the land, so it will be of small benefit for those who have suffered the heartache of misreporting to have a correction put in months later.

Hon. Members have mentioned periodicals. They can literally be published periodically—weekly, monthly, quarterly or even half-yearly. I suggest that there would be difficulty in obtaining corrections that were still timely and relevant to the indiscretion that might have been committed by a journalist in an organ because they might take months to happen. That would mean that the right of reply of the person who had been misreported would be almost worthless. It will not mean anything because the damage will have been done.

We have not tackled the root cause of what we consider to be bad journalism. We should re-emphasise through the existing or a strengthened mechanism the effect of the Press Council. That is where there is public pressure and, from what my hon. Friend the Minister has said, I hope that Government pressure will continue to be exerted. I hope that the new chairman of the Press Council can continue to make his influence felt to ensure that the excesses that we have all suffered or heard reported do not continue to take place.

Some reporting is colourful or sensational and we may not want to be reported in that way, but it is legitimate to do that if it sells newspapers and if it is a way of reporting items that are considered to be newsworthy. We need, of course, to uphold factuality by ensuring that reports are factually correct. It is not right or proper for any hon. Member to endorse or support any newspaper or newspaper management that deliberately reports inaccurately and does not check facts first.

Mr. Michael Brown: The *Sunday Sport* makes it up.

Mr. King: My hon. Friend mentions the *Sunday Sport* and I have no truck with that rag. It is a deplorable organ. However, the mechanism exists within the press system to bring it under control. The mechanism may need overhauling or revising, but we should not accept a Bill that reduces it to the right of reply. We are dealing with clever people who can get round actions such as those suggested in the Bill and can find ways of delaying matters.

We have talked for much of today about the tabloid press, but I am more interested in the effect that the Bill may have on what we call the serious press. I mentioned in a couple of interventions that we lead Europe in the investigative role of our newspapers. I strongly refute the impression that our way of life, press, system of society

[Mr. King]

and politics are identical to those in the rest of Europe, so we can have identical legislation. But the role of the serious press in this country has increasingly become the role of a policeman of many of the excesses that have taken place in Government and in many companies and international organisations. The roll of honour is substantial. Under the Bill, would the Thalidomide scandal ever have broken? It might have become bogged down in a lawyers' paradise of asking for the right of reply and the manufacturers, Distillers company, would have left no stone unturned.

Mr. Michael Brown: The case went to court.

Mr. King: Yes, but it would not have to go to court during the course of the report. If a page or two appeared in *The Sunday Times* condemning the company publicly, the company, as a body of people, would be entitled to seek redress the following week, with a sponsored article by the company's lawyers. Would that be a worthwhile procedure for the betterment of public knowledge?

In an intervention, I referred to the depressing difficulty of reporting accidents and disasters, of which, alas, we have had far too many recently. When we had an accident on the London Underground the press was certainly not slow to come forward with condemnations, and neither were Members of Parliament and others in responsible positions. The result was that London Regional Transport was tried publicly in the media before the official inquiry even opened.

In the case of the M1 air crash——

Mr. Worthington *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 120, Noes 0.

Division No. 74] **[2.25 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchan, Norman
Buck, Sir Antony
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cash, William
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Darling, Alistair
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Holt, Richard
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Irving, Charles
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Livingstone, Ken
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martlew, Eric
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Summerson, Hugo
Temple-Morris, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tredinnick, David
Walden, George
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Banks and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Teresa Gorman and
Mr. Roger King.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills.)

Private Members' Bills

INDECENT DISPLAYS (NEWSPAPERS AND WORKPLACES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 10 February.

FUEL AND ENERGY PROVISION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

COMPANIES (AUDIT COMMITTEES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Second Reading what day? No day named.

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day?

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): On behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson-Smith), Friday 10 February.

GAMING MACHINES (PROHIBITION ON USE BY PERSONS UNDER EIGHTEEN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

HUMAN RIGHTS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

HEDGEROWS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 10 February.

RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS (WEARING OF PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 10 February.

ARMED FORCES HOUSING AND TAX BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [27 January].

Hon. Members: Object.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

Pig Farmers

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.38 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): When laws passed in Parliament are used by greedy, unscrupulous developers—advised and abetted by equally rapacious lawyers—to threaten and blackmail vulnerable people going about their lawful business, Parliament is the only institution to which those people can turn to protect their rights and interests. In those circumstances, it is Parliament's duty to change the law if justice is not available from our legal system. It is my duty to bring such a case to the attention of the House and to try to persuade the Minister to act.

The case is simple. It involves a conflict of interests in which the developer has failed to respect the social and property rights of those who adjoin his development.

A developer bought a long-since disused railway station at Much Hadham in Hertfordshire, in my constituency, for housing development purposes and was given planning permission. The developer, who is not known locally and who is very difficult to locate, has been traced to a company called Bockle in the Isle of Man, whose local representative is one of the new mega-estate agents known as GA. The houses he is developing are expensive and are expected to retail at about £350,000.

Next door to this development is a 180-acre farm owned by Michard Munday and his brother, who are well-educated young farmers. During the past 10 years or so, the farm has been devoted to purely arable use as the price of grain was high. With the fall in the price and profitability of barley, wheat and rape seed, the Mundays have reverted to mixed farming—a form of farming which is much more healthy for the land and for the preservation of the countryside. They elected to go in for pig farming in the traditional manner—that is to say, on a free-range basis, not in an enclosed factory-type building such as those in which pigs in many places are made to live.

The Mundays started with 10 little piglets, whose run was in full view of the housing development, now seductively renamed Miller's View. The Munday brothers had planted, with trees supplied under the county tree scheme, a 200 foot buffer zone on their land to protect their farm from the houses, but this has been destroyed by the builders' machinery and refuse.

Imagine the Munday brothers' surprise when they received a peremptory demand from their friendly developer's lawyer that they remove the piglets and their modest housing because of the nuisance and the smell that they caused. Pigs, of course, do not smell; they are clean animals when they are able to live in a free-range manner and if they are kept clean. What, of course, does smell —and some urban dwellers have smelt it when in the countryside—is the concentrated pig manure removed from pig styes when it is spread on arable farms to feed the crop.

I went to the farm, and I can attest that the pigs are in good condition. They are clean, and there is no offensive smell whatsoever. I doubt whether the lawyers or the developers, undeterred by such small details, have actually been to see the farm. The developer has demanded a 200 yard buffer zone on which no livestock will be kept and has taken the young farmers to court. Lawyers advising the Munday brothers advised them to settle out of court because of the legal fees, which are likely to be over £200,000 and could force them to sell their farm.

That is the story, and that is the scale of the injustice involved. Because a developer, naturally, wants to sell his houses for the highest price, he is prepared to mislead his potential clients by having all livestock activity removed from the vicinity of the houses. In short, he wants to mislead those to whom he is selling. As to forcing the sale of a 200 yard strip, he has never asked for that, but, of course, it would be to his advantage.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. May I ask the hon. Gentleman if the case to which he is referring has been set down? I think he knows that this matter might be sub judice and that he has to be very guarded in his comments. Has the case been set down?

Mr. Wells: I have asked the Clerks about the position, and I have been told that I am allowed to discuss the matter in the way I am doing. I am not exactly certain whether the matter is set down, but an injunction has been brought against the farmers and it is to be heard at some stage. I am told that until a date is laid down, it is permissible to talk about the matter.

What can the Minister and Parliament do to protect farmers from such monstrous abuse? If the farmers concede, they could not keep livestock anywhere on their farm as most of it is within 200 yards of existing dwellings, the occupants of which, far from objecting to their keeping pigs on the farm, support them. The school in Much Hadham and the children are also protesting and supporting the farmers, who have lived in the village for many years. They are supported by everyone except the developer.

I should like the Minister to state categorically that the Government are opposed to any extension of controls or restrictions on the use of land for agricultural purposes; to uphold the principle of farmers and other property owners to farm and use their land as they wish and as farmers must; to caution developers to think twice and sensitively about the rights of other property owners; and to undertake that unless the threatening and bullying behaviour of developers using their financial power ceases, the Government will seek legal powers from Parliament to restrain their activities, to preserve the civil and human rights of comparatively humble impecunious fellow property owners and citizens.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) on raising a subject which concerns many people who live and work in areas of the countryside that are subject to intensive development pressure—particularly, but by no means exclusively, in the south-east of England. My hon. Friend's constituency is in the front line of such pressure and it is understandable that his constituents should ask what can be done to ease—and, one hopes, to resolve—the conflicts of interest to which this gives rise.

My hon. Friend's speech described the difficulties experienced by a farmer at Much Hadham following the building of new houses next to his farm. I am aware of the interest that this case aroused last year in both the local and national press, and my hon. Friend has given the

House further details this afternoon. However, as I am sure he appreciates, I cannot comment on the specific case. Should any aspect of the case formally come before the Department, for example as a planning appeal, I can assure my hon. Friend that any views that he and his constituents put forward on the land use implications will be taken fully into account.

We can be justifiably proud of the contribution that the south-east of England has made, and continues to make, to the revival of the economy which has taken place under this Government. However, the more economically successful the region becomes, the greater are the pressures for development and, in turn, the greater the potential for conflict between developers who wish to share in that success and those who wish to call a halt. Some of those in the latter group allege that there is a tide of concrete spreading across the south-east, but if they check the facts they will find that, outside London, urban areas in south-east England currently cover just 12·6 per cent. of the total land area, a figure that we estimate will increase to only 13·7 per cent. by the year 2001. In contrast, green belts and areas of outstanding natural beauty cover 42 per cent. of the same total land area.

Other critics suggest that the Government should direct new development away from the south-east to other, less prosperous areas. That is not our policy. Such a policy of central direction would deny business the choice of where to locate and people the choice of where to live. In the longer term, it would deny communities the ability to adapt to sustain their economic wellbeing, which must be a prerequisite of their ability to preserve and enhance their environment. Moreover, turning development and investment away risks losing it, not only for the south-east but for the country as a whole.

A much more constructive approach is to design policies that encourage developers and conservationists to coexist harmoniously. The town and country planning system, which has served this country well for more than 40 years, has an important part to play in this process. Its purpose is to regulate the use and development of land in the public interest. To achieve this purpose it has to reconcile the need to encourage development with the continuing need to protect and enhance the environment.

Hon. Members will be all too well aware that this is anything but a simple task. They will no doubt be able to point to specific instances where one party or another has emerged from the planning process much aggrieved by a decision of the local planning authority, or of one of my Department's inspectors. But that decision will have been reached only after the most careful consideration, often of finely balanced issues. Planning decisions inevitably involve such judgments and it is unrealistic to expect them to reconcile the irreconcilable, though they must try their best.

The Government have a range of policies designed to encourage development in areas where it will be welcomed —in particular, in the inner cities, where since 1979 we have committed some £4 billion in grants for urban regeneration and have attracted much more than that in private investment. One consequence has been that, in recent years, about half of all new housing has been on derelict, recycled or unused land in urban areas. That is a record of which this Government are proud. However, not all development can be accommodated in this way, and some new sites will need to be found for development in the countryside in ways that ensure the continued protection of the green belt, areas of outstanding natural beauty and other specially designated areas.

In addition, we have recognised that, at a time of agricultural surpluses, it does not make sense to preserve particularly the lower grades of farmland solely for their productive value. Our policies acknowledge the decline in agricultural employment and the growing diversity of economic activity in rural areas that has resulted from this trend. The need now is to encourage and sustain a healthy rural economy by increasing new employment opportunities. A healthy rural economy, in which enterprise and initiative can thrive, is not only the best long-term protection for the countryside but also the basis for enhancing the quality of life in rural communities.

This need to accommodate a rising number of households in the south-east, and the demand for new housing which accompanies new employment opportunities, must be catered for in ways that are sympathetic to the environment, whether in town or country. The planning system provides a framework within which sensible decisions about the site and location of new residential and other development can be made. The system has two elements—the preparation of development plans and individual development control decisions. At both stages there is ample scope for local residents and businesses to contribute their views.

Earlier this week we presented to the House our proposals for simplifying and improving the development plan system in England and Wales. The main feature of the new system will be comprehensive district development plans, to be prepared by district councils. The plan preparation process will provide for the views of the local community to be taken fully into account, and relevant policies in up-to-date plans will carry considerable weight in individual planning decisions, as they do now in those areas where properly adopted local plans are in force. Moreover, it is long established that planning authorities, when considering development proposals, must take account of any views expressed by members of the public. So there is ample scope within the planning system for local views to be represented.

The Government can and do set up procedures for thorough consideration of development proposals, but those who live and those who work in the countryside have to play their part by being willing to appreciate each other's needs and priorities. That was the burden of my hon. Friend's speech. Let me for a moment turn the subject of this debate around and ask what are the implications of pig farming, or other types of farming, for those who live in the country?

Farmers have, for many years, enjoyed what some people regard as a privileged position in the planning system. The use of land for agriculture is excluded from the definition of development and so from the scope of planning control. In addition, the general development order confers permitted development rights on a wide range of farm buildings and farming operations, so specific planning applications are not needed. Despite the scale of the changes affecting some parts of the farming industry at the moment, agriculture will continue to be the predominant land use in the countryside and so will continue to be responsible for shaping much of the countryside that we cherish as part of our heritage.

The Government are keen to minimise the burden of controls and regulations on all developers, including

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

farmers. We therefore have no plans for a wholesale extension of planning control to agricultural development. I am sure that that will be good news to my hon. Friend. I have to say, though, that the case for continuing to exempt many agricultural developments from planning control becomes more difficult to defend if a few farmers insist on putting up farm buildings that make no attempt to blend with their surroundings and without any thought for the amenity of the neighbours.

Since taking over my planning responsibilities last July I have received numerous complaints about insensitive agricultural development. It really is up to a minority of farmers to adopt a more responsible attitude when exercising their permitted development rights. Without such an attitude, there will be unnecessary conflict and the arguments for increased controls, to which we are at present opposed for the reasons I have mentioned, will become harder to resist. This is undoubtedly a case where an irresponsible few could jeopardise the long-standing freedoms enjoyed by many.

Those farmers who seek to diversify into other activities will need to become increasingly familiar with the planning system. If they do not have it already, they will need to develop an awareness of potential sources of conflict with their neighbours and of the importance of sensitive design and siting of buildings in the countryside. The recently published guide, "Planning Permission and the Farmer" encourages farmers to talk to their neighbours and to the local planning authority and be prepared, if necessary, to modify their plans to meet justifiable concerns. I commend this principle of good neighbourliness to farmers who have aroused the anger of those who have written to me about insensitive permitted development.

While we have no plans for extending planning control to farming generally, we shall not hesitate to introduce new, well-targetted controls where we are convinced that they are justified and necessary for the protection of the environment. We recognised some time ago that additional controls were needed to deal with the nuisance of noise and smell that can sometimes be caused by livestock units and associated structures such as slurry tanks and lagoons. After public consultation, when our original proposals were criticised as not strong enough, and following much further discussion, the new controls came into operation with the new general development order in December. They mean that all new livestock units and associated structures proposed to be built within 400 metres of most residential or other property now require specific planning permission. The new controls are not intended to prevent livestock units being built, merely to make them subject to the same scrutiny by the planning system that already applies to many other types of development. In addition, we encourage farmers to minimise the scope for nuisance from livestock units by operating them in accordance with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's guidelines for housed livestock.

If the keeping of livestock causes nuisance and the matter cannot be resolved by discussion and co-operation, there are remedies available under the Public Health Act 1936. This requires local authorities to take action against, for example, noise or smells if they amount to a statutory nuisance. Wherever possible the aim should be to find ways of abating the nuisance while enabling the farming or other business to continue in operation. Individuals are also empowered to institute proceedings under the Act. We are currently considering responses to a consultation paper which proposed some strengthening of these provisions, for example, to enable action to be taken before nuisance occurs.

So far, my remarks have emphasised the responsibility that the rest of the community expects from farmers, but those expectations are mutual. It is equally important that planning authorities and those living in the countryside adopt a responsible and co-operative attitude to farmers and others who work in the countryside, which was the point that my hon. Friend was making. Farming is a business that makes a very important contribution to the national economy and it is in the national interest that agriculture, like other businesses, should remain efficient, competitive and as free from bureaucratic control as we can make it.

It is all too clear from my postbag that some members of the public have a somewhat unrealistic idea of the countryside, with green fields, contentedly grazing sheep and so on. I do not doubt that when millers were living in the countryside in large numbers, their view was of countryside with pigs, sheep and cattle—although my hon. Friend has said that there is possibly the suggestion that in Much Hadham the millers' view would have been mainly of open fields, with no livestock. The countryside will change, as it has always done, in response to changing circumstances, and we must ensure that the often parochial attitudes of some newcomers to the countryside, keen to preserve their picture-postcard image of rural life, are not allowed to block the very development that is necessary to sustain that life.

Just as we recognise the kind of problems that can arise when livestock units are sited near houses, so we accept that new houses built close to established livestock units and other farming activities are a potential source of conflict. The circular that we issued last October about the new general development order acknowledged this point and made clear that local planning authorities should look particularly carefully at proposals for new housing close to existing livestock units to minimise the risk of conflict between neighbouring land uses.

My remarks have illustrated the kind of issues that the planning system is required to resolve. Conflicts of the type mentioned by my hon. Friend are, unfortunately, not uncommon. The remedy lies in the adoption of a reponsible and constructive attitude by all those concerned with the future of the countryside. The planning system provides the means for resolving some conflicts of interest, but it will work effectively only when matched by reason and co-operation at the local level. I hope that this useful debate, initiated by my hon. Friend, has highlighted the benefits of that approach.

Question put and agreed to.

House of Commons

Monday 6 February 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Benefit

1. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have received disability benefit in the present financial year; and how many received it in 1978-79.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Since 1978-79 there have been large increases in the numbers of people receiving benefits because of long-term sickness or disability. For example, the numbers receiving invalidity benefit have increased by 88 per cent. to 1·1 million; attendance allowance by 186 per cent. to 760,000; and mobility allowance by 458 per cent. to 530,000. I shall, with permission, circulate full details in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. It shows the Government's continuing commitment to helping those with disabilities. I am sure that it will be welcomed not only by disabled people, but by all members of the community. Will my hon. Friend comment on the expenditure required in real terms in the present year compared with that in 1978-79?

Mr. Scott: This year expenditure will amount to some £7·3 billion, which represents a £3·5 billion real terms increase over the 1978-79 figure.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Minister aware that there are quite a number of people who are registered as disabled, yet who do not qualify as disabled for the purpose of housing benefit? Does he have any idea of the numbers involved? Does he have any proposals to remedy this, and to ensure that those who qualify receive their benefit more quickly than is sometimes the case?

Mr. Scott: We are always anxious to ensure that benefits are paid speedily once people have qualified for them. I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's point about housing benefit.

Mr. Marlow: Does my hon. Friend agree with me that, while we can take pride in the fact that, as a party and a Government, we have been far more generous—quite rightly so—to the disabled than the Labour party, it is also fair to point out that, at this important Question Time, there are only four Labour Back Benchers in the Chamber?

Mr. Scott: I am afraid that the Opposition must answer for that.

Mr. Alfred Morris: While everyone knows that more claimants means higher costs, how many disablement benefits have not increased in real value since 1979? How many disabled people lost free prescriptions and free school meals last April? How many are on transitional protection and will thus have no increase in their benefits this April? Will their standard of living not, therefore, slump as rising prices eat further into this so-called protection? Again, how many disabled people have had their housing benefit cut?

Mr. Scott: I can understand the hon. Gentleman clutching at straws as he tries to protect the Labour Government's record. Of the £3·5 billion extra money in real terms which this Government are spending on benefits for the long-term sick and disabled, some £3 billion is because of the wider scope of those benefits—more people are applying for them—and £½ billion is because of increases in real terms in the level of benefits.

Following is the information:

Estimated average numbers of weekly benefit payments at any one time

Benefit	*Numbers* *1978-79*	*1988-89*
Invalidity Benefit	600,000	1,130,000
Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit	210,000	210,000
War Disablement Pension	291,000	195,000
Attendance Allowance	265,000	760,000
Invalid Care Allowance	6,000	100,000
NCIP/SDA	150,000	265,000
Mobility Allowance	95,000	530,000
Income-related benefits	355,000	450,000
	1,972,000	3,640,000

Notes: Beneficiaries may be receiving more than one benefit at any one time.

Social Fund

2. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the operation of the social fund to date.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): We have been closely monitoring the social fund, and the original fears which were expressed about the adequacy of its budget, the introduction of loans, the discretionary nature of the scheme and the review system, have proved to be unfounded. Loans have reached anticipated levels of expenditure and community care grants have steadily risen to 77 per cent. of anticipated monthly expenditure.

Over 60,000 interest-free loans have been made and more than 86,000 community care grants have been awarded. The review system is proving to be a speedy and effective means of handling disputed decisions. Reviews are completed in a matter of days rather than the weeks it took for an appeal to be completed.

Ms. Quin: Despite what the Minister has said, will he agree that urgent changes in the way that the social fund works are needed, especially if those who deserve grants are to be in a position to take them up? Will he agree that

so far all the independent evidence shows that the social fund has failed to relieve the poverty which the Government said it was designed to tackle?

Mr. Moore: I had hoped that the hon. Lady would have listened to what I said before she read out her prepared question. I shall continue, as the Government must and should, to monitor the situation. I am not completely content because I believe that the officers have been applying the conditions for the community care grants too rigidly. I am determined to ensure that it is a success and that all of the fundamental objections raised when the social fund was first introduced are disproved.

Mr. McCrindle: I welcome a large part of my right hon. Friend's reply. Does that mean that the fears that have been expressed by some—dare I remind him, on both sides of the House—that the cash-limited arrangements may prove inadequate, are likely to be allayed? Is he satisfied that the money allocated will be adequate at least in this financial year? To put this matter in perspective, will my right hon. Friend remind the House what would happen if the amount allocated proved to be inadequate?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right to remind the House that we announced in the uprating statement the allocation for 1989-90, which was confirmed in the autumn statement and in the recent public expenditure White Paper. Despite a happy massive reduction in unemployment and therefore a major reduction in case load, those allocations have been maintained. Therefore there should be an increase per case in the funds available. I hope that that will reassure my hon. Friend. I know that he takes a serious interest in this and I know that he will have noted carefully what I said in my opening answer.

Miss Lestor: When the Minister reviews the social fund, will he consider particularly some of the problems that have arisen in Salford—I am sure similar problems have been encountered in other places—where people who have been in hospital a long time and those in residential care who cannot get other accommodation, have had to refuse private rented accommodation because the social fund does not cover deposits that are required in that sector? He also said that he would make some comment to the House on the Barnado's report on the problems of youngsters coming out of care and their accommodation difficulties. Will he do so now?

Mr. Moore: Obviously I will watch carefully how the social fund works because I am determined to ensure that this much more effective method of helping those in need is monitored and adjusted if necessary. Recently I met representatives of certain organisations who raised the difficulties that they believe are being faced by a particular group of 16 and 17-year-olds. Obviously I shall consider that matter with care.

I should stress to the hon. Lady that if one considers the different offices and the differential way in which the rules on community care grants in particular are applied, one realises that serious application by social workers, by local authorities and by diligent Members of Parliament—I know that the hon. Lady is such a Member—will ensure that community care grants are effectively spent.

Mrs. Roe: Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether there are any items or expenses, previously excluded from the single payment expenses, which are now covered under the social fund?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right to remind me that, because it is a discretionary fund, there are many examples of local expenditure that all sides of the House would welcome. One office, for example, paid for a holiday for a family whose young daughter had been seriously sexually abused—not surprisingly all the family had been under considerable stress. In another case a £500 grant was given for a teletext television for a deaf elderly pensioner, living alone, who had become extremely isolated. I could give many other illustrations of payments which could not have been covered under the old single payments system.

Mr. Fearn: Is the Secretary of State aware that many offices are now reporting problems because people are having great difficulty in trying to fill in the 17-page form? Has he any ideas for changing that form, which is causing a great deal of trouble?

Mr. Moore: On a previous occasion my hon. Friend the Minister of State said that we were looking at the form and we shall continue to do so. When that form is filled out with the help of the staff at local offices, it is producing considerable success in terms of the numbers of applications for grants. I am constantly looking at all of our forms because I am anxious to ensure that those who are entitled to receive those benefits with the help of the form and our offices.

Personal Pension Schemes

3. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many personal pension schemes have been established at the latest available date.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): Nearly 1 million people have opted so far to take out a personal pension, through 122 personal pension schemes.

Mr. Stern: I am most grateful for that reply. Does my hon. Friend recollect the way in which the Opposition fought the principle of personal pensions line by line and clause by clause during consideration of the Social Security Bill 1986? Does he agree that that shows, once again, how the Opposition object to any extension of freedom, although more than 1 million people have so far supported this extension of freedom?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is quite right when he says that there was no enthusiasm by the Opposition for personal pensions. The figures that I have just given my hon. Friend show that there is enormous enthusiasm among those sections of the work force which, by and large, were not eligible to join the occupational pension schemes. Quite clearly, they wanted to do so.

"Businessr j 3-1 of Service" (Report)

4. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he is acting on any of the recommendations made in the "Business of Service" report.

12. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how relocation of social security office work out of London will affect service to the customer.

Mr. Moore: I have accepted most of the recommendations of the "Business of Service" report and I am in the process of implementing them. Relocating some social security work will enable us to improve the current unsatisfactory service that customers receive in some London offices. By moving backroom work out of London we shall be able to provide a better, more efficient and responsive service to our customers. All the affected London offices will remain open, some on better sites, and more branch offices will be opened in poorly served areas.

Mr. Summerson: Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that no social security offices in my constituency will be closed? If any are closed that will obviously result in a far worse service to my constituents.

Mr. Moore: As I have said, there are no proposals to close offices although some are not regarded by our staff as being in the best locations to serve my hon. Friend's customers who are also, happily, his constituents.

Mr. Patnick: Will my right hon. Friend tell us the effect of moving the London social security offices to the regions? Are any scheduled to go to Sheffield, Hallam? Assuming that the answer is no, will he consider moving some there because I am sure that that would benefit the city greatly?

Mr. Moore: On this occasion I cannot give any joy to my hon. Friend. I commend him for the way in which he argues for his constituents. The three social security centres that I announced recently will be in Glasgow, Belfast and the Wigan area. We shall, of course, consider further relocation for parts of my headquarter operation. I shall take seriously the interests of the assisted areas in parts of the country where, tragically, there are still higher levels of unemployment than I would like.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the Secretary of State confirm that in the computer projects, on whose efficient operation the success of this proposal depends, the social fund program for example is now running on its sixth version and still contains 100 mistakes? Is he aware that when queries are made at local offices about delays and mistakes in the payment of benefits that are handled centrally, such as some disability benefits, the usual answer is, "That has nothing to do with us, it is a matter for Blackpool, Glasgow or Newcastle"—or wherever? It is widely believed that these delays occur because there is not enough staff at those locations to cope with the workload. Does the Secretary of State expect the House to believe that the proposals will lead to an improved service while still saving £4 million a year?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Lady is wrong, and not only on the detailed facts about the computer program. I had hoped that she would wish to commend it because, despite the initial teething troubles in parts of the computer program, it is one of the most successful operations by civil servants that I have seen in our country for generations. However, that is not relevant to the actual decisions. I am sure that the hon. Lady knows that the key problems relate to the difficulties of many employers in London about high wastage, rates, working conditions and the costs of London work. I noted carefully the warm reaction by many hon. Members to the sensible relocation to those areas of the country that will benefit. That relocation also helps customers, staff and the taxpayer.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: In his laudable attempts to improve the service to the customer by the relocation of Social Security Department facilities, will my right hon. Friend bend his mind to the facilities that have already been relocated? The attendance allowance delays that are reported to me in my surgery are getting far and away out of hand. There is inordinate delay in dealing with applications and appeals relating to attendance allowance. That needs to be corrected. Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking to do so?

Mr. Moore: Of course. My hon. Friend makes a fair point. We are discussing relocation and the ability of our centres to give good customer service, whether on family credit or attendance allowance. I am determined to achieve such a service. Despite current difficulties we have seen considerable improvements in the last year.

Social Fund (St. Helens)

5. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the social fund allocation for his Department's offices in St. Helens for the next two years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will, with permission, circulate details of the social fund allocations for 1989-90 to offices in Great Britain in the *Official Report*. I shall also place a copy in the Library. The allocation to St. Helens is £806,802 comprising £574,468 for loans and £232,334 for grants. Decisions on the allocations for 1990-91 will be made nearer that time.

Mr. Evans: Is the Minister aware that in St. Helens, the DSS has spent less than 40 per cent. of this year's budget for community grants? Does he accept that one of the reasons for this is the bewildering complexity of the forms that applicants have to fill in? I recently spent over an hour filling in one of those forms for a confused pensioner. Will the Minister give an undertaking that when he fixes the budgets for the next two years, he will greatly simplify the application forms? That would greatly improve the take-up, because the problem is that people do not understand the forms.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Member will be pleased to know that the expenditure of his local office on grants in December went up to 50 per cent. I should like to place on record the appreciation of the local office of his interest in seeing that these grants are paid to the people who need them.

Such a constructive approach will help to ensure that this money, which is intended for those in most need, gets to them. If we can also assist by improving the forms still further, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we shall certainly do so. As these grants go to those in the community in most need of assistance, we depend on other organisations, local Members of Parliament and social services departments to assist in ensuring that the money reaches the people for whom it is intended.

Following are the details:

Social Fund
Budget allocations 1989-90

	Loans	Grants	Total
1. London (North) Region			
Acton	285,951	124,062	410,013
Aylesbury	133.151	59,100	192,251
Banbury	87,735	38,153	125,888
Barking	313,684	140,139	453,824
Barnet	100,310	46,161	146,471
Basildon	515,435	228,294	743,729
Bedford	247,883	107,485	355,368
Braintree	133,622	59,026	192,647
Bury St. Edmunds	150,749	66,576	217,325
Cambridge	258,778	117,435	376,213
Canning Town	263,616	110,592	374,208
Chelmsford	133,780	60,757	194,537
Clacton	109,000	48,123	157,124
Colchester	179,783	77,927	257,710
Cricklewood	250,516	107,215	357,731
Diss	34,061	15,683	49,745
Dunstable	89,722	40,087	129,809
Ealing	266,310	115,991	382,301
Edgware	161,636	69,648	231,284
Edmonton	228,510	101,596	330,105
Euston	254,847	109,969	364,816
Finsbury Park	505,202	217,845	723,047
Grays	234,643	104,912	339,555
Great Yarmouth	203,304	92,448	295,752
Hackney	654,199	275,244	929,443
Harlesden	437,683	190,576	628,259
Harlow	201,413	89,825	291,238
Harrow	194,377	82,843	277,220
Hemel Hempstead	117,928	53,616	171,544
Hendon	231,161	101,149	332,310
Hertford	111,065	49,724	160,790
High Wycombe	160,748	74,785	235,532
Highgate	391,619	169,589	561,208
Hoxton	385,192	169,034	554,226
Ilford	378,610	167,826	546,436
Ipswich	263,156	114,982	378,138
Kings Lynn	247,648	108,361	356,009
Leytonstone	327,224	144,319	471,543
Lowestoft	186,885	82,482	269,366
Luton	348,434	143,619	492,053
Milton Keynes	290,573	124,913	415,486
Neasden	398,912	166,445	565,357
Norwich Chantry	286,113	125,940	412,054
Norwich Mountergate	454,483	192,742	647,225
Notting Hill	236,467	100,841	337,309
Oxford	442,510	188,702	631,212
Paddington	364,673	168,491	533,164
Peterborough	646,116	273,462	919,578
Plaistow	357,728	152,462	510,190
Poplar	366,524	155,452	521,976
Romford	213,071	97,879	310,950
Shoreditch	342,534	153,003	495,537
Southall	209,844	95,113	304,957
Southend	274,268	120,203	394,471
St. Albans	120,455	55,978	176,434
Stepney	198,289	84,902	283,191
Stevenage	198,476	85,672	284,148
Stoke Newington	308,676	132,623	441,299
Thames North	19,115	6,861	25,976
Tottenham	440,379	187,222	627,601
Uxbridge	121,234	52,991	174,225
Walthamstow	262,535	118,346	380,881
Watford	119,905	55,380	175,285
Wood Green	201,433	92,723	294,155
Woodgrange Park	587,725	246,991	834,716
Totals	17,241,606	7,512,537	24,754,143
2. London (South) region			
Aldershot	169,186	72,675	241,861
Andover	66,391	30,294	96,685
Ashford	104,572	47,027	151,599
Balham	418,883	179,798	598,680
Basingstoke	83,582	35,833	119,415
Battersea	424,376	191,711	616,087
Bexley	243,385	108,041	351,426
Bloomsbury	181,066	84,079	265,145
Bognor Regis	108,363	48,769	157,132
Bracknell	104,382	47,919	152,301
Brighton	358,554	161,888	520,443
Brixton	381,073	170,379	551,452
Bromley	157,237	72,107	229,344
Camberwell	409,866	175,936	585,802
Canterbury	123,008	58,173	181,181
Chatham	270,121	109,755	379,876
Chelsea	331,875	143,897	475,772
Chichester	60,968	28,308	89,276
City (London)	99,362	44,892	144,254
Crawley	122,128	54,771	176,899
Croydon	346,726	151,909	498,635
Crystal Palace	394,266	179,061	573,329
Dartford	99,943	45,234	145,176
Dover	92,882	40,139	133,021
Eastbourne	166,062	75,210	241,272
Eltham	73,952	30,853	104,705
Epson	55,197	25,109	80,307
Fareham	199,443	82,192	281,635
Folkestone	116,633	50,778	167,412
Gravesend	112,102	47,824	159,926
Greenwich Park	518,737	221,658	740,394
Guildford	118,566	55,356	173,922
Hastings	216,838	105,866	322,704
Havant	213,702	88,386	302,088
Hither Green	124,471	55,010	179,481
Hounslow	379,484	165,053	544,537
Hove	165,047	78,407	243,453
Isle of Wight	219,260	94,957	314,217
Kennington Park	369,213	153,717	522,931
Kensington	194,750	84,225	278,974
Kingston	147,986	66,848	214,834
Lewes	104,012	46,160	150,172
Lewisham	562,602	239,216	801,818
Maidstone	153,068	67,957	221,025
Mitcham	124,714	57,076	181,790
New Forest	142,157	60,615	202,772
Newbury	79,425	36,403	115,828
Orpington	87,293	39,371	126,664
Oval	368,777	164,364	533,140
Peckham	329,774	145,861	475,635
Portsmouth North	174,625	76,515	251,140
Portsmouth South	159,300	68,800	228,101
Reading	373,843	159,827	533,670
Redhill	99,776	45,275	145,050
Rochester	115,513	49,712	165,225
Sittingbourne	169,896	70,100	239,996
Slough	218,278	94,424	312,701
Southampton	482,712	201,592	684,304
Southwark	449,003	208,657	657,660
Streatham	353,899	150,008	503,907
Surbiton	62,437	27,105	89,543
Sutton	76,670	33,951	110,621
Thames South	24,631	9,558	34,188
Thanet	251,531	113,336	364,866
Tunbridge Wells	113,626	51,854	165,480
Twickenham	76,998	35,246	112,244
Wandsworth	207,195	90,505	297,700
Westminster	157,312	70,120	227,432
Wimbledon	167,140	71328	238,469
Winchester	94,606	40,696	135,302
Woking	150,769	65,440	216,209
Woolwich	733,974	310,327	1,044,301
Worthing	152,338	68,600	220,938
Totals	15,361,432	6,734,045	22,095,477
3. Midlands Region			
Birmingham Bradford Street	320,370	130,510	450,881
Birmingham Edgbaston	598,925	255,223	854,147
Birmingham Erdington	558,105	243,468	801,573
Birmingham Handsworth	770,837	319,141	1,089,978
Birmingham Ladywood	460,311	196,366	656,677
Birmingham Northfield	522,226	219,897	742,124

	Loans	*Grants*	*Total*
Birmingham Perry Barr	386,241	157,206	543,447
Birmingham Ravenshurst	281,772	130,204	411,975
Birmingham South Yardley	526,576	226,042	752,619
Birmingham Sparkhill	217,807	92,197	310,004
Birmingham Washwood Heath	476,779	200,111	676,890
Boston	121,624	53,006	174,631
Burton on Trent	120,875	53,787	174,663
Cannock	206,560	83,324	289,883
Chesterfield	394,692	168,124	562,816
Corby	183,483	77,647	261,130
Coventry East	708,200	288,114	996,314
Coventry West	466,926	189,889	656,815
Derby Becket Street	223,321	100,276	323,597
Derby Heritage Gate	133,854	58,280	192,134
Derby London Road	322,844	135,672	458,517
Dudley North	454,371	185,705	640,076
Dudley South	206,145	92,016	298,161
Grantham	119,829	49,610	169,439
Hereford	205,712	93,538	299,249
Ilkeston	201,578	86,709	288,286
Kidderminster	242,695	98,136	340,831
Leamington	194,228	86,954	281,182
Leicester Burleys Way	235,126	102,735	337,860
Leicester Lower Hill Street	357,728	152,658	510,386
Leicester Norton Street	408,438	177,152	585,590
Leicester Yeoman Street	575,257	249,696	824,953
Lichfield	315,354	128,305	443,659
Lincoln Newland	317,210	137,289	454,499
Lincoln Orchard Street	367,347	170,103	537,451
Loughborough	173,927	75,223	249,150
Mansfield	368,727	159,906	528,634
Newcastle (Staffs)	241,422	99,542	340,964
Northampton	353,813	155,376	509,189
Nottingham Castle Gate	327,027	139,345	466,371
Nottingham David Lane	369,118	157,536	526,654
Nottingham Shakespeare Street	481,403	204,264	685,667
Nottingham Station Street	367,211	160,323	527,534
Nuneaton	272,889	110,862	383,751
Redditch	186,886	77,378	264,265
Rugby	114,732	51,024	165,756
Shrewsbury	295,080	127,783	422,863
Skegness	88,564	39,180	127,745
Smethwick	500,587	207,507	708,094
Stafford	128,752	56,649	185,401
Stoke North	404,010	177,656	581,666
Stoke South	237,625	110,928	348,553
Sutton-in-Ashfield	183,187	80,047	263,234
Telford	445,432	191,335	636,766
Walsall East	330,676	134,490	465,166
Walsall West	445,097	198,232	643,329
Wellingborough	298,713	136,920	435,633
West Bromwich	559,297	239,122	798,419
Wolverhampton North	713,287	296,127	1,009,414
Wolverhampton South	579,231	249,684	828,914
Worcester	278,947	133,726	412,674
Worksop	237,560	99,684	337,244
Totals	21,186,545	9,058,942	30,245,487
4. North East Region			
Ashington	221,427	94,749	316,175
Barnsley East	602,431	251,189	853,620
Barnsley West	355,031	145,756	500,787
Berwick-On-Tweed	26,112	12,023	38,134
Bishop Auckland	381,643	158,242	539,885
Blyth	217,724	93,681	311,404
Bradford East	442,986	196,697	639,683
Bradford South	397,200	161,282	558,482
Bradford West	443,796	186,072	629,867
Bridlington	109,409	52,436	161,845
Castleford	190,138	77,631	267,769
Chester-Le-Street	202,581	85,079	287,660
Darlington	449,667	188,278	637,944
Dewsbury	299,865	127,316	427,179
Doncaster East	352,879	143,325	496,204
Doncaster West	543,032	231,410	774,442
Durham	158,232	66,319	224,551
Eston	291,568	113,030	404,597
Gateshead	593,458	241,873	835,331
Goole	115,095	52,322	167,417
Grimsby	542,123	219,244	761,367
Halifax	449,551	197,962	647,512
Harrogate	145,803	64,113	209,916
Hartlepool	338,628	134,655	473,282
Hemsworth	153,033	69,354	222,387
Hexham	50,085	21,885	71,970
Houghton Le Spring	161,336	66,348	227,684
Huddersfield	358,945	154,968	513,913
Hull East	671,197	295,477	966,674
Hull West	558,973	251,564	810,536
Jarrow	325,384	138,204	463,588
Keighley	195,704	84,032	279,736
Leeds East	591,480	246,151	837,632
Leeds North	699,290	299,660	998,950
Leeds North West	362,307	166,967	529,274
Leeds South	243,725	105,300	349,024
Leeds West	326,381	142,116	468,498
Middlesbrough	896,332	354,181	1,250,513
Newcastle East	430,341	174,752	605,093
Newcastle St. James	502,248	207,770	710,018
Newcastle West	417,995	170,806	588,801
North Shields	336,436	145,451	481,887
Northallerton	84,243	37,599	121,841
Peterlee	202,186	87,199	289,385
Pontefract	191,449	81,057	272,507
Redcar	296,301	138,058	434,359
Rotherham North	167,787	71,922	239,709
Rotherham South	537,689	230,351	768,040
Scarborough	161,228	67,263	228,492
Scunthorpe	370,961	153,256	524,217
Seaham	77,923	34,894	112,817
Sheffield North East	974,273	411,432	1,385,705
Sheffield North West	723,208	303,988	1,027,196
Sheffield South East	474,642	196,972	671,614
Sheffield South West	624,974	274,772	899,745
Skipton	30,337	13,861	44,199
South Shields	433,545	183,063	616,607
Stanley	308,225	126,013	434,237
Stockton	634,110	263,453	897,562
Sunderland North	851,567	338,682	1,190,249
Sunderland South	533,100	212,467	745,567
Wakefield	324,752	142,422	467,174
Wallsend	273,606	115,442	389,047
Wath-On-Dearne	336,146	134,286	470,432
York	299,802	133,022	432,824
Totals	24,063,620	10,141,138	34,204,758
5. North West Region			
Accrington	196,613	88,540	285,154
Ashton-Under-Lyne	262,459	117,239	379,698
Barrow in Furness	156,293	73,195	229,488
Birkenhead North	640,278	265,117	905,395
Birkenhead South	301,152	124,202	425,354
Blackburn	356,591	152,858	509,449
Bolton	598,568	246,144	844,712
Bootle	533,794	209,972	743,766
Burnley	386,276	172,747	559,023
Bury	347,978	155,287	503,265
Buxton	25,170	11,528	36,698
Carlisle	182,115	82,342	264,456
Chester	236,354	98,035	334,389
Crewe	240,214	104,319	344,533
Crosby	393,660	162,090	555,750
Ellesmere Port	225,953	89,094	315,047
Failsworth	415,759	176,443	592,202
Farnworth	214,098	95,433	309,531
Fylde North	297,865	130,674	428,539
Fylde South	144,366	65,546	209,912
Huyton	666,622	264,259	930,881

	Loans	*Grants*	*Total*
Hyde	333,371	134,023	467,394
Kendal	33,667	14,892	48,559
Kirkby	684,935	273,433	958,368
Lancaster	344,134	139,283	483,417
Leigh	267,583	112,642	380,225
Liverpool Belle Vale	384,710	157,853	542,563
Liverpool Breckfield	631,306	253,475	884,782
Liverpool City	396,197	162,917	559,113
Liverpool Edge Hill	668,835	258,026	926,861
Liverpool Garston	330,728	131,583	462,311
Liverpool Norris Green	300,273	120,474	420,746
Liverpool Toxteth	799,340	331,820	1,131,160
Liverpool West Derby	173,159	72,764	245,923
Macclesfield	88,927	40,220	129,147
Manchester Central	204,566	89,425	293,992
Manchester Cheetham	380,254	163,217	543,471
Manchester Chorlton	353,314	172,218	525,532
Manchester Longsight	450,612	191,988	642,600
Manchester Openshaw	331,198	142,854	474,052
Manchester Rusholme	559,432	244,743	804,175
Manchester Wythenshawe	456,196	192,343	648,539
Middleton	249,628	103,342	352,971
Northwich	240,913	100,537	341,450
Oldham	433,409	191,246	624,655
Penrith	25,264	11,831	37,095
Preston North	330,911	126,254	457,165
Preston South	235,863	102,480	338,343
Rochdale	333,564	140,740	474,304
Rossendale	119,022	52,248	171,270
Sale	317,676	136,578	454,254
Salford North	381,113	167,969	549,082
Salford South	251,327	106,731	358,058
Skelmersdale	384,801	162,618	547,419
Southport	120,735	52,833	173,568
St. Helens	574,468	232,334	806,802
Stockport North	336,623	137,503	474,126
Stockport South	322,694	138,202	460,896
Wallasey	418,170	169,337	587,507
Warrington	454,245	186,157	640,401
Whitehaven	109,546	45,323	154,869
Widnes	669,999	278,390	948,389
Wigan	540,889	237,170	778,059
Wilmslow	59,321	27,908	87,229
Workington	155,151	70,633	225,784
Totals	22,060,244	9,263,618	31,323,862
6. Scotland Region			
Aberdeen North	324,995	136,664	461,658
Aberdeen South	288,795	125,366	414,161
Airdrie	659,396	269,305	928,701
Arbroath	156,677	71,030	227,707
Ayr	743,508	301,989	1,045,498
Bathgate	524,997	223,124	748,121
Bellshill	489,243	193,990	683,233
Campbeltown	39,008	16,540	55,548
Clydebank	479,332	193,619	672,951
Coatbridge	475,741	192,395	668,136
Cowdenbeath	149,213	69,269	218,482
Cumbernauld	474,682	211,784	686,466
Dumbarton	461,624	194,681	656,305
Dumfries	224,927	98,655	323,582
Dundee East	452,227	188,946	641,172
Dundee West	372,589	154,368	526,958
Dunfermline	223,093	96,750	319,843
East Kilbride	277,067	121,959	399,026
Edinburgh City	518,955	222,994	741,949
Edinburgh East	471,904	202,701	674,604
Edinburgh North	411,233	167,807	579,039
Edinburgh South	432,974	179,642	612,616
Edinburgh West	442,024	182,844	624,869
Elgin	164,853	69,520	234,373
Falkirk	616,125	252,999	869,124
Fort William	75,106	33,202	108,308
Galashiels	158,789	75,861	234,600
Glasgow Anniesland	684,448	284,249	968,698
Glasgow Bridgeton	456,354	203,051	659,405
Glasgow City	565,884	250,765	816,650
Glasgow Craigton	844,419	347,990	1,192,409
Glasgow Cranstonhill	98,759	37,207	135,965
Glasgow Laurieston	847,613	357,390	1,205,003
Glasgow Maryhill	713,217	299,598	1,012,815
Glasgow Parkhead	892,547	368,309	1,260,856
Glasgow Partick	398,764	166,606	565,371
Glasgow Provan	1,035,477	416,294	1,451,772
Glasgow Rutherglen	1,079,128	429,846	1,508,974
Glasgow South Side	865,646	355,586	1,221,231
Glasgow Springburn	927,660	380,519	1,308,179
Greenock	654,289	265,969	920,258
Hamilton	1,063,192	447,633	1,510,824
Inverness	326,136	149,629	475,765
Irvine	746,994	321,952	1,068,946
Johnstone	331,768	136,878	468,646
Kilmarnock	403,821	166,720	570,541
Kirkcaldy	424,204	172,952	597,156
Lerwick	22,216	9,455	31,671
Leven	156,076	63,128	219,203
Motherwell	653,179	263,883	917,062
Oban	49,263	21,678	70,941
Paisley	823,936	325,259	1,149,195
Perth	203,370	84,464	287,833
Peterhead	136,006	60,290	196,296
Port Glasgow	406,643	165,995	572,637
Stirling	399,921	160,146	560,067
Stornoway	72,129	32,710	104,840
Stranraer	90,519	39,199	129,718
Wick	91,977	41,362	133,339
Totals	26,574,580	11,074,717	37,649,297
7. Wales and South West Region			
Aberdare	281,323	123,789	405,112
Abertillery	119,094	49,186	168,280
Aberystwyth	94,095	41,905	135,999
Ammanford (Group)	81,360	38,263	119,623
Anglesey	183,796	76,180	259,976
Bargeoed	228,385	92,738	321,123
Barnstaple	169,204	78,802	248,006
Barry	195,243	80,865	276,108
Bath	190,540	83,703	274,243
Blackwood	141,463	57,868	199,331
Bournemouth	277,466	120,995	398,461
Bridgend	273,323	118,509	391,833
Bridgwater	138,064	54,339	192,403
Bristol Central	264,123	116,999	381,122
Bristol East	298,880	132,396	431,276
Bristol Horfield	166,519	70,157	236,676
Bristol South	390,871	161,817	552,689
Bristol West	122,689	53,334	176,023
Caernarfon	132,703	53,382	186,085
Caerphilly	329,926	139,599	469,526
Cardiff Central	299,032	125,895	424,927
Cardiff East	526,381	213,772	740,153
Cardiff West	382,057	164,352	546,410
Carmarthen	79,550	32,716	112,266
Cheltenham	191,199	81,329	272,528
Chippenham	75,112	35,553	110,664
Colwyn Bay	172,355	73,246	245,601
Cwmbran (Group)	333,846	140,110	473,958
Deeside	140,614	61,423	202,037
Devonport	345,648	149,804	495,452
Ebbw Vale (Group)	209,720	84,673	294,394
Exeter	425,041	188,942	613,983
Gloucester	364,755	158,551	523,306
Haverfordwest	184,884	73,398	258,282
Launceston	86,634	37,376	124,010
Llanelli	238,119	95,571	335,690
Merthyr Tydfil	267,040	105,445	372,485
Morriston	307,767	135,427	443,194
Neath	161,257	67,077	228,333
Newport (Gwent)	662,077	278,899	940,975
Newtown (Group)	96,349	42,481	138,829
Pembroke Dock	119,492	50,949	170,441
Penzance	158,004	63,956	221,959
Plymouth	401,787	174,891	576,678

	Loans	*Grants*	*Total*
Pontypridd	228,791	103,227	332,018
Poole	223,173	97,670	320,843
Port Talbot	177,096	74,259	251,355
Porth	133,229	54,975	188,204
Porthmadog-Dolgellau	78,123	32,779	110,903
Rhondda West	229,361	92,610	321,970
Rhyl	262,960	115,581	378,541
Salisbury	117,921	51,043	168,964
St. Austell	196,298	82,422	278,720
Stroud	113,271	48,652	161,923
Swansea	587,165	268,015	855,181
Swindon	240,052	102,929	342,981
Taunton	186,496	83,497	269,993
Torbay	388,969	171,024	559,993
Trowbridge	87,608	39,339	126,946
Truro	235,100	102,242	337,341
Weston-Super-Mare	138,411	59,489	197,901
Weymouth	128,919	57,336	186,255
Wrexham (Group)	349,058	148,016	497,074
Yeovil	101,032	48,067	149,099
Totals	14,510,822	6,215,834	20,726,656

Note: The totals may not sum due to rounding.

Centenarians

6. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females according to national insurance records have become centenarians in each of the past five years, and in the same period between 1965 and 1969; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the precise information requested is not available, but over the past five years there has been a significant increase in the number of people aged 100. The number of women has increased from 1,150 to 1,550 and the number of men has more than doubled from 100 to 210. Today is the 100th birthday of four people and the 106th birthday of another, and one person, Brigadier Mrs. Mary Fewster of the Salvation Army, is celebrating her 111th birthday today. I offer them all my warmest congratulations and good wishes and I shall, with permission, publish a full breakdown of the figures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Greenway: I echo those congratulations. Are not these figures yet another sign of the success of the Government's policies, and a clear confirmation of which is the stronger sex? What does the trend of those figures imply for male members of the Cabinet who are hoping to succeed?

Mr. Scott: I shall steer clear of the latter point. Yes, I am encouraged by the fact that men are improving their achievement of this target at a more rapid rate than women. I understand that my hon. Friend runs a club in his constitutency for centenarians. I hope that one day he may qualify for membership.

Mr. Eastham: Does not this question reinforce the fact that as more people are living longer, there is a greater strain on the NHS? Does not the great number of old people who have been added to the figures justify the Labour party's case for spending more on the NHS?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman makes a serious point. The shift in the demographic pattern in our society will mean more old people, and more old frail people. That has implications for the Health Service, the social security system and other matters. All these are being considered well in advance by the Government.

Mr. Holt: In his list, my hon. Friend omitted Britain's oldest person, who lives in my constituency. The House will be pleased to know that she is still living on her own, and she answered the phone this morning when we rang to find out how she was. She is now well on her way to her 112th birthday.

Mr. Scott: I add my congratulations to those of my hon. Friend.

Following is the information:

The number of people who became centenarians in each of the last five years is not available. The number of men and women aged 100 years as at 31 March in each of the last five years is as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*[1]1987*	*1988*
Males	100	170	170	200	210
Females	1,150	1,250	1,230	1,420	1,550

Corresponding figures for 1965 to 1969 are not available as records did not begin until 1983.
[1]30 September 1987.

Social Security Payments

7. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to introduce amendments into the regulations governing social security payments in order to restore transitional protection to those who now lose it due to such changes in their circumstances as a stay in hospital.

Mr. Scott: No, Sir. I would point out to the hon. Member that the new income support rules for single people who go into hospital are far more generous than the old. Income support for these people now remains unchanged for the first six weeks after admission, by which time about 94 per cent. of people are discharged from hospital. Supplementary benefit used to be reduced from the first week of admission.

Mr. Michael: Does not the Minister's reply amount to a confession that the Government's promise of transitional protection was not worth the paper on which it was written? Does the Minister realise that many people are losing out through having to go into hospital and through many other changes in their lives that are irrelevant to their circumstances? What does he have to say to the lady who discovered that her husband's death triggered a cut in the payments that were meant to assist with her own health? Will he confess that the Government have tried to con the poor?

Mr. Scott: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman listened to my main answer. Perhaps he was too busy preparing his supplementary question when I was delivering it. Transitional protection will cost about £200 million in its first year. It has been of significant help to many people.

Mr. Robin Cook: Is the Minister aware that the appalling examples of those who have lost transitional protection over the past few months would all have been included in the figure which he used repeatedly last April? He told us then that 88 per cent. would be no worse off at the point of change. Does not that which has happened

since then expose how bogus that figure always was? Will the hon. Gentleman turn his mind to the parallel provision for housing benefit, which effectively ceases after six weeks in hospital? There are many frail and elderly patients who find after a spell in hospital that they have arrears amounting to hundreds of pounds? That cannot be justified, and I am even prepared to believe that it cannot have been intended. Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to change this vindictive rule before it causes any more distress?

Mr. Scott: I do not agree for one moment with the hon. Gentleman's description of the system. The essence of transitional protection is that it is eroded after time. It is right that we introduced the protection in April 1988 to ensure that no one faced a cliff-edge drop in cash terms. As I said earlier, over 94 per cent. of patients are discharged from hospital within six weeks. We are monitoring the effect on the balance.

Mr. Kennedy: Will the Minister note that many come off transitional protection for short-term employment reasons? My constituency is an example of an area where much of the employment is seasonal and short-term by definition, and those who are engaged in it lose transitional protection. I cannot believe that that was intended as in many instances the effect of the loss of transitional protection is severe. I ask the Minister to review the scheme because the issue goes much wider than the strict definition of the question. There are many who are losing a great deal.

Mr. Scott: We have made concessions for some who are in vulnerable groups. We are monitoring the effect of the present scheme.

Income Support

8. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has that the new income support scheme is easier to operate than supplementary benefit.

Mr. Moore: Claims for income support are being processed more quickly and accurately than claims for supplementary benefit. Error rates are down from 12 per cent. to 8 per cent. and will fall further. Claims are being processed in five days as opposed to as many as 11, and we shall improve further. People find the scheme easier to understand and the rate of successful claims has increased from 74 per cent. to 80 per cent.

Mr. Wood: I thank my right hon. Friend for those encouraging remarks, which confirm the impression which I have gained from my local office. What is the average clearance rate under the new scheme compared with that under the old? I invite my right hon. Friend to say more about whether applicants are finding it an easier scheme to use than the previous one.

Mr. Moore: There has been a reduction from the worst rate of about 11 days, which we saw in the latter part of 1987. The average number of days last year was seven, and we are now down to five. Our customers are finding the scheme a great deal easier to use, and the staff are finding it enormously simpler. We should all be pleased to know that as a result the success rate has increased.

Mr. Wareing: How is the new system helping people like Mr. Wyatt, a constituent of mine, who was asked at the Department of Employment office how much he expected to receive if he was lucky enough to get a job? When Mr. Wyatt answered £120 a week, my 58-year-old constituent found that his income support was stopped. It was resumed only a few weeks later and the payments were reduced by £6 per week. What is the right hon. Gentleman going to do about the way in which people like my constituent are discriminated against?

Mr. Moore: I have learnt how important and wise it is to get all the details about individual cases before trying to comment on any particular one. The new income support, in comparison with the old supplementary benefit, has not only made the system simpler, but has improved turnround and the way in which people get their claims settled. I should have thought that all hon. Members would regard that as important, because nearly 4·5 million people are on our live income support load. The new system has reduced the error rate and improved the success rate. I should have thought that all hon. Members would welcome that.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that one of the problems with the old system continues with the present system? There is a tendency among some officers to assure constituents, including some of mine, that a giro is in the post when they inquire about benefit. However, the inquirer finds, after several days' wait and many complaints to the Post Office, that the giro is not in the post. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that officers tell people that a giro is in the post only when they have a document before them which makes it clear that the giro is in the post? That would stop them misleading people.

Mr. Moore: I will look at the point that the hon. Gentleman has made because I have experience of similar cases in my constituency which is an urban area. Overall, the system is working infinitely better than the old, highly complex and very difficult supplementary benefit system.

Fraud

9. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures are being taken to cut down on social security fraud.

Mr. Moore: Since this Government took office, we have nearly doubled the number of staff on anit-fraud work to over 3,300. Cheats are nothing more than spongers on the rest of us and my Department has stepped up its drive against claimants who cheat. Resources are being used more efficiently. Investigations into high-risk areas are producing good results. More people are being found out. As a result, this year we shall produce the best savings ever, around £250 million—up from £100 million five years ago, but still only one eighth of what the Inland Revenue recovered last year through its compliance work.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my right hon. Friend accept congratulations on that not just from Conservative Members, but from people who genuinely claim social security and those on modest incomes who pay taxes towards the people who are cheating the system? Will he assure the House that, when people are found to be defrauding the system, they will be prosecuted and that the widest possible publicity is given to that to deter others from taking that line?

Mr. Moore: Of course I accept entirely what my hon. Friend says. No hon. Member can endorse cheating. However, I should stress that this Government are pursuing this problem sensibly, unlike the Labour Government who believed in a high prosecution policy, did not collect figures for fraud and saw no reason to account for or demonstrate value for money. Last year, 7,231 people were prosecuted whereas during the last full year of the Labour Government's term of office, 21,913 people were prosecuted. That is a sign of the less-than-humane pursuit of a very serious problem.

Mr. Redmond: Does the Minister agree that if claimants at the Department of Social Security are not informed of their due rights, that can also be classed as fraud? Will he restate to DSS officers throughout the country that they are there to help, advise and guide people who make rightful claims and that the duty rests with the DHS to assist those people or they will lose benefit, which would be fraud by the state?

Mr. Moore: There is a duty on the individual and I also fully accept that there is a duty on my offices and staff. In the "Business of Service" report which I am seeking to implement, I strongly endorse not necessarily the hon. Gentleman's words, but ways in which I encourage my staff to treat and serve their customers so that their entitlement to benefit is fully and well understood.

Mr. David Nicholson: While the House welcomes my right hon. Friend's administrative measures to reduce fraud, is he aware that there is a widespread welcome in the country for the legislative measures he is taking—in particular, the Social Security Bill, which is proceeding upstairs? It is unacceptable that in large areas of the country where there is work, people are able successively to refuse jobs and continue living on benefit.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is entirely right. I read with continued interest, and sometimes with amazement, the *Hansard* reports of the proceedings of my right hon. and hon. Friends and of the Opposition in the Committee on the Social Security Bill and I cannot begin to understand how an Opposition can be so far removed from the basic attitudes, beliefs and views held by the majority of our people—with whom my hon. Friend is so closely connected.

Widows' Pensions

10. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to amend the relevant legislation in order to restore the age limit for widows' pensions to 40 years.

Mr. Scott: No, Sir.

Mr. Banks: It did not take the Minister very long to come up with that reply, and I am very disappointed with it. Is he aware that about 2,000 women were widowed between September 1987 and April 1988, and therefore fell foul, retroactively, of the changes made in the social security provisions? All those widows will lose about £32,000 each. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer is going around bragging, at every dinner to which he can get an invitation, that the country's coffers are overflowing, what justification is there for him to deprive the country's bereaved of what is justifiably theirs? If the Minister will not reconsider his terse reply, will he at least drop the mean-spirited approach that the Government adopt towards widows whose cases have been upheld by the appeal tribunal? The Government are trying to reverse such decisions? That is mean-spirited, and the Minister should have a heart.

Mr. Scott An important case is shortly to go before the social security commissioner and it would be unwise of me to comment on it. The whole thrust of the policy is to focus on older widows and widows with children. About 55,000 of them benefited as a result of our reforming the system.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that it does no service to younger widows to exempt them from the necessity of earning a living? Nothing can be better for their morale than to get out and come to grips with life again.

Mr. Scott: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's point that widows should be encouraged back into employment. Also, I am advised that about 90 per cent. of widows aged between 40 and 44 remarry.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister accept that it may be difficult for many widows to follow the advice of the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) if they live in constituencies such as Glasgow, Maryhill where the official unemployment rate is 22 per cent.? Furthermore, is it not insulting to tell widows that their only hope, if they cannot find work, is that they had better find themselves husbands? How would the Minister like to be told, in similar circumstances, that he had better find himself a wife?

Mr. Scott: I am saying that we are helping older widows and widows with dependent children. It is right to give them our highest priority. It is worth reminding the House yet again that about 55,000 widows benefited as a result of our reforms.

Mr. McCrindle: Was not the change made on the supposition that it should be easier for younger widows to obtain employment? That must still apply. However, will my hon. Friend note that a number of employers continue discriminating against women because they are—to use their word, not mine—"older"? Will my hon. Friend take the initiative in persuading employers that, particularly as the number of teenagers coming on to the labour market falls, older women represent a particularly important source of future employees, and that age discrimination is not acceptable?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend. Any employer taking such an attitude is being very short-sighted. As we get into an increasingly tight employment situation, with a reduction in the number of young people coming on to the labour market, wise employers will be looking throughout the age range for skills and experience.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister reconsider his appalling answer in the light of the experience of Mrs. Valerie Jones of Cwmlas Llanbradach? Her husband died tragically of cancer a year ago, 35 days before her 45th birthday and two months before this law came into effect. Her appeal was upheld by the social security tribunal, and the Government are appealing against that decision.

The DSS and the Government believe that Mrs. Jones should go out to work. Tragically, she herself is now

suffering from cancer. She is one of the millions of victims of the Government, who have pursued and cheated people relentlessly under their social security legislation. In pursuing this woman to appeal to save a few pennies, the Government stand condemned 2,000 times over of mean, pitiless theft of the widow's mite.

Mr. Scott: I believe that the hon. Gentleman has been carried away by his oratory. His description of the system is a travesty of the truth. As I have said, an important case —that of Mrs. Doreen Whitbread—is going to the social security commissioner soon: an early hearing is being arranged. I think that we should await that decision.

THE ARTS

British Theatre Association

46. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the number of texts in the British Theatre Association library.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I am advised by the British Theatre Association that it has nearly 300,000 texts in its library. I attach importance to ways being found of preserving public access to this collection. The House may like to know that discussions are taking place between the BTA, the British library and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and I understand that the BTA is actively exploring possible options.

Ms. Ruddock: Does the Minister accept, then, that the library is the definitive theatre library, used by theatre companies and academics throughout the world? Does he accept that its closure would be a major loss to the country's theatres? Regardless of whatever talks may be going on, may I ask the Minister to guarantee that the Government will find the mere £150,000 that the library needs to continue to function?

Mr. Luce: I certainly accept what the hon. Lady says about the importance of the collection to the world of drama. I know that it is a substantial collection, and that is why I have called the parties together—in particular the British library, which has considerable expertise at its disposal and has already offered the association a management consultancy advisory service free of charge, and the Victoria and Albert, which has a theatre museum —to give their advice. I am keen to find a viable solution based on value for money and the right location, and I am doing what I can with the parties concerned to facilitate that.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members are extremely concerned about the future of this irreplaceable institution, and place great hopes in his determination to ensure that a solution is found to enable it to go on providing services to both the theatre and the general public?

Mr. Luce: I appreciate what my hon. Friend has said, and I am sure that he is right in stressing the importance of the collection to the drama world. I am also sure that it is right to look at every option, and to call on the expertise of the British library and other organisations to seek the best way of solving the problem. I shall continue to take a close interest.

Mr. Sheldon: I think that the whole House will accept the right hon. Gentleman's interest, but will he accept that that it is not only advice that is wanted? What we need now is some money, and not a great deal. This is an invaluable collection and it must be preserved.

Mr. Luce: As the right hon. Gentleman probably knows, about 6·5 per cent. of total resources was provided by the public sector in the last financial year. I think it right at this stage to consider what is the most viable proposition for the future of the collection. I entirely accept that it is an important collection which ought to be accessible to the drama world; my obligation is to see what can be done to find the most viable answer, and I think that the way in which we are now proceeding is the right way at this stage.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the action that he has already taken is warmly welcomed? The library must be kept together, because its 300,000 volumes comprise a resource that commands respect and admiration throughout the world.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. What he says is absolutely right. Again I stress that it is important to find a solution that is based on the best value for money and on the most viable proposition that we can find.

Mr. Fisher: Is it not the case, as I believe the Minister knows, that Victoria and Albert museum and British library officials met on the Friday before last and expressed their concern and willingness to help but that they made it clear to the Minister that without money from him they were unable to do anything? The Minister's interest is welcome, but it is meaningless unless he provides some money. He is responsible for a national resource; his is the responsibility to fund it. Will he now stop wringing his hands and start providing money to save this institution, if he believes that it is worth saving?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman's suggestion that I am wringing my hands is far from the truth. Neither the British library nor the V and A has come to me and said that it is essential that at this stage additional public money is provided. They are trying to find the most viable answer to the problem, and that is the right way to proceed. The Government are strongly committed to the library system. We have injected an additional £300 million of taxpayer's money into the construction of the new British library. Expenditure on public libraries, in real terms, in the last two years has increased by 9 per cent. There is no lack of commitment by the Government to the library system. However, it is right to seek a viable alternative solution for the library. That is what I am doing with all the expertise at my disposal.

Mr. Maclennan: Although I recognise that talks with the British library make sense, the Minister is conveying the impression that he is acquiescing in the write-off of the British Theatre Association, which has other functions than the guarding of library resources. They include valuable national advice and courses that are not provided by any other national institution. Why is the Minister not illustrating his concern in a more practical way?

Mr. Luce: The representations that have been made to me have been principally concerned with the importance of this collection, which is made up of 300,000 texts and other reference sources. I accept that it is important, and

it is right that I should be concerned about its importance. I believe that we must look at every option to ensure that we get the best value for money in the right location and in the right circumstances.

Business Sponsorship

47. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the progress of the business sponsoring incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: New sponsorship under the scheme continues to increase. It has brought over 900 businesses into arts sponsorship since 1984, but there is still room for growth. I therefore propose to allow individual arts organisations to be eligible for up to two awards next year, instead of one as at present, up to the maximum of £25,000. This will help smaller arts organisations and encourage more businesses to support the arts.

Mr. Butler: My right hon. Friend knows that I warmly welcome the progress of this excellent scheme. Will he tell me what progress had been made in the north of England, as he knows that the regions derive particular benefit from the scheme?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who has shown consistent support for the business sponsoring incentive scheme, which has brought, overall, an additional £23 million of extra money to the arts since its inception. There have been a number of sponsorships in the north-western area. For example, there have been recent awards to the Northern chamber orchestra, the Manchester museum, the Buxton arts festival and the Guildhall at Preston. Those are just some examples which demonstrate how widespread is the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise how important it is to ensure that the regions and sub-regional centres get an even bigger share of the money that is available from the scheme? Many centres, such as Burnley, which makes excellent provision for the arts and the theatre as a sub-regional centre, will be unable to maintain that provision, as a result of the poll tax legislation, unless it receives more support from this type of scheme.

Mr. Luce: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important that the scheme should be spread widely throughout the nation. I am glad that at least 70 per cent. of all the resources that have been allocated to the scheme have been for projects outside London. That is important. Sponsorship in Scotland, particularly in Edinburgh and Glasgow, has been at a faster rate than in any other area. The evidence suggests that the scheme is becoming widespread. I urge sponsors with headquarters in London to ensure that adequate attention is given to the recommendations of their regional managers.

Arts Funding (Wilding Review)

48. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the obligations and time scale for the Wilding review of arts funding.

Mr. Luce: As I announced on 8 December, I have invited Mr. Richard Wilding to conduct a review into the structure and organisation for support of the arts in England. He will consult the parties concerned and report to me by 31 October 1989. I shall send a copy of the press notice to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he give us some idea of the matters of current concern that have necessitated this wide-ranging review?

Mr. Luce: There is no doubt that, since the inception of the Arts Council of Great Britain after the second world war, and the starting of the regional arts associations, there has, in recent years, been a substantial shift of resources to regional arts. They now handle about £30 million of resources. I am concerned to ensure, with all the changes that have taken place, that there is coherence in the funding system and proper accountability to Parliament and me, through the Arts Council of Great Britain, for the use of taxpayers' money. There is no suggestion that funds are not being properly used now. I also want to ensure proper and improved structures and procedures for channelling the money, the large majority of which should go to the performing arts.

CIVIL SERVICE

Secondments

66. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he has any plans for the secondment of civil servants from other civil services within the European Economic Community.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): Apart from reciprocal training arrangements, for a number of years there have been formal bilateral arrangements which provide for a small number of secondments between the United Kingdom Civil Service and the civil services of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Republic of Ireland. Exchanges also take place outside the scope of the formal arrangements.

Mr. Barnes: Is it not a pity that there are not more arrangements for secondment, and moving in and out of Europe, of civil servants? The Civil Service in this country faces many problems. There is tremendous pressure from the Government to make civil servants operate as political hacks, rather than to maintain their former neutrality. The movement of civil servants from other countries in and out of this country on short-term secondments, might help to re-establish the neutrality of the Civil Service. I should prefer a "Yes Minister" approach to be more prevalent than the current "Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full, Minister."

Mr. Luce: Let me put the hon. Gentleman straight on the last part of his question. There is no shadow of doubt that the Civil Service today is as impartial and professional as ever. That conclusion was reached by the all-party Select Committee in 1988. To suggest that civil servants are political hacks is a gross misrepresentation of the job that they are trying to do. The level of exchanges on a bilateral basis, particularly of secondments—the hon. Gentleman is right—is fairly low. It is difficult to achieve, but exchanges between groups of civil servants within and between countries is happening on a bigger and bigger scale. The courses provided on a European scale at the Civil Service college to prepare for 1992 are becoming stronger and stronger.

Mr. Gow: Do not the British people and the British civil servants bear sufficient burdens already without adding to them by introducing civil servants from the republics of Greece and Portugal who would merely add to the confusion that already exists?

Mr. Luce: I note what my hon. Friend says. It is not particularly easy to facilitate exchanges on the basis of secondments that last for several months. Clear criteria are laid down for entry into the Civil Service, which impose strict controls. The best way to proceed if we want better knowledge of how different systems work, is to have exchanges of delegations. That occurs from time to time within the Civil Service.

Mr. Winnick: Are there any plans to second, perhaps for a year or more, Mr. Bernard Ingham to another EC country?

Mr. Luce: Mr. Bernard Ingham is so valuable here that no such proposal exists.

Training

67. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what training is given to civil servants who deal directly with the public.

Mr. Luce: The next steps initiative gives added emphasis to the training Departments already provide in the delivery of services to the public. In addition, the Civil Service college has introduced a new course on service delivery.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend accept that any steps taken to improve the Civil Service's service to the public are to be welcomed? Will he say what proportion of training for such civil servants is given by the private sector, particularly based on the example of major retailers?

Mr. Luce: A large proportion of training for the Civil Service is provided by the private sector. Of course, there are a whole variety of ways in which training can be provided in the Civil Service. Some of it is done by Departments themselves. The Civil Service college provides 5 per cent. of the training, with special emphasis on senior civil servants. I am setting aside an additional £1 million this coming year for challenge funding training to improve still further the standard of management in the senior echelons of the Civil Service, in preparation for the creation of the agencies.

"Service to the Public" (Report)

68. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what were the conclusions of the report "Service to the Public"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The "Service to the Public" occasional paper is the result of a management study by a team of my officials and has been published to stimulate debate on this import subject, to which I attach great importance. Part I sets out the team's views on the essential elements of a service to the public strategy; part II provides examples of good practice. I am placing copies in the Library of the House, and the paper is on sale to the public through Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Mr. Cran: Can my right hon. Friend explain to the House how the public will benefit by this initiative, and what it is actually going to mean for civil servants?

Mr. Luce: The important thing, is that, about all else, civil servants are anxious to ensure that the best possible service is provided to the public. The creation of agencies within the Civil Service is another way of strengthening the quality of service to the public, because performance targets and performance measurements will be provided. But one of the purposes of the paper is to highlight the best practices in the Civil Service, particularly in respect of such things as access by telephone, communications, the use of plain English, giving personal names, and ensuring that reception areas are adequate. All these and other things are being done in the Civil Service to make sure that the quality of service to the public is as good as possible.

Dr. Marek: Can the Minister confirm the existence of the Privatisation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 1990, as revealed by Touche Ross to the staff at the national engineering laboratory, and can he, further, confirm that the purpose of the Bill is to strip employees and civil servants of their rights.? How can the Minister get the best possible service from civil servants for the public and say that he wants that, and, at the same time, plot with his right hon. and hon. Friends to deprive loyal civil servants of their jobs and pensions? The moral character of Britain is changing for the worse, as his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science said yesterday, but it is led by an immoral Government. When is he going to stand up for morality?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman appears actually to believe what he reads in an article in a newspaper. His imagination appears to be running rather wild—rather unusually so. All I can say is that his question appears to be one for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Our policy on privatisation remains absolutely consistent: if we think that certain operations within the Civil Service would be better performed, with a better service to the public, by privatisation we will take that course. Otherwise, in terms of other services to the public, we regard agencies as a very good way of moving forward and of providing a better service.

Mr. Butler: Sometimes it is very difficult to get through on the telephone to Government Departments. The passport office is particularly bad. Will my right hon. Friend expand on the improved access by telephone that he mentioned.?

Mr. Luce: The point about the passport office should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, as my hon. Friend will no doubt do, but there are a number of experiments going on to improve telephone contact between various Departments and the public. For example, there is a freephone service in the Department of Social Security at Newcastle, and there is a telephone queuing system at Her Majesty's Stationery Office. There are a number of ways in which the system is being improved for the benefit of the public.

Civil Servants (Foreign Languages)

69. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants are able to speak any language of the European Economic Community other than English.

Mr. Luce: More than half the staff in grades 1 to 3 are able to speak a second European language. Information on other grades is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Fisher: Is it perhaps the case that the Minister does not have figures for other grades because they are very poor and because, throughout the Civil Service, there is some complacency which is based on the idea that, if one shouts loud enough, foreigners will understand? Is it not a matter of courtesy that our civil servants should learn other languages? Would it not make good financial sense for the Government to invest in helping them to learn other languages?

Mr. Luce: I am not sure of the standard of foreign languages in the House. It is important that 50 per cent. of the top grades in the Civil Service speak another language. It is for each Department to say what proportion of its employees speak a foreign language. A range of courses is now available at the Civil Service college, at universities and through the diplomatic service which attempts to ensure that we are better prepared for 1992. Priority is being given to this matter.

"Service to the Public" (Report)

70. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how much money he expects to be spent in meeting the recommendations of the report "Service to the Public".

Mr. Luce: There are no formal recommendations in the "Service to the Public" occasional paper. The views expressed in it are those of the officials who undertook the management study. The resources devoted to service to the public are a matter for Ministers of individual Departments. The paper is about how best to improve services within a given level of resources or how most cost effectively to provide a specified level of service.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the courtesy shown by civil servants when dealing with hon. Members' problems and those of their constituents is second to none? It is not always so, however, when it comes to responding to the general public. Does my right hon. Friend agree that being a civil servant means providing a service and being civil? What can he do to improve the manner in which civil servants treat members of the general public?

Mr. Luce: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of what he mentions. There should be good relations between civil servants and the public. It is interesting to note that 95 per cent. of civil servants deal in some way with the provision of services, whether to the public or to specialist groups. A wide range of training courses is available to help civil servants achieve a good relationship with the public. We should be in no doubt that civil servants want to be able to provide a service—it provides much more job satisfaction. It is right to give priority to better training facilities.

Legionnaires' Disease

3.31 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current outbreak of Legionnaires' disease in central London.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): An outbreak of Legionnaires' disease has been identified in the central London area. Ten people are currently suspected of being associated with the incident. I am confident that it is being dealt with in the best possible way by all the appropriate authorities. Westminster city council is in the lead because it enforces the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in offices, shops and hotels in the area. The Health and Safety Executive is assisting the environmental health team at Westminster city council.

It is important to keep this outbreak in perspective. If employers follow the procedures set out by the HSE in its guidance material, the problem of Legionnaires' disease is a controllable one. This outbreak emphasises the importance of doing so.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that responsibility for ensuring compliance by employers with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in general, and their duties in respect of Legionnaires' disease in particular, rests with him because of his responsibility for the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive?

Does the Minister know that the Select Committee on Employment has for several years been profoundly concerned at the increase in the number of incidents of Legionnaires' disease in various parts of the country, of which the most serious were in Stafford, where there were 101 cases and 28 deaths, at the BBC, where there were 58 cases and three deaths, and now at British Aerospace, where there are 36 confirmed cases and, happily, no deaths so far? Does he accept that the BBC case has not been dealt with properly by the courts and that the fine of £3,600 was derisory, disgraceful and utterly inadequate in dealing with what could have become a plague? Does he not understand that his Department has not provided facilities for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive properly to do their jobs in inspecting those air cooling towers which are causing these problems?

In the circumstances, while expressing sympathy to the sufferers and the hope that they will soon be well, may I ask him to reassure the House and the public that he is taking the matter seriously? Will he urge the courts to treat the causing of death in industry as a hugely serious matter that deserves appropriate penalties? Will he please tell the House in far more detail what is being done to contain the outbreak and to find people who may believe that they are suffering from pneumonia but in fact are suffering from Legionnaires' disease?

Mr. Cope: I shall endeavour to respond to all those questions from the hon. and learned Gentleman. First, I did my best to reassure the hon. and learned Gentleman and the House that we are certainly taking the outbreak seriously. As for the BBC case, I do not think that I should comment today on individual decisions of the courts, but it is certainly very important that the courts consider the penalties for individual cases involving health and safety very carefully, subject to the Acts which govern it and their statutory responsibilities. I am aware of the cases that the hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned and of the interest of the Select Committee, with which I know that he has been involved. Responsibility is governed by the allocation regulations of 1977, which were made under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974. They allocate responsibility for inspection between the Health and Safety Executive and local authorities. As I said in my original reply, the responsibility for shops, hotels and offices rests with the city council—in this case Westminster city council—as the environmental health authority. It is taking action and doing its best to isolate the incidents caused by the outbreak. It has appealed—and I reinforce that appeal—for any doctors who suspect cases of Legionnaires' disease to contact it at once so that they may be taken into account in the inquiry and so that it can do its best to discover the cause and treat those who, unfortunately, are subject to the disease.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Is my right hon. Friend absolutely sure that the guidance notes which go out to the managers and engineers of the various establishments, hospitals, office blocks and others using air cooling tower systems are clear enough in the directions that are necessary to carry out procedures to check and test the water supply and then to carry out very quick biocide treatment to ensure that any Legionnella that is discovered is dealt with immediately?

Mr. Cope: The guidelines are very clear and we know of no incidence of Legionnaires' disease when the guidelines have been followed. A new leaflet was put out just a few days ago and has received some attention in the press. It is quite short, extremely clear, and gives good initial guidance. Obviously the full guidance is much more elaborate, but the initial guidance in the new leaflet is extremely helpful.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Will the Minister take on board the fact that we are dealing not with an isolated case, but that this is the third series of cases in a relatively short period stretching between London and Bolton? As various groups share responsibility, and as there has been a series of outbreaks, will the Minister consider introducing some co-ordination so that we can bring together all the lessons that have been learned by examining the cases that have been investigated and apply them when dealing with any others that may arise?

Mr. Cope: It is important that the different authorities with responsibility in different areas co-ordinate the information they gather. That is particularly important in an incident such as this, in which people from a wide area might be affected. The Health and Safety Executive does co-ordinate information from all the different outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I know how serious Legionnaires' disease can be as I suffered from an air conditioning virus about two years ago. However, will the Minister ensure that this does not become the latest in a long line of panics? Will he put the problem into perspective and continue to act with determination, together with Westminster city council, to try to find the origins of the disease, rather than react as the press and some Opposition Members might and turn the incident into another great disaster?

Mr. Cope: I do not think that it qualifies for the great disaster stakes. There are up to 200 cases of Legionnaires' disease a year compared with 180,000 cases of pneumonia. About 15 or 20 people die each year die from Legionnaires' disease. It is important to keep things in perspective but we should do everything possible to control and look after the disease.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Given the number of water-cooled plants in central London, notwithstanding what has been said by the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), this is potentially disastrous and the Minister must appreciate that. Will he consider introducing legislation requiring annual inspections of the plants, because that seems to be overdue? Will he give a clear undertaking from the Dispatch Box that the Government will make all resources available to the House and Westminster city council, if they request them, in order to track down the current outbreak?

Mr. Cope: There is no indication that the resources currently available are inadequate for the purpose. In fact, as far as I know, they are entirely adequate. We would respond carefully to any request for further legislation from the HSC or the HSE, as we always do. So far, they have not suggested the need for further legislation.

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that such outbreaks are, in essence, unnecessary and avoidable? Will he recognise that every case investigated by the Select Committee on Employment has shown that the guidelines issued by the Health and Safety Executive—known as EH48—were known to the employers, management and staff but were not being followed? Therefore, will he think clearly and carefully about the need to make those guidelines legally enforceable so that it becomes an offence for anybody to fail to carry them out? Will he accept that, if he does that, he will find that we do not need question and answer sessions such as this in the House in future?

Mr. Cope: I do not want to cut off question and answer sessions in the House, but I would rather deal with the disease. I have already said that we shall consider any specific proposals for legislation made by the Health and Safety Executive, the Health and Safety Commission or by other people. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 states that employers must provide for the health and safety of their employees. It was under that Act that the BBC was recently taken to court. Therefore, it is already an offence not to provide for the health and safety of one's employees.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Will the Minister say that more than five cases have already been confirmed? He mentioned only 10 suspected cases. Will he give instructions to staff to inspect the water coolers manufactured and used from 1972 because they seem to be causing the difficulties? Will he let the House know whether inspections of jacuzzis and whirlpools will be encompassed in the instructions?

Mr. Cope: The information I received just before I came to the House was that there were 10 suspected cases and five confirmed. I mentioned the figure of 10 in my original answer. All employers and others concerned should follow the advice which is already given in the guidance on Legionnaires' disease. If they have done that thoroughly, their cooling systems should cause no problems. It is, of course, important to follow the specific advice of the environmental health officers who are on the spot dealing with this outbreak.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Will my hon. Friend assure us that this place is not affected by Legionnaires' disease? When were the water systems of this place last tested for Legionnaires' disease?

Mr. Cope: I cannot give my hon. Friend a specific reply to his first question, but I understand that the guidance given by the Health and Safety Commission and Executive in their leaflets is carefully followed throughout this building.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will the Minister look at international experience in this area, especially the work done by the World Health Organisation and by the European Parliament, which have seriously considered over a number of years the implications of diseases caused by air conditioning, of which Legionnaires' disease is the most extreme? Does he agree that the sick building syndrome, probably caused by air conditioning, has not been taken seriously enough in Britain? Surely it is time that much firmer and stronger guidelines were issued by the Government, as diseases caused by air conditioning can cause many days off work and other serious problems for people.

Further to the point made by the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the air conditioning system in this place is inspected? Because of the effect that the air conditioning has on me in this Chamber—sitting here for over an hour at a time—and looking at my hon. Friends, I believe that the air conditioning system needs proper inspection and regular cleaning. I do not believe that that happens.

Mr. Cope: I believe that that does happen. One has to be careful before blaming the air conditioning for behaviour of hon. Members.

The Health and Safety Executive is in close and continuous touch with its colleagues in Europe and elsewhere about this, and, of course, other health problems. It is important that we make the best use that we can of everything that can be learnt from overseas. This disease was first identified in the United States, from where we received our original information about it.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Will the Minister confirm that, while two air conditioning systems have been closed down, there are another 31 within a 200-metre radius of the National Gallery which are currently being investigated? Will he name the two large office buildings affected, so that the office workers within them and those who have used them within the past six weeks can be alerted to seek immediate medical advice if they have any relevant symptoms? As any of the 33 air conditioning systems in the area may be the source, will the Minister order them all to be shut down and until tests are fully completed to eliminate any further risk?

When referring to the previous outbreak at the BBC, the Secretary of State said:

"any lessons learnt will be acted upon".—[*Official Report*, 5 July 1988; Vol. 136, c. 883.]

Is it not clear that lessons have not been learnt, because another outbreak has occurred only 10 months later and

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

only a few hundred yards away? Therefore, because wet cooling systems have been the source of previous outbreaks, will he consider the permanent closure of all wet cooling systems in urban areas?

Mr. Cope: I cannot confirm the figures that the hon. Gentleman gave in the first part of his question, nor am I prepared to name individual systems which have been shut down, because I believe that to do so might give the impression that no other systems could be involved, and that anyone who was suspected of having Legionnaires' disease but who had not been involved with those two, or adjacent buildings, could not be affected. That is not the case. It could be extremely wider. I believe that the best guidance is that given by the Westminster city council and the environmental health people, which is that any doctor who suspects anybody of having Legionnaires' disease and who might be in any way connected with this outbreak should contact them. The wider the net is thrown, the better.

I do not believe that it would be right to close all such air conditioning systems. As I said earlier, if the guidelines are followed those systems are not dangerous. On the contrary. Therefore, there is no need to close them all, but it is necessary for people to follow the guidelines to ensure that they operate their systems correctly. That was one of the lessons learnt from the previous outbreak and that is the lesson that we are trying to get home to the public with the aid of the leaflets that I mentioned earlier.

Point of Order

3.50 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise a point of order in connection with your role as protector of Back-Bench rights, particularly in relation to direct constituency cases. Question No. 10 to the Secretary of State for Social Security was about the age limit for widows' pensions. My constituent, Mrs. Doreen Whitbread was the one who won the important test case about that age limit and the tribunal ruled that the retrospective impact of the regulations was unfair and that they were invalidly introduced. Mrs. Whitbread stated that she felt that the rug had been pulled from under her feet——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has raised a point of order, but he is only one of a large number of hon. Members in this House who have an equal interest in this question. If it is a point of order for me, I shall deal with it.

Mr. Cohen: The point of order is that it was a direct constituency case, because my constituent was involved and won that important test case. The points that Mrs. Whitbread made during and after that tribunal hearing were the ones I wanted to put to the Minister. Will you confirm that it was your choice that I was not given the opportunity to do so?

Mr. Speaker: Sadly, it was my choice and I am sorry. The hon. Gentleman has already said that I am the protector of Back-Bench Members' rights and interests and I must pay regard to all hon. Members. We did not get far at Question Time today and if I took into account every hon. Member who wanted to be called on every question, I fear we would have gone even more slowly. Today we reached only question No. 12, which was not a very good score.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) because, although I understand the point that you have made, the Minister specifically mentioned Mrs. Whitbread on a number of occasions and she happens to be my hon. Friend's constituent.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that I do not know who Mrs. Whitbread is.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister mentioned her.

Mr. Speaker: Well, he may know her, but I regret I do not.

PESTICIDES (FEES AND ENFORCEMENT BILL

Ordered,

That the Pesticides (Fees and Enforcement) Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Water Bill (Allocation of Time)

3.52 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 7th March 1989.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 7th March may continue until Eight p.m., whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 8th March.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in three allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten p.m. on the last of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a Sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on allotted days

7.—(1) On the first and second allotted days, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after 10 o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, Standing Order No. 14 shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion; and on the first or second allotted day that period shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question of any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is made by a member of the Government;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that

[Mr. John Wakeham]

time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

'allotted day' means any day (other than Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the day, provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

'the Bill' means the Water Bill;

'Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee' means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committe;

'Resolution of the Business Committee' means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

The House will need no reminding of the importance of the Water Bill to which my motion would apply a timetable. The Bill will greatly benefit consumers, taxpayers, workers in the industry, future shareholders, and above all the environment. It will do this through a number of measures, which, by now, are well known to the House. It will establish a National Rivers Authority to take responsibility in England and Wales for the control of water pollution, for water resource management, flood defence, fisheries and navigation. The Bill will provide a new statutory framework for setting river quality objectives and other standards, with effective means of enforcement. The utility functions of the water authorities will be transferred to new limited companies, and the role of the 29 statutory water companies will be maintained, with provision for them to convert to plc status if they wish.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Leader of the House spoke about protecting the consumer. As early as possible in his speech will he explain how consumers will be assisted by the 30 per cent. increase that existing private companies will bring in as quickly as possible as a result of privatisation?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has already said that the 30 per cent. price increase is not justified. Water charges would have to rise, irrespective of privatisation, to help to pay for higher standards of drinking water quality and sewage treatment. The price of water is still low compared with the price of other basic services in western Europe. I repeat that there is nothing in our proposals that could justify statutory water companies raising their charges by 30 per cent. or more. The Bill will further seek to provide for the terms of the new companies' appointment and for the sale of their shares to the public towards the end of this year.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It is all very well for the Leader of the House to say that these price increases, ranging from 30 to 50 per cent., are not justified. However, they will happen as we predicted they would in December —a prediction that the Secretary of State for the Environment pooh-poohed. People will pay more simply because of the Government's dogma in insisting on privatising water. It is no good saying that the Government do not like the price increases, because consumers are being ripped off.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman may have no faith in the ability to negotiate anything and perhaps in his case he is right. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will discuss these matters with the water industry. These increases are not justified by anything to do with privatisation. Let us see what happens at the end of the discussions.

There will be a clear legal framework for the duties, functions and powers of the new companies, and water and sewarage law will be updated. A Director General of Water Services will be appointed to keep water and sewerage services under review and to protect the interests of customers. In all, it is the most far-reaching reform in the history of the water industry.

The Government's commitment to privatisation of the water industry is long-standing and well-known. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) first announced in February 1985 that the Government intended to examine the prospects for the privatisation of the water industry. A discussion document followed shortly thereafter. Subsequently, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), the then Secretary of State for the Environment, announced in February 1986 that the Government had decided to transfer the 10 water authorities in England and Wales to private ownership. A White Paper containing detailed proposals was issued, and this was followed by two consultation papers on sewerage law and the water environment respectively, which developed these aspects of the proposals. The Government consulted widely on all those documents.

In May 1987 my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced that the pollution control functions of the water authorities would remain in the public sector under a new National Rivers Authority. Privatisation on that basis was a feature of our manifesto for the June 1987 election, which saw the Government returned to office with a large vote of confidence. The detailed proposals were set out in two further consultation papers later that year. The result of all this is the extremely thorough and detailed Bill to which the House gave a Second Reading by 301 votes to 241.

The Bill has also received detailed scrutiny in the House. It had two full days for Second Reading, and the Standing Committee has so far devoted nearly 75 hours to the first nine clauses and four schedules. There are another 171 clauses yet to be considered. I welcome the careful attention that the Bill has received so far, but I am concerned that sufficient consideration be given to all parts of this large and wide-ranging Bill. Major issues still to be

covered include customer service standards, drinking water quality, the control of pollution, sewerage, flood defences and fisheries.

The House would wish these subjects to be considered no less carefully than our proposals on the National Rivers Authority, the Director General of Water Services, and the duties of the Secretary of State. But this consideration must be balanced against our commitment to ensure that the legislation is enacted this Session. If we are to arrange for the sale of shares towards the end of the year and leave sufficient time for the necessary regulations to be made after Royal Assent, we must speed up our pace. I regret that we simply do not have available the 80 weeks, or about 1,400 hours, that it would take the Committee to finish its scrutiny if it were to continue at its present rate.

I am not suggesting that there has been excessive filibustering in Committee, but I believe that a constructive timetable motion is now necessary. I have brought it forward to ensure proper, measured discussion of all parts of a complex and important Bill. It is also important that the Bill receives this full scrutiny before it goes to another place.

In devising my motion, I have had in mind also the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and his colleagues on the Procedure Committee in the last Parliament—that the introduction of a timetable motion too late in the Committee stage of a Bill can lead to inadequate consideration of a Bill's later clauses. In the debate on the Procedure Committee's reports towards the end of last year, while I argued that it was important for the Government to retain flexibility on timetable motions, I said that I shared the Committee's desire to move towards the introduction of timetable motions, if necessary and where possible, at a time that allows for properly apportioned consideration of a Bill.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): By imposing this timetable, in which the crucial date appears to be 7 March, is not the Leader of the House assisting the Chancellor of the Exchequer to announce in the Budget that the assets of the water authorities will be included in the following year's accounts, to the benefit of the Government and their policies?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his plans, to which I am not party, did not form any part of the discussions that I had about whether this was the right time to introduce a timetable motion. We did so to ensure that the Committee and remaining stages are adequate to discuss the many remaining subjects in a balanced and sensible way.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): My right hon. Friend is being his usual polite and moderate self, and one welcomes the grounds that he is putting forward for the timetable motion. Will he bear in mind that we have had to listen to most of the contents of the *Tatler* magazine being read out by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and to the clubs and attainments of Lord Crickhowell? Those are just two illustrations of what we have had to endure over the long proceedings of the Committee.

Mr. Wakeham: The first draft of my speech said that there had been "no filibustering" and I changed that to "no excessive filibustering" after I had read over the weekend the fascinating reports about the *Tatler* and one or two other incidents.

If the Committee continues to sit each week for 18 hours, which is about the number of hours that it has done so far, there is the prospect of another 78 hours or so of debate. As is customary, it would be for the Business Sub-Committee, which has the important task of allocating the amount of time for discussion of each part of the Bill within the total days available, to decide whether the present pattern of sittings should be maintained or might sensibly be increased. As a number of the remaining clauses are consequential or supplementary, I believe that the Business Sub-Committee will have considerable scope to ensure that time is allocated in such a way as to enable an adequate scrutiny of all the remaining parts of the Bill. In addition, there will be three full days of debate on the Floor of the House for Report and Third Reading. The motion provides that the first two of these days will run until midnight.

These generous provisions show that it is not our intention to cut short debate on this Bill. I commend the motion to the House, in the belief that it represents the best and most realistic way to debate the Water Bill, a Bill of fundamental importance which will benefit the consumer and the industry and, at the same time, safeguard and improve the environment.

4.3 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I compliment the Leader of the House, or perhaps his Private Office, on the sweet reasons that he came up with for the second guillotine motion of 1989. The first one was that on the proceedings of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, and the Leader of the House argued that we had to rush it through before the current Act ran out. I half expected him to argue that we had to pass the Water Bill before the water ran out. Knowing the ineptitude of the Secretary of State for the Environment, that might have proved a more prudent argument than the one the Leader of the House used.

Last year, the Leader of the House introduced no fewer than six guillotine motions—a record for any parliamentary Session. Now, with this Session scarcely two months old, he is introducing his second guillotine motion in a fortnight. Some think that he is going for his own record, hyped up by the wonder drug that drives on all his cringing Cabinet colleagues—fear for his job and fear of the Prime Minister. Others attribute this guillotine-happy phase to the bicentenary of the French revolution. As the modern Tory party has little sense of history, I shall remind the right hon. Gentleman that Dr. Guillotine, the eponymous proposer of the then high tech instrument of decapitation, did not get it into operation until 1792, so any bicentenary celebration of the guillotine is premature. The guillotine on the Water Bill is equally premature.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): While the right hon. Gentleman is going through history, could he tell the House whether it was a Conservative or Labour Government who tabled five guillotine motions in a day during the 1974-75 Session?

Mr. Dobson: It is true that my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) introduced—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] He will probably be

[Mr. Dobson]

along later, because he does not miss many sittings. He introduced a Bill that enacted five guillotine motions in one day, but they were the only five in that Session. The Leader of the House is the record holder, having introduced six guillotine motions. Those motions were introduced by a Government with a majority of 100 and a guaranteed majority in the other place, and came in the first long Session of a Parliament—something that has never before been done. That either says something about the incompetence of the Leader of the House or shows that we are rather better in opposition than some in the Press Gallery give us credit for.

We are faced with the second guillotine motion in two months at the beginning of a parliamentary Session. The Government have failed to answer practically every question put to them by the Opposition about the Water Bill. They have also failed to answer questions put to them by people outside who are concerned about the future of the water supply. The Government propose to curtail debate in Committee to reduce their embarrassment at not being able to cope both with what is happening in the real world and the questioning to which they are being subjected by my hon. Friends. Today, I shall try to put some of the most important points again, not with much hope of getting a reply but in the hope that at least people will know that here in Parliament we are asking questions even if the Government will not come up with answers.

The main basis of the Government's credo on the Bill is that they want to hand over our water industry to profit-seeking private water companies because that will ensure that market forces work to the benefit of the consumer. Even the most fanatical supporter of Adam Smith, and certainly anyone who has read his works, should know that market forces can work only when the consumer has a choice, but the Bill will not give the consumer a choice. How can it? There will still be only one water pipe to each home. The Government are proposing a simple transfer of the ownership of water from the publicly owned water authorities and the strictly regulated statutory water companies to a collection of semi-regulated, money-grabbing monopolists. A dissatisfied customer will get no choice. The Government are saying to the customers, "If you do not like your water supply, get a bucket and get water from somewhere else."

Another major question is who will own the new water companies. Will one company own the lot, so that there will not only be no choice, but no chance to compare the performance of one company with that of another? The Government said originally that they would prevent that happening by having a golden share. We understand, however, that one of their former colleagues, Sir Leon Brittan, may rule that the Government cannot play the golden share to stop such takeovers and the formation of one monopoly company. We could do with an answer from the Minister on that, but it is one that to date he has refused to give.

The next questions are who would be likely to buy the water industry, and why. The recent history of takeovers, combined with the recent history of the sale of some public assets, can fill the water consumer only with foreboding. The most recent takeovers have had more to do with asset stripping and property speculation than with a better deal for customers. The same can be said of some of the privatisations. For example, the royal ordnance factories were sold to British Aerospace. The theory was that the sale would produce an all-purpose armaments company. In practice, it was merely a rip-off. When the factories were sold by the Government to British Aerospace, the land at the Enfield and Waltham Abbey sites was valued at only £3·5 million. The new owners immediately revalued the sites at over £400 million. The arms factories are to be closed so that the land can be sold.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): That is not true.

Mr. Dobson: If I have to choose between the words of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee and that of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), I shall go along with the Comptroller and Auditor General and the PAC.

The potential purchaser of the water industry will not be attracted by its pumping stations, its filtration plants, its thousands of miles of water connections and its customers. Not likely! All those facilities, including, perhaps, the customers, need money spent on them, as well as skilled staff and management skills. The real attraction of the industry—both the publicly owned water authorities and the regulated statutory water companies—is its land. We understand—I say "understand", because the Government will not produce the figures—that the industry owns over half a million acres. Some of that land comprises prime city centre sites while other land is in the suburbs, where it might be used for house building. Much more land is in the national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty. It is on the land that potential purchasers' eyes are focused. They have their eyes on property for property speculation. We all know who gains and who loses from property speculation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that it is inconceivable that planning permission would be given for such development in our national parks?

Mr. Dobson: I am dealing with what might be described as the Department of the Environment's twin-track approach to land sales and property speculation in the national parks. The Secretary of State intends to put the companies in a position in which they can sell off assets, and at the same time he is trying to relax planning restrictions on developments in the national parks. In other words, he will get the national parks both ways.

If Conservative Members believe that nothing is wrong with property speculation, let me remind them of the words that were used in 1909 in Lancashire by the grandfather of the hon. Member for Crawley. I refer to the occasion when Winston Churchill spelt out that the profits of the property speculator were reaped in direct proportion to the disservice done to the rest of society. That is how we can measure what the property speculators will be doing.

We are told that the Government appointed Schroder —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nicholas Baker: May I advise the hon. Gentleman to cease scraping the barrel? If he took the trouble to read the reports of the proceedings in Committee, he would discover that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning has anwered the questions that have been put to him.

Mr. Dobson: We shall come on to that. I think that it is unfair of the hon. Gentleman to refer to the hon. Member for Crawley as a barrel.

We know that the Government appointed Schroder to value the water industry's public assets. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State—glasnost in reverse—refuses to disclose the valuation to the British people. I have no doubt, however, that he will show the figures to would-be buyers. I have no doubt also that the Prime Minister hopes that some of the profits will eventually be siphoned back into Tory party funds. That might happen as a consequence of a novel use of the water companies, as revealed by Rosie Waterhouse in *The Independent*.

The people generally, not only potential purchasers, are entitled to know the value of the land assets if only so that they can calculate in the fullness of time how much the water rip-off has cost every family in the land. Perhaps the Secretary of State, in looking to his future and being fearful for his place in the Cabinet, is thinking of following the example of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) and British Telecom. Perhaps ere long he, too, will be able to complement the sell-off that he organised with a pay-off by becoming a director of the privatised company.

Ministers have refused to disclose the value of the assets, but they have been suggesting that sell-offs would benefit customers as the proceeds would be devoted to investment in the industry and environmental improvements. As we read the Bill, especially if it remains unamended, that is not true. How do Ministers propose to stop land assets being hived off to subsidiary companies or incorporated in a part of a conglomerate that takes over a water company? It that happens, profits will not accrue to the benefit of the customers. Equally, they will not be ploughed back into the industry to improve the quality of water or to reduce pollution. Instead, the profits will go where they always go, to the shareholders.

Ministers have told us that there will be regulations, and so there will. However, as Keith Court, the boss of South West Water, said when he thought that he was not being reported, the job of the industry will be to outwit the regulators. As the Secretary of State is to be the principal regulator, the smart money will be on those who are intent on outwitting him. His record so far—*[Interruption.]* I shall produce evidence to support my assertion. As Secretary of State for Transport and as Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) has an unenviable record in the courts. He has lost rather a lot of cases at the expense of the taxpayer. His record is so bad that he was once rightly described by my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape)—one of my witty hon. Friends—as having more form than the Kray twins. That is all the more reason why there should be plenty of time to consider these matters carefully and at length in Committee, if only so that the Secretary of State can learn in advance what his own legislation means before he is up before the courts again.

The Bill has been put over the Government as a green measure. That is true, but it is not the green of the environment. Instead, it is the green of envy. Their Tory friends have their envious eyes on the disposable assets of the industry and on the monopoly supply of water, which no one, not even the hon. Member for Crawley, can do without. That is about as green as the Bill gets. Even the sensible proposal to set up the National Rivers Authority, which we have welcomed, is undermined by both doubts and certainties. There are doubts about its powers and funding and certainties about its designated boss, Lord Crickhowell. In 1987, he appeared to be held as to either too old or too stupid to remain Secretary of State for Wales, or even as the right hon. Member for Pembroke. Yet now, along with all the other perks that he has had at the hands of the Government, he has been appointed to head the NRA.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I invite the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the most offensive remarks that he has made about the former right hon. Member for Pembroke. He may know that Lord Crickhowell, as he now is, was seriously ill for a number of years as a result of a disease that he caught in the far east while on a Government visit to promote Wales. Thankfully, he has recovered from that illness and is now restored to his former health.

Mr. Dobson: If Lord Crickhowell was too ill to be a Member of Parliament, he is still too ill to be the boss of the National Rivers Authority. I stick to that position—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I will certainly not withdraw. There is nothing to withdraw.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Is the hon. Gentleman's case so weak that he must disparage someone who served with honour in this House? Is that the hon. Gentleman's case?

Mr. Dobson: My case is that if the National Rivers Authority is to command the respect of everyone, it should not be headed by a partisan appointee who receives £40,000 a year for working a three-day week. That is my case.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): That is not the point. The point that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has made which we found particularly offensive was his reference to Lord Crickhowell being stupid or old. The hon. Gentleman has qualified that. However, the hon. Gentleman, who is well regarded in this House, should withdraw what he has said.

Mr. Dobson: I always thought that he was too stupid and old when he was a Member of this House, so I will not withdraw.

The Government claim that the Bill means that the new private owners of the water industry will invest in environmental improvements and in improving water standards. However, as we read the Bill, those provisions are subject to the new companies making enough profits from their water supply functions to make that investment. If, as I have explained, they are likely to siphon off the profits from land sales to non-water supply subsidiaries and holding companies, where will the money for that investment come from?

We do not really need an answer from the Minister to that question today because we know the answer already. The money will come from increases in water charges. Increases in those charges have been pushed above the rate of inflation for some years and there is more to come. Last week the Minister announced that water charges by the publicly-owned water authorities would increase by up to 13 per cent. this year. This weekend we heard that the private statutory water companies are planning to increase their charges by anything between 30 and 50 per cent. At

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least for a moment, reality impinged again on the fantasy water world of the Minister for Water and Planning and he rushed to the news media to denounce those companies. He said that he was going to summon them to meet him.

The latest question for the Minister to answer is what increase will the statutory water companies levy this year. Can he confirm that they would not have considered increases of this size if they had not been threatened with this privatisation legislation? All those increases are making an impact now, even before the legislation is introduced. One of the reasons for the increases is that they are a preparation for what will happen after the Bill becomes an Act. That is usually called fattening the beast for market.

Who wants the Bill? The answer is a few of the self-same secretive, Right-wing weirdos who came up with the ideas behind the recent National Health Service White Paper —the loons who dare not speak their names. Most people do not want the Bill. They know that it is a rip-off and that it is designed to hand over a natural monopoly into private hands. If you will excuse the expression, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are even more fearful of the knowledge that those private hands have the ear of the Prime Minister.

The Government claim that the Bill is the only way to raise standards in the water industry. Those standards certainly need raising. Britain has been taken to court by the EEC for having poor quality water and foul beaches more often than any other country in Europe. The Government must take the blame for that. They have been in power for 10 years. The prosecutions have taken place under this Government and the responsibility is theirs. I am sure that people in this country will remember that responsibility when they listen to the Government giving answers to problems with the water supply about which people are not aware because the Government got us into this mess in the first place.

The Bill is long and complicated. It must be examined carefully. Questions must be asked and are being asked, but they are not being answered. The House and the public are entitled to answers. If Ministers do not know the answers, they should say so. If they do know the answers, they should make them public.

The timetable motion is intended to prevent that process of question and answer. We have been asking the questions, but the Government have not produced the answers. We reject the motion and in due course we believe that the country will reject the irrelevant and expensive Bill.

4.25 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): We have spent 74½ hours in Committee debating eight clauses out of a total of 180. I am sure that hon. Members can calculate the potential number of hours that would remain in Committee to complete consideration. It has taken 74½ hours to reach part II. Heaven knows how long it would take to reach part IV which is headed "Charges by undertakers." At the present rate of progress, that heading might have more relevance than hon. Members realise at the moment.

How has the time been used so far? Hardly had the ink dried on the extraordinary statement from the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) that the Government are stealing the water from the people and putting it into private hands, a statement which neatly sidestepped the fact that 25 per cent. of the industry is already in private hands, than we entered the world of economics.

Early sessions of the Committee were enlivened by the economic views and political dogma of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). They deserve the most extensive circulation. On 10 January the hon. Member for Bootle managed to say:

"If the water authorities are in the public sector after the next election, which the Labour party will win, we shall lift public sector borrowing requirement restrictions on borrowing for capital purposes."

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning intervened and said:

"If the hon. Gentleman's argument is correct, will he tell the Committee why the water industry was subject to public sector borrowing restrictions between 1974 and 1979?"

To which the hon. Member for Bootle, unabashed, continued:

"Yes, because the Labour party got it wrong. I was not a Member of this place during that period. If it had got it right, it might have won the election . . . I was first elected in 1979 and regrettably one of the things that contributed to the Labour party's general election defeat that year was the imposition of public sector borrowing requirement restrictions on bodies such as water authorities. We have learnt our lesson and rethought our policy. What I am advocating is now Labour party policy."

I asked him:

"Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the Labour Government lost the 1979 election because they did not spend enough?"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 10 January 1988, c. 88-89.]

The hon. Member for Bootle answered "Yes." The hon. Member for Bootle does not appear to be particularly concerned with the detail—or should I say the trivia—of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund back in the 1970s.

Of course the hon. Member for Bootle did not claim the experience of his hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) who said:

"I am 41 years old and cannot remember a period of Socialist Government."

Perhaps the hon. Member for Sunderland, South was a mature student in the 1970s and therefore can take a detached view on these matters. It is possible that he is a late developer. If that is the case, it would cause a few shudders on the Conservative Benches.

We heard at great length the economic views of the hon. Member for Bootle—straightforward 1930s, mark one, clause 4 primitive Socialism. We did not hear on all those matters from certain other members of the Committee. We do not know whether the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), for example, agrees with his hon. Friend the Member for Bootle, when he says, "This is Labour party policy". It will be nice if the hon. Member for Copeland confirms that that is so. Does he agree that there should be no controls on public spending, and that the 1979 general election was lost because the then Labour Government did not spend enough?

Perhaps the silence of the hon. Member for Copeland demonstrates that he does agree with his hon. Friend, so there is no need for him to say anything. But his silence may mean that he disagrees, and that he does not wish to say anything because he wants to avoid a row in public. Again, the silence of the hon. Member for Copeland may be because he is shy—but that is not a general characteristic of right hon. and hon. Members, so I must consider instead the first two possibilities. We hope to hear from the hon. Member for Copeland soon—and I trust

that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will be able to detach from him the information I seek as soon as possible.

Later, there were equally lengthy contributions by Opposition Members on conservation and the environment—all elevated to a science these days. I suppose that, seen from Sunderland, Brent, Bootle or Burnley, sites of special scientific interest, areas of outstanding natural beauty and national parks must seem like the ideal picnic spots to those who desire to visit them. There is an element of truth in that, but it is not the whole truth. Not once in Committee was there any shred of acknowledgement that people live in such areas and have to make their living there. There was no comprehension that national parks are not nationalised parks. Above all, there was no understanding that habitat is all important, and that nothing is more destructive of habitat than people.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Does the hon. Gentleman recall the point that I made in Committee concerning the destruction done to the valley in the Lake District by the water authority there? Does he not acknowledge that the Committee debated at great length the problems of people living in the Lake District and the fears they have regarding development after privatisation?

Mr. Knapman: As I mentioned previously, about 25 per cent. of water authorities are in private hands. Perhaps people already congregate on the streets and say, "It is a pity that we live in a private water company area, because it is much worse than being under a public water authority." I am making the point that it is the balance between conservation and public access that is vital. It is that balance which we seek to achieve—as my hon. and learned Friend explained to the Committee, time and again.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on the record of the Essex water company in private hands? It has consistently denied to ramblers the right to cross its land, when they have a legal right to do so—and when it is clearly in the interests of the environment and of the public that such access should be allowed. Is that the kind of record he wants to see other private companies emulate?

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman forgets that the Bill's purpose is strictly to separate the poacher and gamekeeper parts of the water industry. I thought that the hon. Member for Copeland explained on many occasions that that was so. He also mentioned that it was the function, and not the ownership, of the land that is of prime importance—and in that he is absolutely right.

The Committee proceeded—as I fear that I am proceeding—at a snail's pace, listening to the comical view of Opposition Members that legitimate country sports include fishing, because 3 million people, including the hon. Member for Copeland, fish—but that for some reason shooting and hunting are not legitimate country sports. What sort of hypocrisy is that?

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): To do the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) justice, while agreeing with the Labour party's last general election manifesto that fox hunting should be banned, he made a special exception for his own constituency, which is in a national park, saying that it was all right for fox hunting to be allowed in national parks.

Mr. Knapman: I thank my right hon. Friend and neighbour for making that clear. The hon. Member for Copeland makes a habit of such exceptions. I believe that he has nuclear energy interests in his constituency, and that he sought to opt out of the Labour party manifesto's proposals in respect of nuclear power. It seems that the hon. Gentleman's exceptions are a more common occurrence than I previously understood.

The Committee heard also Opposition objections based on political dogma, yet there was no explanation of why there are private water companies in France, under a Socialist Government, but that it is deemed to be right that in this country, under a Conservative Government, the state should provide water and sewerage services. There were also objections to the sale in national parks of land that is surplus to requirements. Those objections were voiced despite my hon. and learned Friend's correct view, which he repeatedly expressed, that land function and land usage should be the determining factor, not land ownership.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Will my hon. Friend inform the House of the amendment that I and my hon. Friends tabled at the end of the Committee's proceedings, the substance of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State agreed to consider sympathetically, to see whether he can bring forward on Report a measure to provide extra protection for national parks, in the way of consultation? That may answer the only point of any substance raised by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). Had he read the Committee's proceedings, he would have found the answer to his question there, too.

Mr. Knapman: I wish to spare the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) the duty of reading the Committee's proceedings over 74¼ hours. Opposition Members generally failed to specify why surplus land in national parks belonging to water companies is so different from all other land in national parks that it requires a vast amount of red tape and a huge bureaucracy to look after it.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Knapman: I trust that the hon. Gentleman has had time to look into the matter.

Mr. Dobson: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that in terms of access to the countryside, all manner of informal access agreements have been reached with water authorities that are not necessarily binding on their successors? Therefore, there are enormous tracts of land to which the public currently have access, but to which access will not be guaranteed when private owners have control of it—particularly if they wish to dispose of that land to other parties that intend doing something with it.

Mr. Knapman: No, I do not accept that. In Committee, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister spent a considerable time trying to explain to Opposition Members that a huge number of footpaths, bridle paths, and so on, will be respected. There are also concessionary paths. However, if one makes concessionary paths mandatory by subsequent legislation, who in future will grant such a concession?

The whole matter is summed up by an excellent leader in the *Evening Standard:*

[Mr. Knapman]

"The Government has bent and bowed to so many . . . empire-defending water officials that its scheme to sell off the water industry to its customers is in danger of . . . over-regulation."

The Opposition objected today, as they have before, to price increases—yet they insist on higher standards. How can one have one without the other? Finally, in Committee we listened for hour after hour to amendments for amending sake. Typical of the Opposition's amendments was the one requiring the National Rivers Authority to publish an annual report setting out details of borrowing. There was a lengthy debate before my hon. and learned Friend was able to intervene, saying:

"I can hardly believe my ears. The Bill requires the NRA to produce an audited annual report."

But did that abash Opposition Members?

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Knapman: No, I have given way enough. I know that the hon. Gentleman is always brief, but I shall not give way any more.

Opposition Members merely continued with the debate on who the report should be sent to and then, in great detail, discussed the North West water authority accounts, which were supposed to be brilliant. It is to be hoped that they had studied all the accounts of all the companies. Eventually my hon. and learned Friend the Minister commented:

"I am just wondering why the hon. Gentleman is so anxious to talk about every conceivable thing except the amendment."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 17 January 1989; c. 284.]

But it was too late: the afternoon had gone.

Most people want a clear and constant water supply. They want effluent to be disposed of quickly and efficiently. Their objectives will be best achieved through privatisation, and particularly by separating the provider of the service from those enforcing standards.

4.40 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) mentioned an occasion on which the Minister intervened after we had debated an amendment at some length to say that the amendment was not necessary because the annual reports were already required. If that is true, why did the Minister not intervene earlier? Was he deliberately allowing the Committee to discuss at length an amendment that need not have been debated?

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): That was because, as the hon. Gentleman will know, I lived in hope—as I have done throughout the Committee stage—that Opposition Members might have genuine points to raise. Does the hon. Gentleman not recall that my expectations were sadly disappointed?

Mr. Pike: That is no answer, and the Minister knows it. Despite his qualifications as a learned legal man, he merely does the job that he is instructed to do under the heavy hand of the Secretary of State—to get the legislation through. As he knows, if he has a contribution to make on any amendment he can make it, because in Committee any hon. Member, including a Minister, can contribute more than once.

By no means all the amendments have come from Opposition Members: a number have been tabled by Conservative Members. Nevertheless, although the Minister has said that he is prepared to consider one or two points, and on one occasion told us that he was prepared to discuss certain aspects of the Bill with organisations that had expressed concern, on most issues the Government have been prepared to make no concessions.

Although we have debated only nine clauses and four schedules so far, they have dealt with issues to which we shall return at a later stage, and they will not all require the same depth of consideration. Today's motion, however, giving the Bill just a month from tomorrow to complete its Committee stage, seems unnecessary. If the Government thought that it was necessary, they could have provided more time.

We must remember that we are legislating for people outside the House, and many of those people are still anxious about many aspects of the Bill. Leaving the question of privatisation aside for the moment, let me point out that those people want to ensure that our heritage—areas such as the Lake District, the districts of Wales, national parks, the Peak District and the Trough of Bowland—are preserved for their children. They believe that the Bill needs tightening up. So do the Ramblers' Association, the British Mountaineering Council and many other bodies that make good use of the recreational facilities provided by the open spaces now owned by water authorities.

We must also consider consumer interests. It is clear that the capital installation and reading of meters will involve additional costs, and that the water authorities will eventually need more than they need at present. Unless we include adequate safeguards, the Bill will penalise unduly large families, the families of the incontinent, and those whose jobs involve extra washing of work clothes, and additional baths.

We believe that the industry should remain in public ownership. It is an issue too basic and crucial to the needs of the people to be privatised, when comparative competition—a phrase that has been used several times—economy and profit are allowed to become criteria that can be unfairly measured against such matters as water quality, pollution, conservation and access. There must be an appropriate balance.

As I have often said, a clear difference between the two sides of the House is that, while Conservative Members judge everything in cash terms and invariably take money as the criterion that matters, we see many other important issues. The report of the Select Committee on the Environment about river and estuary pollution made it clear that the public sector borrowing requirement and the external financial limit need not be applied to the water industry, even if it remained in the public sector. It was clearly possible to remove the industry from the limits on its capital investment through means other than privatisation.

We have spent considerable time discussing the National Rivers Authority. Let me make it clear that as yet no member of the Committee has expressed opposition to the principle of such an authority. We consider it right to separate the regulatory powers—to separate poacher from gamekeeper. But the National Rivers Authority must be able to do the job for which it is being established.

The Secretary of State described this as a green Bill and a great step forward environmentally. Setting up the authority can be a step forward, but only if it can be given the financial powers to do its job properly. We believe in the environment, but we have doubts about the commitment of the Conservative party to environmental issues.

A separate Bill could have been introduced to establish a National Rivers Authority. The Government would not then have been faced with a timetable motion. A National Rivers Authority could have been set up this year and the Government could have introduced a Bill to privatise water next year. However, they are impatient to privatise water because they want the money from its privatisation, and from the privatisation of the electricity industry, so that they can con the electors at the next general election.

The debates in Committee have been constructive. I was pleased that the Leader of the House used milder language in his opening speech than he has used on previous occasions. He said that there had been no excessive filibustering. I believe that there has been no filibustering. If there has been any, it is Conservative Members who have filibustered. They have taken up time unnecessarily by moving amendments that they had no intention of putting to the vote. The Committee could make progress and it should be given more time in which to do so. The timetable motion should be defeated so that these important issues can be fully considered in Committee.

The Leader of the House referred to the Committee needing, at the present rate of progress, a further 80 weeks to complete its consideration of the Bill. That was misleading. The Committee will make faster progress as certain points are dealt with and eliminated from the debate. Conservative Members who are doubtful about the implications of these important and wide-ranging issues should be prepared to vote against the motion and thereby ensure that more time can be devoted to discussing them. Only in that way can we protect the public interest.

4.51 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Once again the Mother of Parliaments meets in absolute tumult and turmoil as it discusses another guillotine motion. Once again hon. Members can hardly get into the Chamber. They have to fight their way through so that they can discuss an important matter concerning free speech—whether it is right that the Government should curtail debate on an important Bill. We walk through the corridors discussing this vital matter of the day. The reality, however, is that we are not debating it in those circumstances.

I wish to spend a few minutes speaking about the procedure and practice of guillotine motions. There is a natural tendency in debates such as these to speak in general terms about the substance of the Bill that is the subject of the timetable motion rather than about procedural matters. However, the debates provide a useful opportunity to discuss procedure. A number of senior Members on both sides of the House have said on previous occasions that timetable motions should not pass without a reasonable discussion of points of procedure. With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall therefore spend a few minutes discussing them.

I sympathise with the efforts to reform the way in which parliamentary Bills are considered. In our daily lives outside this place we know that it is common sense to plan. It is also common sense for the Government and the Opposition to plan the business of the House. It is a constitutional fiction, to which we sometimes pay lip service outside the House, that this place works with a great deal of confrontation, when we debate hotly and when we do not speak to each other. That is how the general public believe that Parliament conducts its business. We know, however, that that is not the case. We get on with each other reasonably well. Those who sit on the Government and Opposition Front Benches consult one another, often behind Mr. Speaker's Chair, to ensure that the business of the House gets done. It makes sense to plan. At the moment, that is a relatively informal procedure.

The proposal to ensure that Bills are timetabled from an early stage suggests to me that informal consultation would become formal. If we were to argue outside the House that better planning is a drawback, that argument would not be given house room. However, we have often used that argument as a way of keeping our method of dealing with Bills intact.

It must also be right to ensure examination of all parts of the Bill from the start. The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), in a far better speech than that which was made by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), referred clearly to the sort of matters that still have to be considered. There is a lot to get through; it is a difficult Bill. It makes sense to spend an adequate amount of time on everything. It would be better, though, to think about that earlier and to make plans right from the start. The informal procedure works to a certain extent but I believe that something different might work better.

An important constitutional point is that this Chamber is seen more and more as being subordinate to the other place. The media now spend much time and energy on what the other place does after Bills leave this Chamber. They expect Bills to be considered in more depth and they expect to hear more exciting debates in the other place. Public attenion is turned all too often to the other place rather than to this Chamber. That cannot be good. This place remains the premier Chamber and it is right that the public should concentrate on what happens in this House. If our procedures hinder that process, that cannot be good. That may be one reason for considering a change in our procedures.

Against the argument for change in the way that Bills are considered, one weighty argument is advanced: that it is to the advantage of the Government of the day that they should be able to plan.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): If there were more opposition on the hon. Gentleman's side of the House, where there is a large majority, and if Conservative Members argued the case, all hon. Members would pay more attention, but the fact is that the case is made on the Opposition side of the House. All that Conservative Members have to do is to use their big majority and vote down the Opposition's case.

Mr. Burt: It hardly lies in the mouth of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) to suggest that opposition to the Government would be better if more Conservative Members opposed the Government. The opposition to the Government's case must come from the Opposition Benches. It is precisely because opposition to

[Mr. Burt]

the Government's measures by the Labour party has been so inadequate that the Government have such a large majority. That is something which lies not in our hands but in the Opposition's hands to remedy.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Does my hon. Friend agree, with his experience of the Committee, which I share with him, that most of the constructive suggestions and debates in Committee have emanated from the amendments that were moved by Conservative Back Benchers?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend makes a sound point. Many good points have been made by Conservative Members in Committee. That is not unnatural, bearing in mind their expertise. If the hon. Member for Walton were a member of the Committee, perhaps we should enjoy a similar degree of expertise on the other side.

Against the various advantages of changing the timetable procedure there is the argument that the Government have a major planning advantage. They can prevent the Opposition from enjoying the great power of delay. In many of our debates on procedure it has been said that if the Opposition were to lose their power of delay, their power to wring concessions from an unwilling Government would be lost. I am not convinced that in the last 20 years there has been much evidence that that is a particularly powerful argument.

Mr. Heffer: How does the hon. Gentleman know? He has not been here for 20 years.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct; I have not been here for 20 years. If the hon. Gentleman is quite content with the way this place has worked while he has been here—and he has been here for a long time—it suggests to me a degree of complacency and the self-satisfaction that I am rather surprised to see on his face.

The timetabling of Bills is a difficult matter. That is why hon. Members, with their varying degrees of experience—from the great experience of the hon. Member for Walton to the lesser experience of hon. Members of my intake and Members of the intake after me—should return to it time and time again. For the avoidance of doubt on the Treasury Bench, I wish to suggest that I am a reformer rather than an iconoclast. I am not suggesting an immediate——

Mr. Boateng *rose*——

Mr. Burt: Here is an iconoclast, and of course I give way to him.

Mr. Boateng: Is not the hon. Gentleman a bit of a crawler as well? Is not that really the tone of what he has said during the past few minutes? Complacency and self-satisfaction describe the attitude of Ministers, not Opposition Members. They showed complacency and self-satisfaction in every response that they made in Committee.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman knows all about crawling. It was he who introduced to the Committee the *Tatler* magazine with its prominent spread of his Front Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). If that is not an example of crawling, I am not merely new here, I am wet behind the ears—and that I am not.

Timetabling is difficult. The time has come to take a hard look once again at the possibility of introducing a more formal timetable procedure as a limited experiment. It should not be a complete change; the House must have time to consider the way in which it would work, but an experiment might be called for at some stage.

Certain informal practices which now exist mean that the Opposition and the Government are able to debate their various points. If a new procedure were put into operation, it would merely mean that this place would adapt and new conventions would arise around the more informal way of timetabling.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): There are a few hon. Members who would agree with the hon. Gentleman. We certainly need more than two months to consider a Bill of this size and complexity, and which is so important to everyone in this country. It would take about four months to consider adequately the Bill if his suggestion were adopted.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman draws attention to the difficulty that any Government would have in dealing with a major item of their manifesto. There can never be a Panglossian solution offering "the best of all possible worlds". There will always have to be compromise. The Opposition will never receive as much time as they feel is necessary and the Government can never give them as much time as they want. The Government have allowed a reasonable time for discussion of the Bill, and the procedure I suggest would also allow an adequate compromise.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): If a compromise is to be reached, it should be between the projected amount of time necessary to complete the examination of the Bill as it is being debated, and the amount of time being allowed in today's timetable motion. That would be a real compromise and a sign of the Government's goodwill and desire for a proper discussion of the issues.

Mr. Burt: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point but it is best not to become too deeply involved in the way that such new procedures would work. There will be plenty of opportunity to do so in the Select Committee on Procedure.

Today's timetable motion debate is a ritual which does not do the House a great deal of credit. The only response from the Opposition Front Bench was a fairly typical speech by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. A timetable motion used to be an opportunity for enormous outrage from Opposition Members—clearly it is not now. The only outrage came from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and, once again, he proved his capacity to let down himself and his colleagues by substituting unpleasantness for argument. That is to be deeply regretted, because the hon. Gentleman is well liked in the House, but, occasionally, he lets himself down.

It is time to get a move on with the Water Bill, whose contents formed part of the Conservative party's manifesto at the last election. It was endorsed then and should now proceed to the statute book. The Bill is similar to others that have come before the House, such as the Education Reform Bill, the legislation on the deregulation

of buses, and the measure limiting the powers of general practitioners to prescribe certain drugs. All those measures were represented by Opposition Members as more or less the end of civilisation as they had come to know it. They said that such measures would irrevocably change services and prove completely destructive. However, none of those measures has done so: most of them were warmly welcomed by the public and were successful for the Government.

For the first 18 months after bus deregulation, the number of bus miles increased by 16 per cent. nationally, and minibuses now operate in about 400 areas. Since June 1988, there has been a net increase of 465 new operators. The socially necessary services—the very services that Opposition Members said would disappear completely—are protected by Government grant. About £240 million has been spent by the Government to subsidise them, out of an available total of £295 million, which means that £55 million was not even required for socially necessary services.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the record of private bus companies, in terms of the percentage of their buses that pass the annual PSV test, leaves much to be desired? Deregulation has not been a success in terms of proving that the safety of the travelling public has been enhanced.

Mr. Burt: The measure has proved that the safety controls contained in it—much criticised at the time—have proved useful and proved that it was quite right to introduce them. They have highlighted faults. The measure to deregulate buses, like the Water Bill, was presented by the Opposition as a measure that would lead to complete and utter disaster. That has turned out not to be the case: the measure widely and successfully improved transport services in this country. The Water Bill will do exactly the same for the water industry.

The Bill is wide-ranging and deals with the water industry and the countryside. I shall mention two specific matters which are sufficiently important to require the Bill to move to the statute book as quickly as possible, thereby greatly benefiting the British people.

First, the National Rivers Authority has been well debated in Committee and was mentioned again in the House by the hon. Member for Burnley.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend beseech the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) not to leave the Chamber, since he is now the only Back-Bench Labour Member in the Chamber who is on the Committee?

Mr. Burt: I would always beseech the hon. Member for Burnley to remain in his place because he is a good House of Commons man and picks up on much of what is said, but I am sure he would wish to hear me conclude my speech.

The National Rivers Authority is long overdue and has been welcomed in many places. The distinction between the utility and regulatory functions of water authorities has long been recognised but only this Government, with their establishment of the National Rivers Authority under the Bill, provide a true opportunity to hoist our standard of environmental care. Concerns about pollution and other matters will grow in the Europe of the 1990s. This country needs to respond and the National Rivers Authority provides a real opportunity to do so.

I believe, as many others have mentioned, that splitting the gamekeeper and poacher roles and the authority's national characteristics will ensure consistency of practice and standards, while not losing regional sensitivity. That, together with the tougher new controls on pollution introduced in the Bill, will benefit the British people and be welcomed by them.

Secondly, quite unnecessarily, scare stories have been mentioned about conservation and the loss of large tracts of land in the countryside. That is linked to the way in which bus deregulation was treated by Opposition Members.

To be honest, existing pressures on open space are likely to continue and will not ease. Concerns about the use of our environment will continue and we shall be continually dependent on our planning system to hold the ring.

The choices offered under such pressures are by no means as clear cut as they are sometimes presented in Committee. It is hard to balance the wishes and interests of growing numbers of people who wish to use open water areas for legitimate purposes with those of people who want no changes. It is difficult to balance the rights and beliefs of all constituents. It is dishonest and unfair to say that overnight, or at a stroke—to coin a phrase—vast amounts of water-gathering areas and areas in the national parklands will suddenly be consigned to 10-storey skyscrapers and the like for immediate commercial benefit.

I believe that that will not be the case, and I am strengthened in that belief by the work of the North West water authority—the authority for the area that I represent—which is looking forward to the freedom that privatisation will give it, and which says quite straightforwardly that there is no foundation for any fears that conservation and leisure activity on or around its land will suffer. Its commitment and record of achievement in the matter is well known to many people, and it makes the straightforward point that most of the land it owns consists of water-gathering areas that need to be saved and protected, and on which access and conservation will continue to be of great importance.

In short, this timetable motion provides for the progress of a Bill that is important to the British people. It may be necessary for the House to consider at some stage in the future whether there are better methods of handling the ways in which Committees look at major public matters. But that is of secondary importance now; what is important is that the Leader of the House has offered a generous period for further consideration of the Bill, and that major matters will be considered, and that the measure, when it is on the statute book, will prove to be a major item that will make more certain the re-election of the Conservative party.

5.12 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): In the light of the time allocated under the guillotine to the Bill's Committee stage, it is quite clear that the word "generosity" has a different meaning in 1989 from that which it had previously. It is certainly my belief that less time has been allowed than in the case of other privatisations.

Guillotine motions have become a standard feature of the Government's legislative programme. Indeed, they seem to be coming forward earlier and earlier during the consideration of Bills. It has been estimated that the

[Mr. Richard Livsey]

Committee had considered the Water Bill for 75 hours, covering nine clauses, before the Government brought forward the motion. That is a considerably shorter period than was allowed on the two previous public utility privatisations. In the case of gas, 13 clauses had taken up 85 hours before the guillotine was brought in. In the case of British Telecom, over 100 hours of debate had taken place. The Government seem to be getting increasingly intolerant of the Opposition when it comes to allowing sufficient debate on subjects of such importance.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): First, will the hon. Gentleman remind the House that it was the Liberal party that first introduced the guillotine into our procedures? Secondly, will he accept the consequence of what he is saying, which is that there will be even more microscopic scrutiny of the early clauses of a Bill and a mere passing glance at the remaining clauses unless the guillotine is introduced at a reasonably early stage?

Mr. Livsey: The point I was making is that this Bill has had even less time than other similar privatisation measures, and I do not think that that can be justified, given the size of the Bill. I gather that, with 180 clauses, it is one of the longest Bills in the history of this House.

One can, I believe, seek reasons for this guillotine. The date of 7 March seems to be crucial in the timetable; it is precisely one week before the Budget on 14 March, so the Chancellor can say in his Budget speech that asset sales in the financial year 1989-90 will include those of the water authorities. I believe that this is a consequence of the Government's dogmatic target of getting public spending below 40 per cent. of GDP. This Bill is very much part of that strategy. The timetable is not just in the House; it is elsewhere in the Government's programme also.

The consumer will pay for this privatisation and, indeed, is already doing so. The consumer will also pay by the sale of the assets. Indeed, most of the assets, as we have seen in Committee, are already vested in the plcs.

Another reason for the guillotine must surely be that the Secretary of State for the Environment nearly lost the Housing Bill last year; indeed, it was saved by only one day. I think there has been over-reaction by the Government in the timetabling of this Bill.

The irony of the guillotine motion is that it could be argued to be in the Government's interests to delay the flotation of the water industry. First, it is already known that they have backed down from selling all the water authority stock this year, for fear that the market may not be able to carry it. No wonder the water authorities are in need of such massive infrastructure investment that they do not offer good prospects for the investors.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman reconsider the point that he has just made? As I understand it, no decision has been made on the flotation of the water industry. I think that the hon. Gentleman is really commenting on press speculation, which may, as is all too often the case, be totally inaccurate.

Mr. Livsey: It is therefore all the more important to persuade the Government of the wisdom of what I am saying.

The much larger electricity industry sale is just round the corner, with the danger that the two privatisations together may be more than the City can handle. That, I think, is a genuine problem which the Government ought to consider. The Government are still in dispute with Brussels over drinking water standards, as reported in *The Independent* today. The uncertainty that the dispute causes can only damage the prospects for the sale. Assuming that the Commission wins through, the result could be an enormous clean-up bill for the industry—not exactly the best lure to potential investors. It is surprising that the Government want to go any further, any faster, with the confusion besetting the sale at present.

Secondly, there are still huge question marks over the Government's plans for the sale. The legality of the special share announced by the Secretary of State last month is in doubt in the light of European rulings on similar arrangements set up for Rolls-Royce. The special share arrangement is vital if the water authorities are to be given even the remotest chance of remaining in the hands of the communities they are supposed to serve. I strongly support the inclusion of a special share provision in this legislation —that is, if we have to suffer the legislation, though I am diametrically opposed to the privatisation of water on principle.

Although arrangements for a special share need not appear in the Bill, the Standing Committee should have a definitive answer on the legality of such a share. If it were to be ruled out, the Committee might consider other methods of control—for example, by giving extra compensatory powers to the Director General of Water Services or, indeed, the NRA itself.

Why, then, are the Government rushing the Bill through before the legal implications of their proposals in relation to article 2(3)(ii) of the treaty of Rome have been clarified? That gives us cause for concern.

Where will the money raised by the privatisation go? What benefit will the community receive that justifies rushing the Bill on to the statute book in such a manner? If the Government said that they actually needed the £7 billion from the sale of water to plough back into public investment—for example, to give a boost to infrastructure investment—perhaps we could have some sympathy for their position. In the Welsh Select Committee the other day—perhaps I should not mention where this information comes from—we discussed infrastructure development in France to the tune of £1·7 billion of investment in the railway system. The British Government ought to be considering the use of public money in intelligent ways to improve communications to the regions of Great Britain.

Britain is being systematically asset-stripped to finance the Government's short-term policies. Not content with selling the family silver, they are now proposing to rip out the plumbing as well. What will happen when there are no more assets to sell? That is the big question.

Guillotine debates, including a summary of a Bill's main points and its virtues from the Leader of the House, have become something of a ritual in recent years. In this debate such a summary of the Bill's main proposals is likely to be far more significant for what it does not contain than for what it contains. Crucially, it does not contain any mention of competition. Increasing competition and the possible benefits it can bring to the consumer can be the only justifications for considering privatisations. This Bill achieves neither. The water industry will remain as much of a monopoly after the Bill is passed. There will be no choice for the consumer. As a result the consumer will be in a worse position after

privatisation. For the 12 million consumers now supplied from the private sector the Bill has already had just that effect. The implications of the tight timetable for privatisation have led statutory water companies to announce price increases of 30 per cent. I believe that that is a sign of things to come.

It is reported in the newspapers that the Minister intends to call in the water companies about price increases. What does he intend to tell them? Does he accept that the consumer should not have to bear such price increases? Will he take any measures to reduce them? Does he accept that the rise is a direct consequence of the Bill?

It is ludicrous that this, the most controversial proposal before Parliament this Session, should be rushed through the House without adequate scrutiny by the elected representatives of the people. It only strengthens the case for wholesale reform of the workings of the House so that Bills are timetabled realistically, adequate time being provided to debate all their provisions. The House ought to revise its procedures so that its workings become more accessible to the electorate it serves, especially as television cameras are about to move in.

Most of all, the House should be elected under a fair electoral system. That is the only way in which to prevent a situation such as this. How is it that a Government elected on 42 per cent. of the vote can stifle debate on a measure which is opposed by 75 per cent. of the electorate —all in the name of democracy? In Wales, the Bill is opposed outright, as it is utterly unsuitable to my country. Welsh Water owns 66,000 acres of land in my constituency and my constituents do not want it to go into private hands.

In Committee last week, when we were debating clause 9, the Minister could give us no assurance about what would happen to water authority land if water plcs handed it to subsidiary companies. He could give no guarantee about its security or what would happen to it environmentally. I am, therefore, very happy to oppose the motion.

5.21 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I apologise to the House for not being able to be present during the winding-up speeches because I shall be receiving treatment for an injured back, but I am glad to be able to contribute to the debate.

We have heard some interesting things from the Opposition. We have heard, for example, that there is no such thing as comparative competition. I think that we have it here in the Chamber at the moment. We have great competition among Conservative members of the Standing Committee for an opportunity to speak in the debate, whereas the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) has had none. Such is the passionate, crusading, campaigning opposition of the Labour party to the Bill that it cannot be bothered to turn up. So much for the credibility of Labour Members of the Standing Committee.

I strongly support the timetable motion, not simply because a Government should be able to get their business through and implement their manifesto commitments, but because if we do not have such a motion, discussion of the Bill will become even more unbalanced than it already is. Without the motion, there will be an uneven distribution of the Standing Committee's time. The early clauses will have been subjected to microscopic scrutiny while the vast bulk of the Bill will get merely a passing glance. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) said —he is one of seven Conservative members of the Standing Committee who are in the Chamber, as opposed to just one Labour—we have had more than 74 hours of debate in Committee. We have reached clause 9—only the end of part 1, which is described as the preliminary part of a five-part, 180 clause Bill.

The timetable motion will enable the Bill to be discussed in a structured way. It will allow much more disciplined discussion of the remaining clauses—many general points and points of principle having been debated at considerable length. I am sure that the Opposition agree that much remains to be discussed in detail. We have still to discuss the duties of water undertakers with respect to water supply and water quality, the provision of sewerage services, charges, the protection and management of rivers and other waters, the control of pollution and powers and duties in relation to the land.

The best work of the House is often produced under the pressure of a deadline. The Committee needs the pressure and, indeed, the discipline of a deadline to achieve an even and balanced discussion of all parts of the Bill—in other words, to do its job thoroughly and well.

The Water Bill is emphatically not one of those which has been rushed before the House and inadequately drafted, thus giving rise to the need for a host of Government amendments. Governments of all parties have done that from time to time. The Department of the Environment has examined the water industry in great detail for a considerable time, and the Bill has been prepared most carefully. The Opposition knew a great deal of what was likely to be in it, so there can be no justifiable opposition on those grounds.

Much of the opposition to the Bill is bogus. In many respects, the Bill does precisely what the Opposition have called for. The hon. Member for Burnley must have been promoted for being the only member of the Standing Committee to turn up as he appears to have joined the Opposition Front Bench. As he said, the Bill does much of what the Opposition have asked for by setting up the National Rivers Authority. The Government have listened to the Opposition's criticisms of previous privatisation measures and produced a regulatory framework which is heavier than has been found in any previous privatisation Bill. It will protect customers against excessive charges, reduced level of service and neglect of assets. It greatly strengthens the legal framework for setting standards of drinking water quality. It creates a powerful Director General of Water Services, who is independent of Ministers and accountable to Parliament. He will monitor the performance of water companies and ensure that they carry out their functions efficiently and effectively. He will have a network of regional customer service committees reporting directly to him.

The Bill also represents one of the most significant advances in environmental legislation during the past few years. The Opposition have, in effect, conceded that. The creation of the NRA shows just how much importance the Conservative party and Government attach to measures which protect the consumer and the environment. Creating the NRA removes a glaring defect which has been highlighted as much by Opposition Members as by Members on this side of the House.

[Mr. Keith Raffan]

I am glad to see the Chairman of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee present as he will endorse what I am saying. He will remember a report written some three years ago to which we put our names. It concerned the need to divide water authorities' responsibilities. They cannot be both gamekeeper and poacher—the monitor and discharger of sewage. We must separate those responsibilities if there is to be effective monitoring of pollution, and that is exactly what the NRA does.

One of the great fallacies of public ownership is that it protects the consumer. It gives no foolproof protection for the consumer, as the Camelford incident has so sadly shown. More blatant is the neglect of the last Labour Government. It was after that Government crawled humiliated to the International Monetary Fund for the biggest loan that it has ever given to the Government of any country—banana republics and Paraguay included —that they forced water authorities to cut capital spending on infrastructure by one third and, within that, to cut capital spending on sewerage infrastructure by one half.

Now, thanks to privatisation, water authorities will be freed from external financing limits. They will have access to the capital markets. They will therefore be able to accelerate their capital programmes to make up for the neglect of which the Opposition are so guilty. Should the nightmare occur—difficult though it is to conjure up, 10 years after the last time the Labour party was in power —and the Opposition were to form another Government, perform its usual economic miracle, run the economy into the ground and crawl again to the IMF, water authorities will not again be forced to cut spending on crucial infrastructure for water treatment and sewerage works.

I spoke earlier about the beneficial effect of the discipline of the deadline. The timetable motion will put pressure on all members of the Standing Committee to confine our remarks to what is strictly relevant. I do not believe that any debate has ever suffered from brief and succinct speeches. Nor has any Opposition been weakened by making their case concisely and to the point.

It is clear from examination of the first 17 sittings of the Committee that the timetable motion is likely to hasten not only the improvement in the quality of our water but also the quality and relevance of the speeches in Committee, particularly those by Opposition Members. We learnt more about the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) than we learnt from him. We learnt about his dexterity at fishing in netting 24 salmon last autumn in Scotland, accompanied by an extremely attractive blond friend. I add that this was his English setter Sam—before the *News of the World* reports anything else. Similarly, the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) told us that his mother's maiden name was Owen and that his aunties and uncles were Evanses. We learnt about his admiration for Tommy Steele in "Half a Sixpence" and his crusade against undrinkable House of Commons tea, served in, "non-biodegradable bleached teacups".

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is not here. His contributions to the circulation of *Tatler* have already been mentioned in the House. I shall not repeat the details, but certainly he should receive a free annual subscription to that magazine for all he has done to promote circulation by distributing it widely to his colleagues. We did not expect that to be their normal reading, but it is certainly an improvement on "Das Kapital". We heard the hon. Member for Brent, South reminiscing about nature study at school. He also commented obscurely about an obscure American economist called Schlieffer and gave us a delightful cameo about gloves, ending with the question:

"How many of us have ever kept a pair of gloves for longer than five years?"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 10 January 1989; c. 101.]

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) who fleetingly passed through the Chamber a moment or two ago—one of the few Labour Back-Bench Members of the Standing Committee to attend this debate however briefly—informed us that when he was a teacher petrol was siphoned from his van in the staff car park.

The hon. Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) managed to introduce into our debates and at some length the White Paper on the National Health Service. But although it was close, and there was certainly strong comparative competition among Opposition Members, the prize for irrelevance must go to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) who intervened to keep us up to date on the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.

All that was entertaining and illuminating, but it was hardly a debate on the Water Bill. The Standing Committee, and not least the Opposition Members on it, need the discipline of deadline that the timetable motion will provide so that we can now debate the Bill; not the Opposition'a extra-curricular activities, their schooldays, their obsessions with gloves or the magazine *Tatler* but the remaining 171 clauses of the Bill. That is what Conservative Members intend to do because that is what the nation wants.

5.33 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I do not know whether it is a pleasure to follow the speech made by the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). As he mentioned the Select Committee report on pollution of coastal waters in Wales, it is vital to remind the Government that the key conclusion that we reached some three years ago was that the Department of the Environment had deliberately avoided the directive issued by the EEC in 1976 on coastal bathing waters by defining a beach occupied by a number of bathers so that not a single beach in Wales could be considered as coming under the terms of the directive. Such situations deeply worry the people of Wales and we scrutinise any Government measure with great trepidation.

The only possible reason that I can find for the timetable motion is the Government's deliberate and cynical desire to stifle debate and scrutiny of the Water Bill. To protect the principles of democracy, a guillotine motion must be used sparingly, and only when there is a clear national need for speedy decision making. There is no need for speed in the privatisation of water, only for expediency for the Government's convenience and avoidance of further discomfort.

The proposed privatisation of water has aroused the interest and concern of my constituents even more than the privatisation of gas and British Telecom. Like all hon. Members, I have received a great many representations about different aspects of the Water Bill. I have passed many of those representations to my hon. Friend the

Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) so that they can be raised and clarified in Committee. I have told my constituents that I have done that and promised to send them relevant copies of the Committee proceedings so that they will be fully informed of progress, of any successful amendments and of the outcome of their representations. The guillotine means that there will be inadequate time for scrutiny of all the major and contentious issues in the Bill. Guillotining the Standing Committee debate and the scrutiny of the Bill will therefore deprive my constituents of the right to that channel of representation.

There will be no time to discuss the inevitable higher price for water. Only last month, the Welsh water authority raised its charges by an average of 9·9 per cent. Because of the way it chose to impose those charges, occupiers of lower rateable value homes will pay substantially more than those in properties of higher rateable values.

On Saturday, a pensioner who is a widow brought to my surgery a pension book which she had just received which contained counterfoils for her pension increase in April. Each counterfoil was worth 15p. That is how much better off that lady would be in April, but the increase in her water rates will probably be more than 27p a week. So she need worry only about how she will find the money to meet price rises associated with 7 per cent. inflation, rate increases and electricity price increases in preparation for privatisation.

Mr. Ashby: Can the hon. Gentleman say what that counterfoil increase would have shown 10 years ago when inflation was a good deal more than 7 per cent.?

Mr. Wardell: I am not concerned with that, as I was not here 10 years ago. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was here then.

Last April, the Government said that anyone who was worse off by more than £2·50 a week would receive transitional payments. However, if those pensioners receive any increase in their pensions on 1 April it will be deducted from their transitional payments. That is happening to many constituents throughout the country.

I assume that the Department of Social Security issued my constituent with an additional book rather than amending the current one because it will be easier to withdraw the new book than to re-amend the existing book when housing benefit is cut again.

After reading today's newspapers there can be no doubt in anyone's mind that the water sell-off will mean much higher water bills. Water metering—a process that Welsh Water seems to be against—needs to be discussed and made clear in every detail. In addition, it is important for the Government to spell out whether, if authorities such as Welsh Water intend to move to a system that relies increasingly on raising the standing charge element of the water bill, they are considering the introduction of some sort of sliding scale for rebates similar to that proposed for the community charge.

Mr. Raffan: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the increase in charges has nothing to do with privatisation and everything to do with improving water quality and standards?

Mr. Wardell: I cannot agree with that for the obvious reason. Over the past few years, the Government have placed an external financing limit on water authorities which means that they have been unable to borrow on the open market to the extent to which they would have liked. As a consequence, they have been unable to finance their capital investment from borrowing on the open market and have had increasingly to resort to raising the money through current charges. The increase in water charges has come largely from the imposition by bodies such as the Welsh Office of external financing limits which have forced water authorities to cut back on their investment and to raise the money almost solely from current water charges.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Is the hon. Gentleman disapproving of the increased capital spending proposed by the Welsh water authority for next year?

Mr. Wardell: Not at all. I am saying that over the past few years, the Government have been deliberately preventing the water authority from borrowing money for financing its investment. Now that privatisation is about to be carried out, the Government have permitted that borrowing to take place.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman's analysis is correct, does he not welcome the Government's privatisation proposals? It will free the Welsh water authority and others from public sector borrowing restraints.

Mr. Wardell: The Minister has missed the point. The Government imposed the external financing limit and are now saying how great it is that they are removing it. If they had not imposed it in the first place, the argument would be unnecessary, as would privatisation.

Mr. Ashby: I asked the hon. Gentleman to cast his mind back 10 years in respect of one matter. Would he do the same in respect of this matter? Will he say whether there were any constraints on public expenditure in 1978 under a Labour Government?

Mr. Wardell: I do not want to look back 10 years. I have only to look at this Conservative Administration to know that what is happening leaves a tremendous amount to be desired.

The Government are careless of public opinion and concern at any time other than during the nine months when they are giving birth to their pre-election programme. The Government's large majority is making them complacent and that complacency shows in the fact that they have made no concessions so far in Standing Committee. They have accepted none of the amendments that have been proposed.

A press statement for Wales was issued on 11 January, perhaps because the Secretary of State feels that he may be answerable to the press in a way that he is not answerable to the House. The statement said that because there is a need to keep Welsh water Welsh, individual shareholders will be allowed a maximum holding of 15 per cent. in the new plc, unless or until a 75 per cent. majority of the shareholders vote otherwise. What a meaningless sop. Even if that is legal under European law, it is clearly in the interests of shareholders to vote to end that restriction as soon as possible if they want to maximise the price of their shares. That is surely the purpose of their investment. If a

[Mr. Wardell]

French company or a large institution came along with a juicy offer for 25 per cent. of the shares, the shareholders would fall over themselves to register their vote in favour.

The Secretary of State for Wales has felt no need to justify to the press or the House the erosion of Welsh Office powers and responsibilities brought about by the Bill. It is clear that at present the Welsh water authority is responsible to the Welsh Office. After privatisation the National Rivers Authority committees and agencies in Wales will be directly responsible to the central NRA committee, which is responsible to the Department of the Environment. The Secretary of State for Wales may have an input in the deliberations, but he will no longer be responsible for a range of functions associated with the NRA such as river and beach pollution control, drinking water quality control and environmental amenities and access, all of which are regarded as extremely important by the people of Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Having listened to the hon. Gentleman, it is clear that he is not fully aware of the powers and responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Wales. I have produced a digest of those powers and responsibilities which has been sent to all Committee members. I would be happy to send the hon. Gentleman a copy.

Mr. Wardell: I thank the Minister for that and I am glad that he intends to send me that information. Of course, it would have been helpful if he had sent a copy of the digest to all Opposition Members so that we could fully understand the point that he is trying to make.

It took the scrutiny of the Committee to reveal the major defect in the Bill. The Government have squirmed and wriggled and wasted valuable scrutiny time. They have not taken on board any of the proposed amendments, which were reasonably and rationally put to them. Now they propose to limit that scrutiny time. It is clear from the Committee proceedings that the Government do not intend to accept any amendments. They will not concede that there is a need for the NRA to be up and running with its complex structures and its obvious teething troubles ironed out before the plcs are given free rein. Committee members wanted to give the NRA a year's head start. Clearly, there is a need for that. Mr. Keith Court, chairman of South West Water, has been talking about finding ways of outwitting the NRA and Mr. Gordon Jones, chairman of Yorkshire Water and of the Water Authorities Association, said in the magazine *Agenda*—vol. 2, No. 7—that the duty of experienced water industry executives is to be responsible to their shareholders, not consumers.

The Government will not concede that there is a need clearly to state the relationship and responsibilities of Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution and the National Rivers Authority beyond saying that they are clearly complementary. Of course, we know that. We know, too, that the inspectorate is being starved of cash and staff so that the Government can claim that it is ineffective and can cast it off completely. The Government are now not even prepared to concede the most eminently sensible step of ensuring that those proposals in the Bill, which would clearly be governed by European law, are scrutinised by specialists to ensure that they are legal before being enacted by the House. That is petty minded, arrogant nonsense. The Government have said that they will listen to further representations about access to open spaces—some of the most beautiful areas of Britain are at present owned by water authorities—but they have not accepted amendments which would largely meet those problems.

The Government have made no concessions regarding the adoption of unadopted and unadoptable sewers, which is a problem not just for my constituents, but for thousands of householders, and it is a matter which I have raised in this House on many occasions. The Minister, as a Llanelli boy, will know that problem well, but all that he promised in the Standing Committee was that he would write to the Law Society. That is the limit of what the Government are prepared to do. I do not know whether the Minister's Department has received a reply from the Law Society, but I believe that it is ridiculous that, in privatising water, the Government are prepared to let the practice continue whereby developers are required to build to building regulation standards which are different from those standards laid down by water authorities. Here was an opportunity for the Government to do something about it, and at least to protect future householders by ensuring that when they bought their properties they knew what they were buying. The Government have chosen not to take that opportunity. All that they have done is to write to the Law Society. A lot of writing must have gone on, but few results appear to have emerged.

No concessions have been made regarding the role and powers of the new Director General of Water Services. I am fascinated to find out, if this measure is passed, whether—in the same way that British Telecom and Sir Bryan Carsberg have effectively devised a formula for pricing British Telecom charges—the formula applied will be K plus RPI or K minus RPI.

Obviously, in proposing this guillotine, the Government are merely saying that—because they are not prepared to amend the Bill, to make any concession to legitimate representations of concern from the public, to listen to any argument, or to brook any opposition from any quarter—there is no point in the Standing Committee spending time scrutinising the Bill. Perhaps the Government are worried about what other foul-ups the Standing Committee might find. It is certainly apparent that so complacent, arbitrary and dictatorial have the Government become that they cannot even be bothered to go through the motions of complying with EEC laws, of listening, of making accommodations or of achieving consensus. Such words are like a foreign language to the Cabinet.

I remind Conservative Members that the people of this country regard water as free and as a natural, national asset. They do not yet believe that the Prime Minister controls our rainfall. They very much resent her belief that she can make them pay through the nose for something that they already own and to which they have rights. For the man or woman in the street, this Bill is about paying lots more to a few shareholders for something that they already have and own. Conservative Members believe that they and their leader know what is best for us all and that, if we do not like it, we can lump it. I would urge right hon. and hon. Members to think twice before acting in such a high-handed roughshod manner as guillotining legitimate procedure, scrutiny and representation about such an important Bill.

5.55 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): We have listened to the usual ritual argument against the timetable motion. Indeed, the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) went on at some length about it. It is fair to remind the House that all Governments have had recourse to that measure. There is little virtue in Opposition Members adopting holier-than-thou attitudes, as they have this afternoon, especially when one recalls that it was the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) who in one day—20 July 1976—actually guillotined five separate and major bills. [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] I hear the expressions of dismay and almost complete disbelief from my hon. Friends. Who could really believe that an Opposition Member could act in such an undemocratic fashion?

Mr. Ashby: They forget themselves.

Mr. Pawsey: Clearly, 20 July 1976 must be a black day in the annals of the Labour party since, if it seeks to condemn this Administration—as the hon. Member for Gower did—for what they are doing today, what must have been its thoughts on 20 July 1976? Clearly, whatever thoughts it had were kept well to itself, because those measures were driven through this House by a three-line Whip and supported by Opposition Members.

I shall deliberately not use the word "hypocrisy" to describe the comments made by Opposition Members.

Mr. Knapman: Why not?

Mr. Pawsey: I shall answer my hon. Friend. That would make me out of order. I shall, however, leave that unspoken thought to work upon the consciences of Opposition Members.

The Water Bill is a large and important measure. It has 180 clauses and 24 schedules and so far we have completed only nine clauses and four schedules in 74 hours. It might be thought by my right hon. and hon. Friends that the reason for the slow progress was the overwhelming dedication shown by Opposition Members. Sadly, that is not entirely the case. I shall provide hon. Members with just two samples from one day's proceedings in Standing Committee D. The quotations that I shall use will provide a mere flavour—a gentle taste—of our discussions on one day only. I shall refer to the 14th sitting held on the morning of Tuesday 31 January. The Committee, or at least Conservative Members, listened with rapt attention to the comments made by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). They were briefly mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan). It is worthwhile quoting some of the hon. Gentleman's comments on that morning. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not in his place. He said:

"This is the Mother of Parliaments . . . but tea is sold here in non-biodegradable, bleached plastic cups. Is that appropriate for the Mother of Parliaments? The plastic cup damages the environment, and the tea in it is also damaging. My tea was cold and it was poured from a flask. It was also undrinkable. The Mother of Parliaments should not treat in this way those at the hub of its legislative programme, when a cup of tea is served at one's desk in the meanest town hall."

I responded to the hon. Gentleman's comments as I have an interest in this matter as a non-executive director of the group that manufactures the cups that he described. The hon. Member for Bootle proceeded truly to amaze the Committee with the depth and breadth of his wisdom on medieval affairs when he said:

"We should like to see the British landscape of William Tell"—

[Laughter] The House will not be surprised to learn that the reaction of the Committee was precisely the same. The hon. Gentleman said:

"We should like to see the British landscape of William Tell, Robin Hood and Maid Marian. William Tell was a regular visitor to British forests, and used to hunt as a guest of the King of England."

Hon. Members may share my belief that William Tell was a Swiss hero and a republican to boot. The thought of him hunting as a guest of the King of England beggars imagination.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) gave away the depth and breadth of his knowledge when he said of William Tell:

"The television series was certainly made in this country."?—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 31 January 1989; c. 626, 629.]

Mr. Pawsey: Yes. That day will be long remembered by those of us who had the pleasure to listen to those contributions.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is not in his place, but it is worth while bringing out the flavour of his contribution that day, which was also touched upon by my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) and for Bury, North (Mr. Burt). The hon. Member for Brent, South said:

"When we look at these matters it is helpful to look at the Conservative party's hidden agenda . . . revealed in a magazine . . . It is the *Tatler* a magazine such as one would find at the the dentist's or the doctor's. It tells of the fads, foibles, fancies and doings of the upper classes . . . The *Tatler* has changed in recent years. It is no longer a harmless and innocent publication. It has become the house journal of the Conservative party."

The hon. Gentleman developed his case by saying:

"there are the fashions of Imogen Inglis-Jones and Nathalie Mountain, who are pictured in various fishing positions . . . the *Tatler* is the real house journal of the Conservative party. It is the Conservatives' equivalent of *Marxism Today*, shorn of some of the ideological pretensions of that magazine."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 31 January 1989; c. 670-1.]

If the hon. Gentleman believes that, he will believe anything.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) is a member of the upper middle classes. He is the son of a barrister and a lawyer himself. Does my hon. Friend agree that he revealed his class origins when he assumed that *Tatler* was the common preserve of dentists' waiting rooms in Bootle, Burnley or Sunderland?

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend makes a typically telling point.

I have made a genuinely important discovery. The hon. Member for Brent, South is an amusing and entertaining raconteur, but his comments do not always appear to be totally relevant to the clauses under discussion. Yet another of his more diverting digressions was when he said that Fred Jarvis was a ghillie employed by some anonymous laird. The idea of Fred Jarvis being a ghillie is most unlikely. In my capacity as chairman of the Conservative party's parliamentary education committee I

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have met Fred Jarvis on a number of occasions and I would have thought that he would make an unlikely, unwilling, unhelpful and unco-operative ghillie.

I have greatly enjoyed the contributions from the hon. Member for Brent, South. They burst like a ray of sunshine into the dullness of our winter days. If that does not damage his chances of reselection, nothing will.

The House may ask what is the relevance of my observations about the hon. Members for Bootle and Brent, South to the Water Bill.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Quite right.

Mr. Pawsey: Well, they are the quotes from your hon. Friends.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pawsey: I beg your pardon, Sir. Although Opposition Members may seek somewhat obtuse connections with the quotes, you may think, Mr Speaker, that they represent a prime example of time-wasting or tautology on a massive and original scale. I am not seeking to suggest that Opposition Members have been involved in any deliberate time-wasting. In their case it would probably be unnecessary since they have an ability, indeed a talent, to meander round a subject rather as an old, silted-up river meanders round a landscape.

I must make it clear that I have enjoyed the contributions from the hon. Members for Brent, South and Bootle in much the same way as I enjoy those of Jasper Carrott or Lenny Henry. I hesitate to say that I enjoy Victoria Wood lest I be misunderstood. I believe that both hon. Gentlemen, however, could earn even better livings were they to join the ranks of Equity.

I have given the House an all too brief flavour of some of the contributions made to Standing Committee D—a sort of hors d'oeuvres to the main course. To be able to enjoy, and in good time, the main part of the feast, it is necessary to introduce a timetable measure. It will be recalled that the Water Bill was a central plank of the Conservative party manifesto of 1987. I need scarcely remind the House that, on the strength of that manifesto, the Government were returned for an unprecedented third term and with a substantial majority. Therefore, it seems that the British people are anxious to see this Bill enacted with the establishment of a National Rivers Authority and a new statutory framework for the control of drinking water and of river quality.

The Bill provides the terms of appointment and financial arrangements for the new limited companies to provide water and sewerage services in England and Wales. One of the things that I particularly welcome—it was touched upon by one of my hon. Friends earlier—is the appointment of a Director General of Water Services. He will be the consumers' white knight.

The Bill will ensure better value for money and more efficient service. The quicker it is enacted the better and that is why I support this motion.

6.8 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Having listened to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), I wish that I had been invited to join the Committee on the Water Bill, because it seems that it is the place where learning is combined with a great deal of pleasure.

The Leader of the House gave the game away when he said that, so far, the debate in Committee had not resulted in any excessive filibustering, but there was a need to curtail the examination of the Bill because the Government needed to get the legislation through to offload the shares in the new water companies during the forthcoming financial year. It seems that profit is being placed before the public interest and that the rights and needs of consumers have been sacrificed on the altar of expediency.

There seems to be no good reason for rushing the examination of the Bill. Even if we were to continue at the same rate it could still be on the statute book well before the next election. Despite the time being given to the Bill by the guillotine motion, inevitably some parts of the measure will not be discussed in the detail that is necessary. As some hon. Members have been at pains to point out, huge sections of the Bill have not been scrutinised. I could reel off at least a dozen such areas, but I shall not do so because the time allowed for this debate precludes that possibility.

I should like to look at one or two areas of great concern. The first is European Community legislation. That raises two issues and the first relates to any regulation that might be introduced about the nature of the shareholdings. Perhaps the Minister who is to reply will tell us whether the proposal for a golden share in the case of the English companies and a 15 per cent. maximum holding in the Welsh company is completely acceptable to the Commission in Brussels.

The next issue is water quality. Over the last 18 months I have asked several questions about the quality of tap water and bathing water, and I and my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) have recently put down some written questions on these subjects. So far, the answers have been fudged, to say the least. I have been told that bathing water quality on the majority of our beaches does not come up to the EEC water quality standards and that the Commission, the Government and the water authorities are discussing a programme to enable all beaches to be brought up to standard in an appropriate time.

In answer to one of my questions to a Minister in the Welsh Office, I was told that there was a 15-year programme for Wales. From my knowledge of the Commission I know that would be far too long. Before the Bill is completed we ought to know the exact programme for bringing all the beaches up to the European Community standard and we should know how much that will cost. That will be a great deal of expenditure for the new shareholders. The same can be said about tap water quality, although not so much in Wales because I have been assured by the Welsh Office that all water supplies will be up to standard by 1992. There still has not been an answer to that question about the position in England.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) alluded to the National Rivers Authority. There will be no separate National Rivers Authority for Wales, even though the Welsh people want to see such an authority. I

remind Conservative Members that, given that there is a separate Welsh water authority, the will of the Welsh people at the last election was clearly not to see that part of the Conservative manifesto carried out. I hope that Conservative Members and the Government will take account of that.

The one good thing about the Bill up to the weekend was that the Government has introduced no amendments. On today's Order Paper there are 10. I do not know whether the trickle will become a flood, but I hope not, because it would make the guillotine even more of an injustice.

6.14 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): To date the course of this ill-attended debate has been that those who oppose the Bill oppose the guillotine, and those who support the Bill support the guillotine. I have to break that pattern, because I am not a supporter of the Bill. However, I think that a timetable motion is the best way to ensure that what is undeniably an immensely important Bill is properly considered before being presented to the House for Third Reading.

I notice that under the timetable motion three and a half days—that is two days plus two periods of two hours—are allocated to Report and Third Reading. I hope that the Business Committee will allocate sufficient time for Third Reading, because hon. Members who abstained on Second Reading may wish to participate significantly on Third Reading in order to share with the House their reasons for deciding to vote for, or against, Third Reading.

In parenthesis, I hope that the reason for the Secretary of State's absence from the Front Bench is that he has left the House to reply to a letter that I wrote to him not weeks, but months ago inquiring about whether in the privatised water industry it would or would not be a criminal offence to supply water that is not potable. Many hon. Members will know that if water gets into milk during its production, even with no guilty intention, the farmer is automatically guilty of a criminal offence even if the milk is not thereby rendered unwholesome. It would be quite scandalous for us to pass into law a Bill privatising water that gave water companies exemption from such a criminal provision. I hope that that will be one of the matters discussed either in Committee or on Report.

In the last Parliament the Procedure Committee paid considerable attention to the public Bill procedure. We decided—I say "we" because I was then and am now a member of that Committee—to recommend to the House that if it seemed probable that a Bill would spend more than 40 hours in Committee, it should be timetabled right from the beginning instead of having to go through a ritual dance, hilarious examples of which have been given by some of my hon. Friends, so as to waste enough time in conventional wisdom to "justify" the adoption of a timetable. The Select Committee on Procedure said that it would be much better to timetable the Bill from the beginning, so that all its important provisions could be properly examined. That is not just for the benefit of the Opposition. Often the drafting of clauses has consequences unforeseen by the draftsman and unintended by the Minister. That is avoided only by going carefully through a Bill. The motion will have my support, even though the Bill does not, because I acknowledge the importance of the Bill, and wish to see it examined as it ought to be, and believe that a timetable motion is the proper instrument for that.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) opposed the timetable motion in totality, thereby rejecting completely the proposition of the Select Committee on Procedure. Speaking for the official Opposition, he did not say that the timetable ought to have one more allotted day for Report or Third Reading, or 10 more hours in Committee, which might have been a sustainable argument—I do not know, because he did not deploy it. Had he deployed it, seeing that I am uncommitted on the Bill, I might have found myself of that opinion. He has not put to the House any judgment that the time for the Committee stage should be longer, or that more time should be allocated for Report or Third Reading. Therefore, he has placed all of us in the position where we have to vote for this motion as it stands, on the basis—because it is this that he has asked us to accept or reject—of whether a better Bill will emerge as a result of this timetable motion.

It has been my fate, Mr. Speaker, in the last few debates in which I have had the good fortune to catch your eye, to speak for three minutes on the last occasion and four and a half on the one before. I have not found myself greatly constrained by that. It is the experience of many hon. Members that the discipline of time enables them to say what they need to say. There is a story—I forget which pope it is about—that shows quite a lot of wisdom. The pope received in audience three visitors. Of each he asked the same question, "How long are you staying in the eternal city?" The first said, "Three months, Your Holiness." "You will see a little bit in that time," said the pope. The next replied, "Three weeks." The pope said, "You will see a lot of it in three weeks." The last replied, "Three days, Your Holiness." "You will see everything worth seeing in three days," replied the pope.

I have been in the House for 28 years, and I have never been to the Royal Mint—it has now left London—I have never seen many things in London. I am convinced that the Procedure Committee's experiment, which it recommended to the House, of having a 10-minute limit on speeches has been justified by events, and the vast majority of Members would like to see that extended to most, if not all, debates on the Floor of the House. The same logic is compellingly appropriate of the Committee stage of Bills. The discipline of a timetable structured by the Business Committee, not imposed willy-nilly by the Government, is the only proven method of securing proper detailed examination of the Bill so that, whether its general principles do or do not commend themselves to the whole House, better legislation will result than would otherwise have been the case.

6.22 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I agree with the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) that short speeches can be effective, and I intend to make mine extremely short. The Government have to guillotine the Bill because it sets out their policy and they want to get it through its stages. However, it raises many important issues. The timetable set out in the motion would not allow enough time to deal with some of the major problems such as the complications of the EEC factor and of the codes of practice, how that is applied to successor companies and to

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land disposed to third parties, and what is the definition of operational and non-operational land. The Committee is only just getting to grips with some of these issues.

We must explore all these issues in greater depth. For example, we must examine consumer rights, charges, how capital is raised for improvement—through revenue charges or borrowing—water metering, the kind of meters to be used, who will pay for them, how much they will cost, what access will be allowed and what protection there will be for the low paid, the unemployed and retired people, particularly if their water is cut off in times of financial stress. These are all major issues in a major Bill.

Some Conservative Members are as concerned about some of these issues as we are. However, those who are driving through this Bill and its guillotine do not care one jot about the implications to the environment, water quality, consumer rights and consumer protection. All they care about is dogma and ideology. In their minds, anything privatised is good and anything public is bad. The water companies were set up by public institutions and public bodies, often as a result of falure of private companies, and their record is not bad. What about compensation for the ratepayers who set up the water companies and the waterworks that are now being sold off to the private sector without any compensation?

We must examine all these issues in great depth, and the guillotine will not allow that.

6.26 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I found the remarks made by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) extremely interesting. I hope that, when and if he receives a reply to his letter from the Secretary of State, he will publish it so that we can see the interesting comments that the Secretary of State might have to make.

Guillotines can often be justified—for example, when major legislation needs to be rushed through the House because it is urgent, although usually there is co-operation from both sides of the House in such circumstances. Guillotines can also be justified, and have been found necessary, when delays have been caused. Many of the debates about guillotine motions have concentrated on whether a Committee has been making progress and whether there is undue delay. It is clear that there has been no undue delay in the Committee considering the Water Bill. For example, the Committee did not debate the sittings motion. The Opposition did not object to the doubling of our sittings, even though that was done from the second day of the Committee stage. We have not swamped the Amendment Paper with minor or trivial amendments or wasted time with unnecessary votes and points of order. The Government have not been forced to move closures on any of our debates on clauses or amendments. As the Leader of the House accepted, there have been no unduly long speeches from Labour Members.

This is an important and serious Bill. The Leader of the House also acknowledged that our discussions in Committee have been serious and concerned important matters such as the National Rivers Authority, which has taken up most of our discussions so far. Every attempt that we have made to strengthen the NRA has been rejected quite blatantly by the Government, who do not seem interested in ensuring that that body has the strength, resources and staffing that it requires.

Many other important issues have to be discussed. My hon Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) mentioned some of them. The Leader of the House gave us a list of those items that he thought ought to be discussed, such as a customer services committee, drinking water quality, control of pollution, sewerage, flood defence, all of which we agree are important. On which of those does the Leader of the House think that we should skimp our debates? There will not be enough time to discuss all those issues as fully as they should be discussed. By giving us that list, the Leader of the House proved the point that the timetable will not give us sufficient time to do so.

Even the Leader of the House has admitted that there has been no undue delay in Committee. On the other hand, there is much evidence and a great deal of proof of undue haste on the Government's part. Second Reading took place on about the first possible day. Consideration in Committee started on the first day possible. We have a guillotine motion after fewer than 75 hours of debate in Committee. The Government are pushing ahead with this pretty desperate timetable when they still appear not to know the final outcome of their legislation.

The Government were forced to withdraw their plans for the privatisation of the water industry in 1986 because of the outcry that then took place, and did so in a typical hole-in-the-corner way. A statement was wrung out of them by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on a Thursday evening at 10 o'clock—it was obvious that the Government wanted the minimum notice taken of their withdrawal. Despite the rejection in 1986, and despite having two years to consider the matter—the Government have had two years to get their proposals right and to acquire answers to all questions—confusion still reigns in Government circles when it comes to their plans and the consequences of them. Ministers are still unable to come up with the answers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The hon. Lady may say that undue delay has not taken place in Committee, but 75 hours have been spent in Committee and only nine clauses have been covered. Does she accept that if she and her team had proceeded at a more reasonable pace and achieved much greater progress, as they could have done, the Government would then not have had a good case for introducing a guillotine motion? Alternatively, is the hon. Lady happy that the Government have introduced the motion?

Mrs. Taylor: I think that the Leader of the House dealt with that question in his remarks. He acknowledged that there had not been undue delay. Indeed, he said that we have been discussing important issues in Committee, as we have.

The issue that is concerning many is prices. The Leader of the House said earlier today that the Bill would greatly benefit consumers, but that was a completely inept remark to make today, of all days. The Secretary of State told us on 28 November 1988 at column 450 that we could expect water prices to rise in real terms between 7·5 per cent. and 12·5 per cent. by the end of the century. Last week, the water authorities announced increases of up to 13 per cent. This weekend, the statutory water companies told us that their price increases would be about 30 per cent., and even

as much as 50 per cent. When we warned of these increases in December we were told that we were scaremongering, but now we have the reality. We are faced with the greatest price increases ever.

It is no use the Minister saying that he will call in the water companies. I am sure that we are all impressed by that! I am sure also that we know exactly what the Minister will say. If he takes the advice of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) he will say, "I say, chaps, can't you turn this down a bit?" The fact is that the Minister cannot control the water companies. They are not accountable directly to him, any more than the new privatised water companies that replace the water authorities will be directly accountable to him or, more important, to the House.

The position is worse than that. The Department of the Environment is implicated in the price increases that we have heard about from the water companies during the weekend. In December, Ernst and Whinney was appointed by the water companies to advise them on the run-up to privatisation. It wrote to the companies, giving the advice that they faced their last opportunity to increase tariffs before privatisation. It also advised each company to raise its tariffs to the maximum level permitted, which is what the companies have done. The letter stated:

> "Following a meeting arranged by the Water Companies Association today with the Department of the Environment . . . it was agreed that I should write to you on an immediate basis to let you know of points which were agreed at that meeting."

It is clear that the Department and the accountants were working together before advising the water companies to take the action which they announced during the weekend.

Of course, this is only round 1. There are plenty of other additional costs for the consumer that are still to come. We shall soon be seeing flashy adverts on television, for which we shall all have to pay. There will be the costs of flotation, which the City will not have to meet. It has already received £700 million from taxpayers. There will be the extra costs of higher management salaries, to which some in the industry are looking forward. There may be other costs, including, perhaps, VAT. None of us minds paying a bit more for a better service and better pollution control, but we mind paying a privatisation surcharge which is entirely avoidable and wholly unnecessary. We face enormous additional costs because of the Government's obsession with pushing every industry, however vital, into the private sector, where profit will be the first priority. As the director of the Water Companies Association said, the Government's proposals will put them under an obligation to put the shareholders first. There is no doubt about the consequences for prices.

There is no great doubt about the proportion of the industry that will be owned by the private sector after flotation in November. Will all the industry be owned by the private sector? Will 51 per cent. of it be so owned, or will the percentage be something between that and 100 per cent? How will the industry be sold? Will it be sold directly, through a holding company, or one region at a time? Will water supply be sold before sewerage? The Under-Secretary of State told us in Committee that no decisions have yet been taken, but it is now February. The motion is before us because of the urgency of the Government's privatisation plans, but they still cannot answer some basic questions.

Perhaps the Minister for Water and Planning will be able to tell us what will happen to the industry's debts. Are they to be redistributed? Will they be written off in part or in full? How much will it cost the taxpayer if and when debts are written off? What will happen with the Government's merger policy? On 11 January, the Secretary of State announced his policy. He promised that the necessary amendments would be with us as soon as possible, and I understand that the Government are tabling them today. Perhaps our debate in Committee on Thursday 2 February brought some good. We have still not been told, however, whether the amendments have been cleared with Brussels. There has been no confirmation of clearance. That is not surprising, as clearance has not yet been obtained. We adhere to the legal advice that we have received that the Government proposals may infringe European competition law.

The Secretary of State assured us that he would not ask the Committee to proceed with a matter that was in doubt. Clearance and many other matters are still much in doubt or unanswered, yet the Government are pushing ahead with the guillotine motion. Rather than guillotining the Bill tonight, the Government should suspend consideration of it in Committee until they answer vital questions. We shall oppose their motion.

6.39 pm

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): In a previous privatisation guillotine motion debate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales said that his view on guillotines was consistent; when he was in government he was for them, when he was in opposition he was against them. From what we have seen of the way in which the Opposition have organised themselves in Committee, it will be a long time before my right hon. and hon. Friends need to be against a guillotine motion.

We have heard some excellent speeches today. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) made an exceptionally thoughtful speech. We also heard excellent speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). We shall certainly take note of the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) about Third Reading and do what we can to accommodate him. I am very sorry that he has not received a reply to his letter. I will look into that. He may find clause 51 of the Bill helpful in answering his point.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House referred to the time that has already been spent examining the Bill. He referred to the two full days—11½ hours—devoted to Second Reading. So far we have spent nearly 75 hours in Committee discussing nine clauses. Under the terms of the proposed timetable motion, there would be a further 78 hours in Committee making a total of 153 hours in Committee. That would be followed by three days on Report and Third Reading making a further 23½ hours and by then the House will have spent nearly 200 hours considering the Bill. By any standards, that is a generous amount of time.

The hon. Members for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) suggested that that was not sufficient time to consider the various provisions in the Bill. Anyone present during the

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proceedings in Committee would greet that assertion with astonishment. Even under the stern chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) and the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), time has been found, as many of my hon. Friends have explained, for many diversions, some more entertaining than others.

During the debate on clause 1, we were treated to a biology lesson by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). He told us how to test for chlorophyl—the stuff, as he put it, that makes leaves green. We also heard about the greatest ghillie in the world, called Fred Jarvis, although we did not quite discover his connection with anyone with a similar name.

The hon. Member for Brent, South seemed to gain particular pleasure from using *Tatler* as one of his great source documents for his contributions in Committee. However, he did not acknowledge that the editor of that magazine is the sister of my hon. and distinguished Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames).

Mr. Boateng: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman suggesting that it was *Tatler* which set the tumbrels rolling in relation to this guillotine motion? He knows full well that no matter whether that magazine is edited by the sister of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames)—and I understand that that editorship has caused a certain amount of embarrassment in the hon. Gentleman's household—its production during our Committee proceedings was highly relevant because it is geared to the parvenus and parasites who populate the modern Conservative party. It represents the greed and avarice which are the very motors of this Bill. We were right to reveal the true motives.

Mr. Howard: The *Tatler* certainly set the tone for the hon. Gentleman's contributions to our deliberations.

For the most part, the Committee deliberations were highly entertaining stuff. However, they are highly inconsistent with the picture that Opposition Members have sought to paint today of a Standing Committee desperate to stuff every available minute with scrupulous scrutiny of every sub-clause, but which was starved of the time to do that.

When we debated the Bill on the Floor of the House, I described the Labour party as the "say no" party. I suggested that it said no to change, new ideas and to any constructive proposals designed to improve the conditions of our people. Having listened attentively to the arguments, or what passed for arguments, advanced during almost 75 hours in Committee and in today's debate, I have been reflecting on that. The Labour party is not simply the "say no" party; it is also the "go slow" party.

Let us examine the Labour party's record in Committee. Almost the first act of Labour Members was to table amendments Nos. 1 and 2 in the names of the entire Opposition first team for the Bill. Amendment No. 1 was to pave the way for amendment No. 2 which was intended to delay the appointment of the new water and sewerage undertakers for at least five years. Unfortunately for them, their futile attempt to wreck the Bill was completely transparent. The amendments were not selected for debate. Then they put their names to amendment No. 33 which would have delayed our plans for only one year. The amendment told us to go slowly and they proceeded to do just that in Committee. We spent one and a half sittings debating that amendment. That was just the first of the delays. It took us the best part of seven sittings—nearly 27 hours—before we even moved away from clause 1 and its accompanying schedule. That was the pace that the Opposition set for consideration of the Bill in Committee and that pace has not significantly improved.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does not the Minister think that the establishment of the National Rivers Authority was important?

Mr. Howard: It was extremely important. Its importance could have been better dealt with by more relevant and pointed debate rather than the debate which took place. I hope that the House will not be taken in by the points made by the hon. Member for Dewsbury. She tried to suggest that the Opposition's points were made in a genuine attempt to strengthen the powers of the NRA.

The hon. Lady's motives were made clear in an interview she gave to the *Financial Times* on 7 December 1988, which states:

> "Her response is to try to ensure that the final shape of the legislation will incorporate so many new consumer and environmental safeguards and restraints that it will be unattractive to the private sector."

That was not because she was really interested in the safeguards, but because she wanted to use the Committee stage to sabotage the whole principle of the Bill which had been granted a Second Reading by the House.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) spoke most eloquently against the guillotine on the Bill. Will my hon. and learned Friend speculate on whether she spoke as eloquently against the guillotine on the Wales Bill when she was an assistant Whip on 18 July 1978? Her right hon. Friend the Member for Iswlyn (Mr. Kinnock), who is now the leader of the Labour party, said at the time:

> "We are faced with an abbreviated guillotine on a runt of a Bill. The only reason why this Bill exists is in order to legitimise the panic that the Government"—[*Official Report*, 18 July 1978; Vol. 954, c. 448-49.]

find themselves in.

Mr. Howard: I am relieved that my hon. Friend relieves me of the necessity to speculate on the hon. Lady's attitude on that occasion. I am sure that the leader of the Labour party will bear in mind the contrast—*[Interruption.]* I was not paying the Leader of the Opposition that accolade, but I am sure that he will comment on the contrast between his attitude and that of his hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Minister accept that in Committee many beneficial points have been made upon which the Government have given assurances on questions relating to disablement, the environment and the Secretary of State for Wales? Had such a guillotine motion affected the first part of our deliberations in Committee, we would not have given such attention to the benefit of the Bill.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman deserves an accolade for having spoken longer than anyone else in Committee. I will happily pay him that tribute, if tribute it is.

Yes, of course, the Government have taken note of many of the observations made in Committee. We have

said that it will be appropriate to reflect on some matters. However, in almost every instance, the Government responded in that way to short debates that were relevant and to the point. Those debates secured the objectives that the Committee was entitled to see achieved; they were not achieved by the verbose meandering and irrelevant debates which repeated points that it was clear would not be accepted.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) made a sour little speech at the opening of the debate, and asked for a number of answers that had already been given in Committee—and some of his questions were repeated during the debate. The hon. Gentleman asked about the golden share. There is no mystery about it—I made the position abundantly clear in Standing Committee. We do not anticipate any difficulty whatsoever in relation to the golden share, as we have said more than once.

Mr. Dobson: Are we to give as much weight to the hon. and learned Gentleman's anticipation concerning the value of the golden share as we are asked to give his anticipation that water prices will rise by about only 7 per cent. this century?

Mr. Howard: I will not take any criticism about water prices from a party that in 1975-76 presided over average water price increases of 42·8 per cent. That is the truth of the matter, and Labour Members will do well to reflect on their own record before questioning water prices.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras also spread the calumny that Opposition Members are so fond of spreading in his allegation that the Government have been taken to the European Court on water matters more often than any other member of the European Community. I do not know why Labour Members are so fond of spreading that falsehood. It is entirely untrue. The fact is that the United Kingdom has not been taken to the European Court on a single occasion in respect of water matters. If Labour Members took more care over this country's reputation, they would desist from spreading that self-evident falsehood.

Many matters in the Bill are worthy of the Committee's time. They go far wider than questions of privatisation. Provisions in parts II and III of the Bill will establish a new statutory framework for controlling drinking water quality, river quality and other standards affecting the control of pollution. We are also amending and improving the law in respect of a wide range of matters relating to water supply, sewerage services, water pollution, management of water resources, flood defence, and fisheries. I hope that all those matters will receive the proper and serious consideration that they deserve in the Committee's remaining sittings. The motion's purposes is to ensure an even pattern of debate for the remaining sittings and that important issues gain the attention they merit.

The Bill will result in a more efficient water industry and a much-improved water environment. It will give the customer a more responsive service, and it will free the industry from political intervention of the kind that, in the past, delivered a triple achievement of massive price rises, more employees, and declining investment in sewers and infrastructure. I look forward to proceeding with the Bill in an orderly manner so that, with proper debate and consideration, the industry can take its place in the private sector by the end of the year. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Mr. Speaker, there is still one minute left.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has spoken.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): She may speak with the permission of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: She may, with the permission of the House—but not now. Time is up.

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put the Question necessary to dispose of them, pursuant to Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to Bills.)*

The House divided: Ayes 272, Noes 199.

Division No. 75] **[6.52 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*

Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Hesley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David

Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 7th March 1989.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 7th March may continue until Eight p.m., whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 8th March.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in three allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Ten p.m. on the last of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 80 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be made in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be made to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on allotted days

7.—(1) On the first and second allotted days, paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, Standing Order No. 14 shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion; and on the first or second allotted day that period shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;
(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);
(c) the Question of any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is made by a member of the Government;
(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;
(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a

conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution; or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of, recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

'allotted day' means any day (other than Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the day, provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

'the Bill' means the Water Bill;

'Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee' means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

'Resolution of the Business Committee' means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Private Business

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The Clerk will now proceed to read the titles of the private Bills set down for consideration at this hour.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Could you confirm that, although we are about to debate the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill, it will be in order for hon. Members to refer to points relating to the London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill? I am sure that you agree that the two Bills cover much the same principle of penalty fares, although they cover entirely different geographical areas. It would be for the convenience of the House if at least some general debate could take place, although obviously there will be two separate votes and two separate sessions of debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct. The two Bills will be taken separately, but clearly the one impinges on the other. I am fairly tolerant and will allow quite a wide debate, although hon. Members must of course not make it too wide.

British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

7.7 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill had its Second Reading in the other place nearly a year ago, on 21 March 1988. Its progress through Parliament has been delayed not because of any special difficulties with the Bill, but through circumstances that could not have been foreseen by its promoters.

As the House will recall, the Transport Act 1962 places a duty on the board to provide rail services having "due regard . . . to efficiency, economy and safety". Sad to say, over many years that aspect has been seriously undermined by those who travel on the system without paying fares. The figure currently estimated for Network SouthEast—the area within which my constituency falls—is now losing some £36 million a year, with an overall figure that could be far in excess of £50 million. That is a substantial sum, representing an enormous number of journeys on which travel is enjoyed without payment being made. It could be as many as 20 million journeys.

Research has shown that much of the evasion takes place partly as a result of failure to find proper places to buy tickets and partly as a result of opportunism by young people on short journeys. The present position cannot be allowed to continue, if it can be changed satisfactorily. It is both archaic and inefficient. It is based on the visible check of tickets at the barrier which is at best perfunctory and at worst does not take place at all. Staffed barriers are inevitably expensive. They cause queuing and problems for those with luggage, pushchairs and other encumbrances. It is worth pointing out that this is the only country in either eastern or western Europe that still uses staffed barriers to check tickets. The penalty fare, of the type that I shall explain in a moment, is becoming increasingly commonplace.

The board's plan, as outlined in the Bill, is aimed at recovering about £9 million a year as an opening, realistic objective. It is hoped that that figure will be substantially increased, but the board has that in mind as a starting figure. The requirements of the scheme, as set down by the board, are, first, that it presents an effective incentive to people to purchase tickets, secondly, that it is relatively easy to operate and, thirdly, that it will cease to be, as it is at present, a substantial burden on the courts. It is worth remembering that between 3,000 and 4,000 cases a year still come before the courts. Although this is to be not a criminal but a civil penalty, it must also be remembered that the board retains the right, in the case of serious fraud, to prosecute under the terms of the Regulation of Railways Act 1889 and its byelaw under section 67 of the 1962 Act.

The penalty will be a simple, flat rate figure. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was correct when he said that a common feature of this Bill and that which London Regional Transport has in mind is a flat rate sum of £10. That is not in addition to the normal fare; it is instead of the fare. However, when the cost of the journey is higher than £10, the standard full, single fare would be recovered.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that in that instance no additional penalty will be imposed on any passenger?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: The difficulty, as the hon. Gentleman with his experience knows, is that under the 1889 Act—the principal Act that governs this problem—fraud has to be proved. That is a lengthy and, needless to say, expensive process. This is not a criminal penalty. It is a civil penalty. As I hope to explain in a moment, anybody who is confronted with it will have a number of options before him. Under the 1889 Act there would be a straightforward criminal prosecution under which the board would quite properly have to prove fraudulent intent.

The new scheme would transfer ticket examination from the station to the train. On long journeys that is a common procedure. That is why I said at the beginning that the problem tends to be at its worst on shorter journeys. With ticket inspection on trains, an additional benefit is that more staff would be travelling on the trains to carry out that duty, thereby enhancing passenger security on trains. I hope that that will reassure women and elderly people and make them feel safer. In some areas tickets are already issued on trains. The West Yorkshire passenger transport executive area is one of them. In such an area it is unlikely that any major changes will be necessary.

The system is designed primarily as part of a package of measures. I pointed out earlier that opportunistic people arrive at the station, find that the ticket office is closed and rush for the train. Despite the fact that they may say to somebody that they will pay at the other end, they get off the train and, finding the ticket barrier unmanned, walk off. That can be understood, but there is another type of person who deliberately tries to avoid paying.

This package of measures, of which the Bill is but a part, will include more and better ticket issuing machines. The board's objective is that people who require tickets should not have to wait more than three minutes in the off-peak period and five minutes in the peak period to purchase them. That would provide an incentive for people to purchase tickets. They would not then encounter the problem that I have just described.

In addition to the ticket machines, there would also be the deferred fare authority machine. It would accept any coin between 5p and £1. If purchased, that ticket would mean that no penalty fare would have to be paid. It would provide people with the opportunity to pay the rest of the fare to a properly authorised railway official. The scheme would receive full publicity. If the new scheme were properly publicised by means of notices posted throughout the railway network, it would be thoroughly advantageous.

Penalty fares will be collected by fully trained and competent "authorised persons", as they are referred to in the Bill. I make it clear on behalf of the board that this will not be just another responsibility that is to be dumped on to ticket collectors. Training does not mean training only in the general law relating to passenger travel. A special course will enable authorised persons to deal with interpersonal relationships, violence and other problems. It is hoped that the teams who will undertake these checks will consist of no fewer than two people. Perhaps small groups of people will carry out the checks.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the hon. Gentleman able to tell us how many people will be around?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the information that he requires. More staff of a different type will be required. We are moving away from the barrier check to the on-train check. I am not aware that those who are currently carrying out this work will be put at a disadvantage. However, new and better trained teams of people will be required.

What is more important, the trained, authorised personnel will be given discretion. If a person says, "I have lost my ticket"—not a completely unknown predicament, in which some of us may have found ourselves—it will be possible for the official to say, "That is all right, you can go." There will also be a 21-day discretionary period. If a notice is issued to a passenger, he will be able to put his case in writing. The matter will then be examined by the appropriate authorities at head office. There will be no attempt to bulldoze or bully passengers. If a reasonable excuse is given, discretion can be exercised by those in authority.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the hon. Gentleman assure us that there is no provision for the British Railways board to insist that fares are collected—that is, to reduce the discretion that fare collectors exercise? As the hon. Gentleman knows, British Rail introduced a number of disciplinary rules recently, and I dare say that there is a fear that the board will tend to set targets for collecting money, which will, of necessity, reduce discretion.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Happily, I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that such targets are not in board members' minds. The board is anxious to create an incentive for ticket purchasing. Not everyone fails to buy a ticket for fraudulent reasons. However, at the same time, there should be a back-up penalty for people who are deliberately trying to evade the system. I hope that those

[Mr. McNair-Wilson]

words will reassure the hon. Gentleman who, I know, is an expert on railways. I assure him that the board is not attempting to bully the travelling public.

The penalty, as I have said, will be a flat rate of £10. As I also pointed out, there will be an excess penalty for longer journeys. I wish to make it clear that no penalty fare will be issued to a passenger who has a ticket or some other authority to travel, or who found the ticket office was closed and no machines were available at the start of his journey—it is true that booking offices are often unavailable—or who has been told by a member of British Rail's staff to join the train.

Some form of penalty fare is necessary. To activate the penalty fare system it will be necessary for the Secretary of State for Transport to issue an order to that effect. The only way in which the system can be activated is by British Rail. None of the elements of the scheme can be introduced without the Secretary of State and British Rail being satisfied that the ticket machines, the deferred-payment machines and the rest are already in place. I hope that the system will be introduced not in a half-hearted, incompetent way but on the basis of providing every opportunity for those who wish to buy a ticket.

Providing that the Bill proceeds through the House, British Rail would like to start the scheme fairly swiftly. It is thinking of starting it on the Southend-Tilbury-London line and has also considered the possibility of the London to Reading line. A substantial number of the machines to which I referred are already in place. Training of the appropriate personnel is going ahead. In order to ensure that British Rail does not introduce a blanket scheme that breaks down through incompetence or inefficiency, the scheme will be introduced in places where the proper machinery is already in place.

I hope that the Bill, having received an unopposed Second Reading in the other place and having satisfactorily undergone the various relevant procedures before it came before us, will now command the support of the House.

No one who has paid to travel on the railway system, be it London Underground or the wider British Rail network—the two are interconnected—can ever feel entirely happy that a number of other people are travelling for nothing. If we want to hold down the cost of rail travel, it is essential to try to recover, as far as possible, all the moneys owing to the system.

I hope that the House will feel able to give the Bill a Second Reading and allow it to go into Committee.

7.25 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am sure that there is no disagreement about wishing to stop people cheating when they travel. The disagreement will be about whether this measure, and that relating to the London Underground, will achieve that end.

The motion in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), that the Bill should be read a Second time six months hence, is particularly appropriate. Anyone who examines the problems currently facing the railways, and studies this measure, will think it far better if British Rail and London Underground were to come forward with their proposals in six months' time rather than now.

I understand that consultations with the unions have been fairly perfunctory so far, and it would seem better for British Rail to give us assurances that the unions—whose members, both men and women, will have to operate the scheme—have been fully consulted before the scheme is introduced.

London Underground's automatic ticket barriers cause a fair amount of chaos and we should see what happens with those before the measure is enacted. In the north-west, in Greater Manchester, my constituents are certainly not in favour of any form of penalty fares: they would be more in favour of penalty refunds because of the appalling service provided by British Rail for people in south-east Manchester. There is concern about the safety of passengers on the Underground and British Rail, and there are many questions about whether these measures will improve safety.

A fundamental principle of civil rights is involved. Does the Bill transfer the onus of proof from the railway authorities, who must prove that someone set out to defraud them, to the individual, who must prove that he did not set out to defraud the railway authorities? That is an unfortunate erosion of civil rights. There is also a lack of logic in a measure which seeks to make what was a criminal offence into merely a civil one. That may encourage the gambler in many people, who may feel that it is worth trying to avoid paying the full fare, because though they risk having to pay £10 if they are caught, they will not have committed a criminal offence.

The House ought to know more about deferred-payment ticket machines. They seem a good idea but I have yet to see one in operation.

Like so many other measures, the Bill is not very powerful on its own. The key lies with the Secretary of State's powers to implement it. I hope that tonight the Secretary of State or his representative will be able to give us some idea of how the Department envisages the implementation of the scheme, and of what checks it will make before it is convinced that an area is ready for the introduction of the scheme. We should also notice that, by order, the penalty can be increased from its present £10 and £5 to whatever the Minister or anyone else thinks appropriate.

British Rail has opted for a "no ticket barrier" philosophy. As I understand the documents that I have received, it wants to get rid of the barriers and ticket checking as passengers get on and off trains. On the other hand, London Underground is in favour of ticket barriers —one might say ticket barricades—so that people are checked on and off the platform. There is a fundamental difference between the two schemes.

It seems to me that in some parts of the country it will be extremely difficult for British Rail to check passengers on trains. In the north-west of England there are certain commuter lines into Manchester on which many people travel relatively short distances. It will be extremely difficult for British Rail to conduct on-train inspections of tickets because it still has so much archaic rolling stock on which it is absolutely impossible for anyone to move from carriage to carriage to check tickets. Certainly we desperately need to replace some of that old rolling stock from the north-west, and if this measure were to speed that up, I might be sympathetic.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend accept that there are diesel multiple units that do not have sufficient personnel

to provide ticket conductors? I am thinking, for instance, of two two-carriage units that are not connected by a corridor. Because there are not sufficient personnel to operate in both two-car units trains often run with two cars empty. We have not received any assurance that British Rail's policy will be reversed so that we can ensure that all the DMUs are properly staffed.

Mr. Bennett: That is an important point. Certainly I would argue very strongly in support of on-train ticket checking, provided that the trains are suitable and that there are sufficient staff to carry it out. However, it is interesting—and this is a total contradiction of philosophy—that London Transport wants to go for barriers.

I am particularly concerned about the question of consultation with the unions. It seems to me that it is particularly important that both British Rail and London Transport are able to give assurances to the unions that these proposals will not involve any redundancies. If, as has been claimed, the main aim is to improve the service by having, in the case of the London Underground, more people to issue tickets and, in the case of British Rail, more people to check them, it ought to be possible to give the unions an assurance about redundancies.

I believe also that there should be assurances for the staff about safety. If it becomes known that travelling conductors or guards, or the staff doing the checks on the London Underground, are likely to be carrying substantial sums of money there will be a further risk to those people who already place themselves at some risk in that they deal at night with people who may have had something to drink or who may not be particularly amenable. The promoters of the Bills should have talked to the staff and given them assurances about safety.

They must also give the general public assurances about safety. First, they have to deal with the question of bogus collectors. Many people in the House were quite sympathetic to the idea of giving the police powers to collect penalty fines for motoring offences, particularly speeding, and to the idea that this could be done very quickly. But we are aware of the nasty experience arising from one or two bogus policemen operating on motorways, and, indeed, we have heard one or two instances of people assuming wrongly that officers were bogus.

We have to look into the question of the authority that the individuals collecting the penalties will have, so that it can be made absolutely clear to passengers that they are genuine collectors. This is particularly important in the case of British Rail because if the scheme is introduced in a piecemeal way many people will not be certain whether it operates in their area. I hope there can be some clarification and that there will be discussions with the unions about the safety of those individuals.

My argument for deferring the scheme for six months relates very much to the question of the Underground and the automatic ticket barriers. I notice that there have already been criticisms of the automatic ticket barriers. The fire brigade has suggested that it is not really safe if large numbers of people have to get off the platform. It may be a bit of brilliant timing by the Underground that it put the fares up in January, just as it was introducing many more machines. It seems that at the same time people are having considerable difficulty in having the right money for the machines. Every machine that I come across demands the exact money rather than offering change. In addition, many people are finding it difficult to put the tickets into the automatic barriers. Certainly my experience is that most people go for the open gate rather than put their ticket though the machine. Surely it would have been far better for the London Underground to wait until its barriers were working and seen their effect.

Apart from anything else, I believe that if the machines work effectively they will cut fraud significantly, and there may therefore be no need at all for this measure. If the machines do not cut fraud significantly, what is the point of introducing them? I shall not say any more now about the automatic barriers; it may be more appropriate to come back to the question later.

My constituents in Greater Manchester are very disgruntled and upset about British Rail spending so much time trying, supposedly, to improve inter-city trains through Manchester. They have had a winter of total and incomprehensible muddle so far as the local commuter trains are concerned. A constituent of mine regularly writes to me to tell me which trains are late on his journey to work. I get a letter at least every day. It would be simpler for him, and for me, if he were to write and tell me when the trains are on time. I realise that British Rail has been doing a great deal of work at Piccadilly south, but certainly the service is appalling.

As I said earlier, my constituents would like penalty refunds. I do not think that they would mind if they got a pound for every 10 minutes the trains were late. British Rail would have been bankrupt a long time ago if it had had to pay out that sort of money.

It is very sad that British Rail has put so much effort into the inter-city services so that it can run trains from Blackpool to Harwich—only one little Sprinter carriage, but it goes—and from Newcastle to Liverpool via Piccadilly—yet it has not been able to maintain a commuter service through that area.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): My hon. Friend is labouring under the same misapprehension that I laboured under until recently. Those trains from Harwich to Blackpool, and indeed the ones between the cities of Newcastle and Liverpool, are not part of the inter-city network. If my hon. Friend can tell me why, he is a wiser man than I.

Mr. Bennett: I do not know what network they are part of.

Mr. Snape: The provincial services.

Mr. Bennett: I thank my hon. Friend. Certainly they are appropriate to some very sleepy provinces; they do not provide a very speedy service.

What is particularly worrying is that British Rail seems to have felt that, in order to squeeze those trains through Piccadilly south, it was possible to squeeze out the commuter service into Manchester. I understand that the Manchester transport executive has been considering taking British Rail to court over its failure to provide the service for which it gets a subsidy. Certainly, the first thing that the people coming into that area want is trains that are reliable and efficient, and they would be much happier to pay for that service by buying tickets than to see British Rail spending its time introducing a measure like this, which will do nothing to improve public morale. I should think that anyone trying to collect tickets on those trains would spend a great deal of time getting a great deal of

[Mr. Bennett]

earache about the unreliability of the service and would find it extremely difficult to move from one part of the train to another, even if there were corridors—and many carriages still do not have corridors.

Let me turn now to the question of safety. British Rail in particular says that if there are far more people on the trains checking tickets there will be improved safety. To a certain extent London Underground makes the same case. I am sure that we are all very concerned about the safety of passengers, but I suggest that there is not an overwhelming case for saying that people are worried about their safety on the trains as opposed to their safety on the stations. It seems that British Rail is aiming to reduce substantially the number of people on the stations. I must say that at more than one station where I wait late at night I would much prefer to know that there was someone in the booking office who, if I were attacked, would have a chance of doing something about it. He might pick up the telephone, though I would not expect him to come to my assistance in any other way. But if I knew that the ticket office was not manned, that there was merely a machine, my unease would be increased. At one or two stations in the Greater Manchester area, passengers have to go down a couple of steps and around one or two awkward corners, where somebody could lurk, before they get to the ill-lit platform. The idea that such stations will not be manned increases my anxiety, especially if the automatic ticket machines are liable to attempts by people up to mischief to take money out of them. That does not increase safety.

With London Underground, if staff are on the platform and are clearly visible at barriers, their presence is an effective deterrent. I would like more staff to travel on trains to reduce violence. I do not accept the promoters' claim that the Bills will increase passenger safety. For British Rail, it would be much preferable to have more effectively manned stations and travelling ticket collectors. With London Underground, the problem with fare default increased substantially when staff levels were reduced. The problems of violence on the tube and on stations has also increased as a result of reduced staffing.

The promoters claim that making what was previously a criminal charge a civil charge is a significant step in terms of civil rights, but it is not really all that significant for most people because most people do not want to break the law, civil or criminal—they want to be law abiding. The change, which is fairly minor in their eyes, does not justify changing the onus of proof. I understand that at the moment, London Underground and British Rail have to prove that an individual got on a train without trying to buy a ticket and intended to travel without paying. If that were difficult to prove, one would expect there to be few court cases, but the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) said that there are a substantial number of prosecutions each year.

It is extremely difficult, however, for a traveller to prove that he intended to pay. Deferred payment machines might be installed at all stations. If that is so, life will be easier for somebody who arrives at a station without an open window at which to pay to get a ticket out of the machine. I suspect that people will occasionally have only more than a £1 coin, especially if they have travelled some distance. They can reasonably expect there to be somebody at a window to take their fare.

The presence and working conditions of a deferred payments machine must be guaranteed if the scheme is to have any justification. My experience is of going to Westminster tube station after about 11 pm and finding nobody to take the money for a ticket. A 50p machine sometimes worked before Christmas, but often there was no machine and somebody in a little wooden office counting money. I could not be certain whether he was supposed to be counting money because he had finished his shift or whether he was trying to finish early and ought to have had the window open. At the other end, there was sometimes somebody to collect the money, but sometimes there was not.

If I were stopped on the train, I doubt whether I could satisfy the inspector that there was nobody at Westminster station. Indeed, I suspect that if that somebody was supposed to be at the window at Westminster station and supposed to be collecting money, he would insist firmly that he was doing just that. It would simply be my word against his. In my position, and in view of the fuss that I would make, it might not be all that difficult for me to get away with it, but a 13 or 14-year-old, or somebody who was not prepared to make a fuss, would probably find that London Underground tends to believe the person in the office rather than the individual. That gives rise to considerable difficulty.

Many people would be pressurised into paying because they would be unable to prove that, when they went to the ticket office, nobody was in it. People can also claim that they have been authorised by somebody in British Rail or London Underground uniform that they are entitled to travel without making a payment at the start of the journey. When challenged, or at an inquiry, it is extremely difficult to say who authorised the travel. There must be a much more efficient way of issuing tickets or some other authorisation for travel before the Bill is introduced.

Anyone who knows London Underground will say that the present system has broken down. If it needs the new machines and they work, very few people will defraud it. That being so, it would be no hardship to London Underground—indeed, it would be an advantage—to charge people who defraud the system with a criminal offence and make a fuss about the fact that they have been apprehended and punished. The only argument in favour of penalty fares arises when a large number of people do not pay and the burden of taking them through the courts becomes too great.

If the new barriers are worth all the fuss, they must cut the amount of fare dodging. If British Rail has efficient ticket issuing machines on the Southend line, there should be a major reduction in the number of fare dodgers. If there is, there is no hardship in treating fare dodging as a criminal offence, on which basis the fine could be much more than £10—and much more of a deterrent.

The £10 penalty fare might be considered a gambler's charter. People who have to pay £1·50 or £3·00 may think that, if they get away with it, it will have cost them nothing and that, if they are caught, the most that they will have to pay is £10. On some British Rail routes into London, people have to pay £7 or £8 for a ticket. Gambling for £10 in those circumstances becomes quite attractive. There does not seem to be much logic in that.

I would much rather have the new and supposedly efficient ticket checking and collecting systems and no resort to penalty fares. I should like a more detailed description of the deferred payment ticket machines. I would like to know how soon London Underground will add them to its exising machines. Will it be possible to say, "I got a deferred ticket because I read, 'Exact money' on the machine and I cannot see a space for that on the machine below the 60p"?

I hope that the Minister can tell us what guarantees he wants about the sections of line to which the new arrangements will apply. With British Rail, the scheme will be phased in on the Southend line first. What guarantees will the Minister want about orders? What publicity for the new arrangements will be provided? Can the Minister assure us that he will not increase the £10 and £5 penalty fares?

What will happen with the rolling stock? I hope that we shall have a guarantee that none of the new arrangements will apply when people cannot move from one carriage to the next to check fares.

I have expressed most of my fears. There should certainly be some amendments on Report. I shall also be looking with considerable interest at the operation of the present London Underground system. I shall be looking for dramatic improvements in reliability and punctuality in Manchester when the new timetable is brought out. In the light of all that, I reserve my final attitude to penalty fares, although I am concerned about the principle of changing the onus of proof so that instead of someone having to prove that an individual has committed a crime the individual will have to prove that he has not committed an offence.

7.50 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): It may be for the convenience of the House if I set out the Government's attitude to the Bill. First, may I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on making so clear the purposes of the Bill. I hope that my remarks will help the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) with some of the points that he raised.

In May 1986 the Government set up a working group to look into arrangements for charging penalty fares on public transport. We accepted its recommendations that changes in the law were needed to tackle the problem of fare evasion and we gave our consent to BR and LRT to deposit the Penalty Fares Bills which we are discussing tonight.

The Government strongly support the Bill. British Rail loses large amounts of revenue every year through fraudulent travel. The new Bill is designed to deter people from embarking on a journey without a valid ticket or "deferred fare authority" which allows them to travel to their destination and then pay an excess fare.

Dr. Marek: Before the Minister continues reading his speech, may I ask him why he sought to intervene and make his speech after only one Opposition Member has been allowed to speak? My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) also wishes to make a speech. I hope that the Minister will not simply plough through his prepared speech and then take no further part in the debate or answer any questions from Opposition Members?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that this is a private Bill and not a Government Bill. I am not here to wind up the discussion or reply to points. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish has raised some points about an order that the Government might make, but those points are best addressed when the Government may or may not make that order. For the moment we are dealing with private legislation.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Although I did not develop that argument in my speech, there is a great deal of worry about the order-making procedure. The orders are subject to annulment, which does not encourage debate in the House, and the best we can get is a debate for one and a half hours. That is not satisfactory. Surely it is far better for the issues to be argued in the House before we give the Minister the powers to make the orders rather than when he has those powers.

Mr. Portillo: I am trying to address the hon. Gentleman's worries by making a speech now, if I am allowed to continue. It may be that annulment does not encourage debate, but it certainly allows debate. In any case we are now debating the Second Reading of the Bill. If the hon. Gentleman feels that that part of the Bill is objectionable to him doubtless he will seek to amend it during the further stages of the Bill.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I shall take the Minister's hint.

Mr. Portillo: The recovery of lost revenue through the operation of the Bill will benefit not only British Rail but both the honest passenger and the taxpayer. It should be a significant help to BR in achieving the objectives we have set—to reduce the amount of support it receives from the public purse, while improving quality of service.

Passengers will also benefit from unrestricted access to and from trains through the use of "open stations", since on-train ticket checks will allow more ticket barriers to be removed. In addition, more automatic ticket-vending machines and the introduction of deferred fare authority machines will reduce queues at ticket offices.

Many parts of the country outside London and the south-east already have open-station systems and on the whole they have been successful. On-train ticket checks are common in Europe and Britain is the only country which still relies heavily on barrier controls.

Under existing law, if a passenger is found travelling without a valid ticket, BR can charge him the full single fare to his destination. However, research has shown that most fare evasion takes place over short distances and therefore that is not an effective deterrent. The payment of a flat-rate penalty of £10—which is the same as that proposed by LRT—or the full single fare, if it is greater, will encourage people to buy a ticket before travelling. As my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest made clear, the penalty fare will be a civil penalty, not a criminal one, and that will mean that most offences for non-payment of fares will no longer be heard at magistrates' courts. But BR would still have the right to prosecute in serious cases of fraud.

Of course, the powers which I have just described cannot be applied to any service or group of services until my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made an activating order. Before any such order is made the Secretary of State will need to be satisfied that all the necessary arrangements are in place to operate the system

[Mr. Portillo]

and that they include safeguards to ensure that honest passengers are not penalised if no opportunity to buy a ticket has been provided. He will therefore need to be satisfied that ticket offices are properly staffed; that the necessary ticket and deferred authority machines are in place; that there are satisfactory arrangements for monitoring and repairing machines; that there are adequate publicity arrangements to inform passengers about the new system; that ticket inspectors are properly trained to operate the system and are deployed appropriately and that they have adequate identification. We must also be assured that procedures for disputes and appeals are in place.

We believe that the introduction of penalty fares legislation will bring many benefits to passengers as well as helping to recover some of the revenue which BR is losing through fare evasion. We will need to be assured that preparations have been made to ensure that the system is operated properly and that adequate safeguards are in place to protect the honest fare-paying passengers.

7.55 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The House is grateful to the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) for the customary courteous and lucid way in which he introduced the Bill. However, the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) shows that we should not allow the elaborate cloak so cleverly spun by the hon. Member for New Forest to disguise the somewhat shabby figure underneath. A number of legitimate points should be raised before the House allows the Bill to proceed.

The hon. Member for New Forest referred to the need, indeed the desire, of British Rail for more and better ticket-issuing machines. So say all of us. Those of us who have travelled on, have had any dealings with or have worked on British Rail, as I have, will be aware that not so many years ago—at least it does not feel too many years ago—one went to a ticket office window, handed over the cash and very quickly was presented with a piece of cardboard on which was written the originating station and in larger letters the destination. The price on it was inevitably out of date, but the whole transaction was fairly speedy and simple.

That is not the case now. By the nature of their job, Ministers are cosseted from the realities of daily life that are faced by millions of ordinary people, but a quick visit to any mainline railway station will demonstrate that these days the system of purchasing and selling a railway ticket is much more complicated. First, the little pieces of cardboard to which I referred so fondly have all disappeared. I understand that that was known as the Edmonson system after its inventor, just to tip off the Minister in passing. Particularly at mainline terminals, the ticket issuing machines look like extras from "Doctor Who". They are enormously complex. The mere issuing of a ticket leads to an interrogation from the clerk which is understandable, given the multiplicity of tickets that BR now sells—blue savers, white savers, singles, returns, first class, standard class——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Silver service.

Mr. Snape: —and silver service, as my hon. Friend reminds me. It is immensely more complicated than it used to be.

The House will not be surprised, although the Minister might be, to find that queues at mainline stations are considerably longer than they used to be. The temptation for passengers in a hurry is to leave the queue and board the train, particularly at an open station with no barrier check. They will then pay the conductor-guard, the senior ticket examiner—I understand that that will be the new grade—or the station staff at their destination, depending on who approaches the passengers first. At the risk of the hon. Member for New Forest branding me as a potential criminal, I must confess I have acted in that way when I have seen a long ticket queue. Therefore, we need more assurances that the new and better ticket-issuing machines are on the way, because there appears to be no sign of them so far.

The hon. Member for New Forest said that the British Railways board intends to try to ensure that the maximum wait at a ticket window will be between three and five minutes. That time, so optimistically referred to, is considerably exceeded for most parts of the day at, for example, Birmingham New Street which is my closest InterCity station. Despite there being up to five ticket windows open, there is often a considerable queue at each. Many passengers, including hon. Members, no longer use the outmoded system of purchasing with cash. They use credit cards or, in our fortunate case, railway warrants. Transactions involving credit cards or railway warrants take a little longer than the simple cash transactions of the past. Also, many of us seek reassurance from the person from whom we purchase the ticket that the train we want is running, that it is on time and often from which platform it departs. That causes increased congestion and delay for those in the queue. Someone whose patience expires or whose time of departure gets ever closer while complex transactions take place would be likely to head for the train and hope for the best.

Under the proposed system, such a passenger would, according to the hon. Member for New Forest, have an opportunity to purchase a permit-to-travel ticket for what he describes as a "nominal fee". British Rail's idea of a nominal fee often does not coincide with the thinking of the rest of us. The hon. Member for New Forest—or more likely the person who drafted the Bill and certainly the organisation for which it was drafted—takes an optimistic view of the efficacy of the machines that accept money. The hon. Gentleman did not give the figure that British Rail has in mind, but it will probably be up to £1. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and the House will be aware that some machines accept coins and then reject coins of the same denomination within seconds. We need an assurance that the machines that British Rail has in mind will be more foolproof than any we have yet seen on British Rail or London Underground such as those at, for example, Westminster tube station.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The deferred payments machines are supposed to accept any coin up to £1. It will be interesting to see whether they can cope with any coin. I am sure that my hon. Friend will realise that such machines cannot provide essential information such as whether the train is still at the station and other information that one can obtain from an individual.

Mr. Snape: That amply illustrates the lack of concern for the travelling public so often demonstrated by those in charge of our, fortunately, still publicly owned railway and underground system. Such people are almost exclusively male. For some reason, the concept of manoevring a pram, trolley, shopping bag or a couple of recalcitrant toddlers around a railway station never impinges on their thinking because they never do it themselves. Yet, to add an additional complication to a journey is not, to put it at its mildest, likely to benefit customer relations. We will be told that it is more efficient. More efficient for whom? Is it more efficient for the accountants who run our public transport system or for those who travel on it?

The hon. Member for New Forest said that no penalty fare would be payable if no machine were available. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) pointed out the difficulty involved in proving that no machine was available or that a machine was not in proper working order. How does one prove that one has been told, in the words of the hon. Member for New Forest, by a member of British Rail staff to join the train without a ticket? British Rail has a multiplicity of staff. Some are involved directly in ticket sales, but the majority are not. Does a member of British Rail staff include a driver leaning out of a cab of a diesel multiple unit or one of the new fangled sprinters to which my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish referred? Such trains meander from Blackpool to Harwich and are staffed, at least on part of the journey, by only one person. If that one person—the driver—leans out of his cab at a station and says to a passenger staring in bewilderment at one of the ticket machines, "Will you be there all day because the train will not?", does that constitute permission to travel without a ticket or do we have to wait for my learned friends to make a bob or two in some court while deciding whether it is permission to travel without a ticket?

Most laughably of all, the Minister referred to the fact that the Secretary of State would have to give his consent before any route could switch to the penalty fares system. How many times have those who take an interest in such matters heard that said in recent years? When responsibility for public transport was taken away from the Greater London council, I remember the then Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), assuring us that he would be responsible for the safe running of the system and that any complaints about tickets or trains could be directed to him in the House. He and his successor were quiet after the King's Cross disaster. There was not a collection of Ministers at the Dispatch Box, beating their breasts and crying "Mea culpa" after that incident.

Therefore, I cannot believe that, given the complicated life that the Secretary of State for Transport leads and given his wide responsibilities and some of the events that have impinged on them in recent months, he can call in a group of British Rail managers, perhaps from the London-Tilbury-Southend route, and say, "Now chaps, what have you done to enable me to consent to your proceeding with the penalty fares system on your route?" We all know what will happen. He will receive a letter from British Rail saying that everything is in place for the great scheme to be implemented and he will give his consent without knowing personally what British Rail has done.

Of course, there is a lack of logic about the penalty fare system, because both the Minister and the hon. Member for New Forest referred to the loss to British Rail and London Underground from fare evasion. I am sure that the amount is considerable and all of us, whatever our connections have been with British Rail or London Underground Limited, would deplore that. It is said that Network SouthEast is losing about £36 million from fare evasion. That is a remarkably precise figure for an imprecise science. I do not believe that anyone can know how many fares are evaded.

The Minister and the hon. Gentleman made the point that much of the evasion took place on short journeys, which was the thinking behind the £10 penalty fare. The way the system works is that, if one evades a £1 fare—not that there have been many of those since this Government came to power—one is fined 10 times the amount of the fare that one has evaded. If, for example, one tries to evade the fare between Euston and Manchester—to use the route referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett)—presumably one is not fined at all, because that £10 has long since been swallowed up in the exorbitant price of the ticket.

The Bill says, in effect that, if one is going to fiddle, one should do it in a big way. One should fiddle not on short distance journeys, because there is a severe financial penalty, but on the long journeys—the very journeys from which British Rail are anxious to safeguard its revenue —because under the Bill there will be no penalty.

Of course, the hon. Member for New Forest might say that there are existing statutes that would take care of such matters. That might be right, but I believe that there is an enormously illogical flaw in a scheme that can fine someone for evading a small fare, but does no such thing when there has been large-scale fare evasion.

The Minister said that there would be good publicity to explain the proposed changes to the travelling public. However, many members of the public—especially women —might catch trains only occasionally. How and where would this publicity, which will tell people that the scheme is in operation, be exhibited? We all know that the scheme will be used to reduce staff on railway stations even further. I do not want to see British Rail staff on wayside railway stations on quiet branch lines—those that are still left—sitting around doing nothing. That would be a fairly frustrating business and would not lead to any great job satisfaction. However, what we envisage here is a scheme planned by men for men. The man carrying only a briefcase will have no great difficulty. He will not have shopping or toddlers to worry about. For thousands, if not millions, of women who travel alone or with children, the introduction of this scheme and the consequent reduction of staff will mean even less security on their journeys than before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish pointed out the problems that have already been experienced by people using London Underground in the short time that automatic barriers have been installed at many stations. Like him, and no doubt other hon. Members, I can recount many occasions when making late night journeys from Westminster tube station has meant travelling for nothing, because the ticket office at Westminster has not been manned. Unaccountably, all the machines have been switched off, although sometimes there is a 50p machine. I used to live in north London and the fare before the latest round of fare increases was about £1·60. It was quite possible to get on a train through an unmanned barrier at Westminster. One would have

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thought that that was the one station on the system where there should be proper staffing. The failings at Westminster station illustrate amply the sort of contempt that past London Underground management—I do not know about the present management—had for this place and for the Secretary of State, who was supposedly in charge of its day-to-day operations, or so we were told at the time——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The right hon. Gentleman does not use the service.

Mr. Snape: He might be in charge, but it does not mean he has to use the service.

Mr. Tony Banks: *rose——*

Mr. Snape: I shall give way in a moment. Just let me finish the journey that I used to take last November.

When I left the train at my destination, either on the Victoria or the Piccadilly line, depending on which train came along first, regularly late at night there was no one manning my terminal station, and therefore, of course, my £1·60 journey cost me nothing. Yet we are told that under this marvellous new system it is the dishonest passenger who will be caught. The management of London Underground Limited will need to be more efficient before we bite on this particular cherry.

Mr. Banks: I have felt very much the same as my hon. Friend about the staffing at Westminster station. I do not know whether my hon. Friend has noticed how good it is at St. James's Park. Staff seem to polish everything there including the passengers. That might have something to do with the location of the headquarters of London Regional Transport.

I came from East Ham station this morning and the ticket office was closed. I saw the train coming, there was a queue waiting at the ticket machine, so I sprinted down and jumped on the train. Obviously, being a very honest person I paid the full fare when I arrived at Westminster. I was told there was no one at East Ham station because the staff were training. There is an awful lot of temptation put in the way of the potential fare evader and I find it unacceptable that it can be said that there are not sufficient staff to man the ticket offices. That is an open invitation to ticket fraud.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that his experience is mirrored by every one of us. I can quote no recent example to show that things are getting any better.

I have recently been travelling by London Underground from Notting Hill. Waiting for a Circle line train from Notting Hill enables one to watch operating practices. Unaccountably, Circle line trains appear to be few and far between. At Notting Hill there is a whole battery of those fancy new ticket machines in the booking hall. When they were installed, virtually all of them said in bright red letters "Change Given". They were very modern looking machines and one expected them to do everything, including drive the trains. They were complex to use but, once one got the hang of them, it could be said that the modernisation of LRT had actually arrived. However, now most of those machines, instead of saying "Change Given", say "Correct Change Only". To use one example, this morning I counted about 14 people waiting at one open ticket window and others were looking plaintively at those machines and fiddling through purses and handbags trying to find the correct change.

There is a problem, too, with the new barriers at Westminster. One of them refuses to accept a 60p ticket from Notting Hill. I hope that I am paying the right fare. The barrier shows a green arrow, but the gates do not open. One could well envisage another King's Cross situation, and the carnage that would ensue from half a dozen people trying to get out through the barrier.

We are told that the introduction of barriers and the penalty fare scheme are designed to bring greater efficiency and benefit to the travelling public. With your kind acquiescence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have embraced what I wanted to say about the second Bill. There are important and substantial differences between the two systems. Travelling on the London Underground system at night is more difficult sometimes than travelling on the surface railway. All the points that I have made about the women travelling on British Rail once the Bill is implemented are even more relevant to London Underground because, by its nature, there are steps, subways, escalators—do you remember those, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and when it was possible to get on a moving one? In the new modern system it is only possible to walk up and down escalators; they do not carry passengers.

I can only suggest to my hon. Friends that we wait for the hon. Member for New Forest to sum up. I am sure that his contribution will be as lucid and courteous as his opening speech, but I hope it will be more satisfying and enlightening.

8.20 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): There are similarities between the Bill and the London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill. I hope to make another contribution when we discuss the latter. Those who give a cursory glance at the two Bills may assume that they are different because the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill, if enacted, would allow open stations. Staff would not control any gates and passengers could walk straight on or off trains. The Bill for London Underground proposes a closed system. There will be gates at stations and passengers will be held within the system unless they have a ticket to pass through the gates to enter or leave the system.

The Bills are similar because the aim of both systems is to cut down staff and to make people redundant. Eventually they will generate a second-class system for what the Government plainly believe are the second-class public who use the systems. It is certainly true that, by and large, Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers do not use the London Underground or British Rail.

The Minister spoke about what is happening on the continent, as though whatever happens there should also happen here. On the continent it is possible to get on a train without passing through a control, but equally on the continent there is not one pair of guards on a 12-carriage train, but two pairs. Those guards will pass through the train between one station and another. In this country there is no way in which a pair of guards or three guards could travel along a 12-carriage train during the rush hour between Newington and Sittingbourne on the north Kent route. If someone gets on at Newington and gets off at

Sittingbourne he may not have to pass through any controls. The system incorporated in the Bill will encourage evasion.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) spoke about the unsuitability of the barriers used on the London Underground. Those barriers also exist in the underground systems of Germany and France, but most of those systems have been rebuilt with wide, palatial concourses. A fire such as that at King's Cross could probably never happen in Europe because of the immense amount of space incorporated in the new underground systems. In comparison, the plans for our underground system are pokey, small, claustrophobic and liable to suffer similar fires to that at King's Cross because of the introduction of tight gates and automatic barriers. It is clear that either the Government have not thought it out or——

Mr. Tony Banks: They could not care less.

Dr. Marek: That is right. They do not agree with the principle of manned stations and trains. Employing people is not something that they want to do.

Mr. Banks: It is worthy of comment that the Prime Minister has not travelled on a British Rail train since February 1987. I am damned sure that she has never travelled on the London Underground during the rush hour. If some Ministers, particularly the Prime Minister, travelled on the Underground or on Network SouthEast during the rush hour, I am sure that something would be done about the appalling travelling conditions that Londoners must face.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is right. I suspect that a lot of people are grateful that she does not travel on the trains or on the Underground, but perhaps that is somewhat facetious. Perhaps the Minister should report our comments back to his mistress and tell her that she should go down to Oxford Circus station at 5.15 on a Thursday afternoon. I regularly used to ask the Prime Minister if she travelled by train on official business, but for three or four years the answer was always no.

Mr. Banks: It has been suggested to me—I had not thought of it—that if the Prime Minister travelled on the Underground during the rush hour someone would probably push her under a train. No doubt there would be quite a queue to do it.

Dr. Marek: We must not be uncharitable. We would like her to travel on the Underground—incognito if possible—so that she can experience the difficulties that the public face.

I am not in favour of anyone evading payment of the proper fare. The National Union of Railwaymen is not in favour of that. I should declare that I am sponsored by that union. I do not believe that any reasonable person could condone fare evasion, but the problem is whether the Bill has got it right. The Bill, rather than closing off the avenues for evasion, will encourage them. Society will become worse because temptation will be put in people's way. Such temptation should, of course, be avoided but, life is not like that. It will be much better if we had a system where evasion was not presented as a temptation.

Assaults on passengers and staff on British Rail are increasing. In 1984 there were 309 assaults on passengers —such attacks cover murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, malicious wounding, grievous bodily harm, robbery and assault with intent to rob. In 1985 there were 374 assaults on passengers; in 1986 there were 448 and in 1987 there were 508. The equivalent figures for assaults on staff, although not rising monotonically as with passenger assaults, have also risen in the same period. In 1984 there were 88 assaults on staff; in 1985 there were 79 assaults; in 1986 there were 69 and in 1987 there were 102. That represents a fairly large increase and it is something that concerns employees of British Rail.

If the Bill gets on to the statute book staff will be expected to collect penalty fares in difficult circumstances. Late at night the staff, if they expect to do their job properly, honestly and without failure, will have to try to collect penalty fares from people who will have had too much to drink and who could easily be in an argumentative mood. There is no question of people being able to say that they were not absolutely sure that they wanted that particular train or that they were unsure if they could travel by bus if there was no convenient train. According to the Bill once the person has got on a train he has committed himself to an illegal position. Unless that person provides a satisfactory explanation for being without a ticket he will have committed a civil offence, which will necessitate the payment of the penalty fare. I am sure that a number of people will be unreasonable and irrational when asked to pay such a fare. It will increase the number of incidents on the railway and that is regrettable. We all seek a system to stop evasion but we should try to find one that will not lead to incidents, arguments and perhaps violence.

The Bill does not make me feel very easy. As my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East said, the penalty only applies if the fare is under £10. The fare from Dover to Victoria must be about £10·50 or £11 and that would encourage a traveller to chance his arm because if he were caught he would have to pay only £10·50 or £11.

Mr. Snape: I should also add, and perhaps I should have said it in my speech, that one would have to pay the full ordinary fare within 21 days. That is a better bet than standing in a long queue at a ticket office in Dover.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend is right. If a person is detected and challenged he will have to pay only the single fare.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: It will be necessary to take a person's name and address and to make certain that the details are correct. What questions will the guard or ticket collector be entitled to ask about whether he has the correct name and address?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend raises an important matter. There will be a temptation to avoid paying a fare because it will be easy for a traveller to say that he is Mr. Jones of 4 Railway Cuttings, East Cheam and then go on his way. What is the ticket collector supposed to do in such a case? He can do nothing other than accept that the name and address are correct and that means that the person who has been caught will get away without having to pay his fare.

I shall develop the argument that I advanced earlier. A fare dodger travelling between two stations that are close together—from New Cross to St. John's, for example, for which a single fare is perhaps 60p—and who was caught and decided to make a clean breast of it would have to pay

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£10. I see no harm in a system that catches people trying to avoid paying fares but in future many people will be on trains without a ticket simply because the permission-to-travel machine did not work, the booking office was closed or there were too many people in the queue at the booking office and people had to jump on a train that was about to leave. In such cases the argument raised with the penalty fare collector will always be about whether there was a reasonable excuse. Anyone who is challenged by British Rail about why he did not go to the booking office will say that he did. I would say that and so would the Minister. There is a wide area for argument.

People who have to pay a penalty fare of £10 for travelling without a 60p ticket will feel resentful, especially if they think that they are being treated unfairly vis-a-vis a traveller from Dover to Victoria or to London bridge who will have to pay only the single fare.

I have spoken about the reliability of permission-to-travel machines. The hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) said that there will be new and better ticket machines. It would be better if the Bill were withdrawn for six months so that we could be satisfied that there were not just new and better ticket machines but new and guaranteed systems with fail-safe devices. When they are working the new London Underground ticket machines are good. That is a personal view. However, they will often accept only the exact money. I do not know why that should be, but I suspect that when the machines run out of change they automatically display a sign saying "Exact money only". Part of the problem is that London Underground is not prepared to service those machines so that they will always give change. It is no good the Minister saying that we will have an assurance on this or that. The public are far too cynical, and so am I, to believe such assurances.

I have long experience of London Underground and British Rail and I know that we need to see the system in action first. It must be proved that the new ticket machines on the Underground are reliable 99·99 per cent. of the time. I think that there are about three or four machines in Westminster tube station and in such stations it will be necessary for, say, two of those machines to work 99·99 per cent. of the time. If that could be guaranteed I might lend a more sympathetic ear to assurances by the Government.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: My hon. Friend has said that he has had no trouble with these machines. Could he tell us the correct way to push a child in a pram through one of the exit machines so that the passenger can insert the ticket and get the pram through without being chopped in half?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend misunderstands. I was talking about the machines that supply tickets and not about the barriers and how one should go through them. Perhaps we could talk about that later. I accept the problem mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) about coins being accepted while a few seconds later identical coins are rejected. In my short personal experience of these machines I have not encountered that problem. That reinforces the point that we need to be satisfied that the machines will work, and that calls for proper servicing by London Underground. If a machine runs out of change somebody should be there within 10 or 15 minutes to replenish it.

British Rail machines will not be enclosed in underground stations but will probably be on open, windswept platforms where, late at night, anybody can have access to them. The whole point of the Bill is to ensure that there will be fewer staff and that people will be able to go in and out of stations and get on and off trains. Vandals will have access to the machines. As I say, I am cynical about the Bill. I do not think that British Rail will be able to provide a permission-to-travel machine that is vandal-proof and that will provide a valid ticket for a specific coin,. If the machines will accept any coin, what else will they take in the course of their working day?

There is a serious problem here. The London underground system is locked up at night and so is vandal-proof, but British Rail has the opposite system. It is planning to open stations but to withdraw staff from platforms and have inspections on the trains. That will be a temptation to vandals, and vandalism leads to a worse society.

The hon. Member for New Forest said that the inspection teams would have two or perhaps three conductors for 12-carriage sets, or even longer sets in suburban areas. The Bill basically affects Network SouthEast, in which many people get on and off at intermediate stations—for example, on a suburban train going from Charing Cross to Bromley and stopping every two or three minutes. At the peak rush hour, many people will get on at the terminus, but many will get off at the intermediate stations. It would be impossible for one team of conductors to go through the whole train between one station and another. I suspect that even two teams of conductors would not be able to do so.

This must invite evasion of fares. Passengers can easily find out where the conductors are and I suspect that it would be relatively easy to travel two or three stations without being inspected. Even those passengers who are not minded to evade fares will quite often find that their tickets are not controlled on such journeys. At the moment, such tickets are controlled because at the main stations there is a ticket barrier before a passenger gets on the train, and the guard looks at the ticket. When the passenger alights he has either to give in his ordinary ticket or show his season ticket to the guard at the barrier. If that changes, evasion will increase rather than decrease.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East said that £36 million was lost through fare evasion on Network SouthEast. That is a large sum, and I reiterate the point that he made that, if this is the official figure, the chances are that the real figure is even bigger. Why cannot British Rail go the other way and, instead of having an unsatisfactory method of trying to stop evasion and a way that will not work, employ 2,000 more staff?

The National Economic Research Association in its report as part of the "Better Rail" campaign suggested that 2,000 extra staff, costing £20 million, would pay for themselves by cutting fare evasion. The hon. Member for New Forest did not address that point, and he must do so. It would have obvious benefits in that not only would there be employment for 2,000 people, but those people would be on the platforms and would be able to help mothers with children and make sure that vandalism on the platforms did not occur, that stations were cleaner and that evasion was decreased. That is the nub of the

argument. The Bill is going in the wrong direction and it is the wrong Bill at the wrong time. British Rail should have come to a different conclusion and started to employ more staff instead.

I hope that there will be a vote on Second Reading so that I can express my displeasure about the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish says, if the Bill does not receive a Second Reading, I hope that British Rail will think about the suggestions that have been made this evening. I hope that the Government Lobby fodder will not come in when the Division Bells go.

Mr. Sydney Chapman (Chipping Barnet): No.

Dr. Marek: I hope that the hon. Gentleman is right. If he is, we have a chance of defeating the Bill, because the weight of argument is against it. However, if by some chance the Bill is given a Second Reading, I can think of many amendments that I should like to table in Committee and on Report.

8.45 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The best system for issuing tickets is that which uses human beings. The notion that many of them should be replaced by machines, with all the difficulties that have been described tonight, is a clear prelude to privatisation of British Rail—to increase profits, to inconvenience passengers and to give the putative privatised sector more powers, through orders issued by the Secretary of State, to impose the new system on passengers.

Nobody would quibble with the Minister's view that we should curtail fare dodging to benefit honest passengers. That was qualified by his claim that he wants to reduce public revenue support. Several people have quoted continental practice. For example, the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) spoke about the continental practice of train inspection. However, the Minister did not invoke the continental practice of support for railway transport, in working hours or in the rate of wages. If we are to have continental practice, then we should have continental standards on safety and wage awards.

The Minister and the hon. Member for New Forest are highly selective in what they say. They talk about on-train inspection—a new jargon phrase like "feedback" or "ongoing situation"— but fail to inform the House that, while continental railways have the same basic gauge between the rails, they have larger loading gauges. Continental wagons and railway coaches, for example, cannot easily be transported over the whole of British railways, but over selected routes that have been specially widened for the purpose. Such coaches have more room on them for people to move around and are more substantial, so on-train inspection is more easy.

All in all, the continental example—invoked by the hon. Member for New Forest as though it were some sort of magical formula; because it comes from somewhere else, it must be good—has no substance in it. British Rail has a system of barriers for entry on to the railway system because when the railways were built in the 19th century it was decided that the railway system should be safe and that people should be kept in a regulated fashion from approaching what is essentially a dangerous movement of heavy vehicles at high speeds on a railway track. Therefore, we have a statutory obligation to fence the track on both sides to prevent access by both human beings and animals. On the continent, there is an open system because they decided that that was suitable, and they are more used to it. There is no reason or justification for us to shrug our shoulders and say, "Ah, it is the continental system. Therefore it must be good."

Human beings working at barriers can not only check tickets but give help, advice and guidance. They can help women who are experiencing difficulties with their toddlers or the elderly person with parcels who is confused by the station's set-up because changes have occurred. Such changes baffle people. My mother has never been into Bradford interchange, built in 1974, because they changed all the bus stops and she was sure that it would confuse her. She is now 92, and it is pretty certain that she will not be catching buses to Bradford interchange. The elderly are confused when things are changed. If they have to go to public stations, they find it helpful to have staff at barriers to guide and inform them.

British Rail management always manages to provide an adequate number of personnel for occasions such as this. It does not abandon the box under the Strangers Gallery because it has to abandon involvement in the Bill. Indeed, it has sent along what appears to be a handsome contingent. I wish that it would apply the same standards to stations. At the inquiry into the proposed closure of the Settle-Carlisle line, four representatives of British Rail's management were present. One of them presented a statement and explained that he and his colleagues could not take part in the discussion because they were not to be subjected to debate. What a splendid example to set! Would it not be better if they were all busy working on the Settle-Carlisle line to promote it and thereby to attract more passengers? That argument seemed to go down extremely well with all the objectors to the proposed closure, but it did not bring much of a gleam to the eyes of the British Rail representatives.

Mr. Snape: I would not want my hon. Friend to accuse me of undue cynicism, but he should bear in mind that many members of British Rail's senior management spent their formative years travelling around the country in chauffeur-driven cars in the 1960s looking for parts of the system to close down.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is right. We remember the various dodges that were used to enable British Rail to present a case for the closure of certain lines, when that action was entirely unjustified.

We are told in the summary that it is estimated that Network SouthEast is losing £36 million a year in fare evasion. That sounds grandiose, but that statement amounts to a guess. As my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has said, there is no certainty as British Rail cannot know about successful fare evasion. I am sure that if it did know about evasion it would consider prosecution or publishing the names of evaders, for example. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), I think that it is a guess that has been put on the top side, as it were. After all, it would be human to present a figure that is on the high side so as to frighten a few hon. Members into providing their assistance in getting the Bill through the House.

British Rail has produced a figure for the cost of vandalism that is more quantifiable. It estimates that each year the bill is £20 million. If British Rail is each year to

[Mr. Cryer]

shed more staff and introduce machines, vandalism will increase. That must be a major cause of concern for all hon. Members. If more stations are to be devoid of human activity in the form of British Rail employees, there is a potential danger for passengers both in stations and as travellers on trains. For example, things can be thrown on to railway tracks that may endanger lives because they affect the smooth and safe running of the trains.

What will British Rail do about that? The Minister will know that British Rail has a statutory duty to protect trains from people by means of fencing. The Bill does not provide for any sections of any existing Acts to be repealed, so is British Rail embarking on a criminal activity by introducing the Bill? By removing barriers it will be failing in its obligation to prevent the public from getting to its trains. It is proposed that there shall be open stations. It is urged upon us that we should adopt the wonderful continental system in which people can have free access to trains. That will mean that toddlers will have access to them at a time when there is more electrification. Is British Rail telling us that it will provide more access to trains for toddlers, teenagers and the elderly, for example, when there is third-rail DC electrification at 500 volts? The management's justification for this approach is, to say the least, somewhat suspect.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Has my hon. Friend received a letter from British Rail in which it makes a virtue of the fact that it will provide far more points of access to stations so that it will be possible for the public to get on to trains at all convenient points? That reinforces the argument that my hon. Friend is advancing.

Mr. Cryer: My comments are derived precisely from that claim by British Rail. It is clear that it wishes to make stations much more open. I am probably the only hon. Member who has accompanied a member of the railway inspectorate along a line with the man who became the chief railway inspecting officer. When he inspected the Worth valley branch line to ensure that it was safe, he said that fences had to be in place. We had to provide the inspecting officer with a certificate that stated that the faulty fencing to which he had drawn attention had been repaired to stop the very access that British Rail is now saying is one of the continental delights that we must adopt.

Dr. Marek: Perhaps my hon. Friend will bear in mind that British Rail removed fences at level crossings. Many automatic level crossings were introduced about seven or eight years ago and many people lost their lives because of a lowering of standards. There were arguments——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that we are not dealing with level crossings. We should be debating penalties for fare evasion. That has nothing to do with level crossings at this stage.

Mr. Cryer: I think that my hon. Friend was using an illustration, Madam Deputy Speaker——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not debating level crossings

Mr. Cryer: That is right. We are dealing with access and the removal of barriers at stations. We are saying that it is better to have British Rail staff at stations to prevent people running on to the platforms if, for example, they are drunk. The same applies to young children and others. In other words, the consideration applies to all those who may suffer injury by falling off the edge of the platform. The same argument applies to level crossings, but I shall not cross that path again.

The Minister was gloating when he spoke of less public money, but surely it is a good thing to have a good public service. There should be staff at stations to help and guide and to maintain property in good order. There should be staff to look after our public service and to protect facilities from vandalism. That is where British Rail should be making the savings that it and we want to be made.

I am not advancing an argument on behalf of those who seek to dodge fares. Instead, I am saying that we should maintain and improve the good safety system that British Rail has been operating. By historical development, the system that British Rail has maintained—it is required to do so by law—depends on a closed system. It seems that we are being asked to take a step that is very much in the wrong direction.

I urge British Rail to reconsider its policy. It should leave the Bill for six months and start to employ people at stations instead of removing them and leaving a bare platform with a bus shelter. We are all aware that such shelters are often damaged. We condemn vandalism, but it happens.

My hon. Friends the Members for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for West Bromwich, East have referred to abandoned stations. If staff are taken from stations, the risks increase, particularly for women. The Employment Bill is in Committee and that will remove protection for women. Under that Bill, women will either have to do night work or face losing unemployment benefit if they refuse to take that job.

Stations which should have barriers and a staff presence will not be staffed because, as the hon. Member for New Forest said, the Bill will mean that more stations will be unstaffed. Therefore, thanks to the Employment Bill, more women will visit stations late at night and will not see a friendly face and receive help from station staff. They would need such assistance in the early evening in winter or late at night in summer when station lamps might not be working as well as they should. Mobile maintenance teams carry out maintenance work at the moment. However, as stations are inspected only at intervals, repairs are carried out infrequently and at times the lamps are out of action.

There is Government pressure to make cuts and we are witnessing the all-too-willing acquiescence of British Rail senior management. It would have been helpful if British Rail management had the co-operation and help of the unions because union members will have to carry out the work. The board members endorsed and dreamed up the proposal in their executive suites. They have chauffeurs waiting at their doors, but those chauffeurs have not been sacked. Similarly, the executive cook in the executive suite still has a job.

British Rail senior management will not be travelling on the trains. It would be good if Robert Reid left his executive suite, gathered the lads and lasses around him and said, "I'm going to do the Leeds Pullman express today and I want you all to come with me because I'm going to demonstrate how to deal with difficult passengers." That would lift morale on British Rail. However, he is not going to do that and nor is anyone else

in the executive suites. They will stick tight to their Italian leather chairs and send out the orders. They will not travel on the trains because they would meet too many people who would like to take up complaints directly with them. If those passengers discovered who they were, the executives would never get off some of the trains, particularly those on the overused, generally run-down urban services.

Trade unions members will have to impose the fare penalties. As my hon. Friends have already said, there may be drunks on platforms late at night. People might become intoxicated because they have been encouraged to drink by the advertising in this enterprise culture, for example, on ITV, and of course Sky television will be beaming around its adverts to booze more. I will not follow those electronic beams. I will refer to the Bill. It will be very difficult for station staff to impose penalties on drunks. Railway staff have already called repeatedly for more late-night protection.

There will be other difficulties. While the hon. Member for New Forest has assured us that there will be no targets for collecting penalty fares from fare dodgers, or alleged fare dodgers, we must remember that British rail personnel are subject to an intransigent and unco-operative management which has imposed on them the most remarkable rule—if staff criticise British Rail publicly, they can be sacked. It should be made clear that if anyone in British Rail has a complaint, he should go to his Member of Parliament, because it will be a breach of privilege for British Rail management, or anyone else, to deny a person the right of consulting his elected representative. There is the onus and constant pressure on British Rail staff to collect fares. At the same time, they cannot grumble or complain about it being a bad system. Therefore, it seems that this is not the time to introduce the Bill.

My third point concerns the deterrent to travel—although I make no defence for the fare dodger. At present, the system is that the fare can be paid on checking. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East pointed out that in the 1960s the Government were busy eroding British Rail's network. More closures are in the pipeline.

The question of the Settle to Carlisle line has been raised in the House on several occasions, with 29 petitions against its closure presented over the past 12 months. I am not happy with the powers envisaged being granted to British Rail management, because they will provide another technique for justifying a railway's closure. A set, group or gang of ticket inspectors could act as a potential deterrent to travel.

I should not like to see that happening on a line such as the Settle-Carlisle. That line belies the need for the Bill. Its passenger revenue has increased from £1 million to £1·7 million. There is already fares collection by guards on the train, but not the imposition of fare penalties. That system has, by and large, worked extremely well, with increased revenue to the extent I have described. One asks why the Bill is necessary when a line that was making a loss five years ago is now making a healthy profit—and with expenditure on the Ribblehead viaduct reducing from £4·5 million to £900,000, it is paying its way. If the Minister intervenes again, I hope that it will be to make the short, dramatic statement that he will make British Rail keep open the Settle to Carlisle line——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must return to the Bill before the House, and not discuss the Settle to Carlisle line.

Mr. Cryer: It is very tempting to stay on the subject of the Settle to Carlisle line, because it is so important that it be retained. However, I accede entirely to your request, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Dr. Marek: I wish to mention the Settle to Carlisle, but in connection with the Bill. Is it not true to say that the Bill is unnecessary in respect of that line, because the two or three-car sets that it uses enables guards or ticket collectors to walk through the whole train between each station, thereby controlling the travel of every passenger and making fare evasion impossible? Does my hon. Friend agree that there is no need for the Bill's provisions on the Settle to Carlisle line?

Mr. Cryer: I agree with my hon. Friend. The record is there to see. The Settle to Carlisle line is a friendly line, and the imposition of fare penalties will breed a great deal of antagonism. The Settle to Carlisle line has developed an enormous amount of goodwill and friendliness over the years that it has been rescued from the clutches of closure by British Rail's management.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that on a line such as the Settle to Carlisle, which is used a great deal by walkers and climbers, an unsatisfactory aspect of unmanned stations, and of unreliable train services on occasions, is that a traveller can arrive at the station and not be sure whether the train he wants has arrived and departed? That is important in respect not only of the Settle to Carlisle line but of others. If deferred ticket machines are to be installed, there must also be a system that will make clear whether trains have yet passed through a station.

Mr. Cryer: I entirely endorse my hon. Friend's point. I shall deal with a few of the Bill's details in a moment, but first I wish to emphasise that the Settle to Carlisle line offers a good example of why the Bill is not necessary.

Clause 4(3)(*a*)(ii) provides an exemption, for a passenger will not be able to pay a penalty fare if,

"when he transferred from another train service . . . there were no facilities for either the sale of the necessary fare ticket for his journey or the sale of deferred fare authorities."

Where I now live I have the opportunity of going either to Bradford interchange or to Shipley station. The status of Shipley station has recently been enhanced. To avoid responsibility for closing the Wortley curve—another argument that I shall not go into now—British Rail has transferred London trains from Bradford interchange to Bradford Forster Square.

None the less, Shipley station is at present open only in the morning. If trains are leaving at about the moment of closure and someone has to run to catch his train, he may be confronted with a ticket collector saying, "You have no ticket. You could have bought one at Shipley station." Instead of just handing over the fare, as would normally happen, that person must write within 21 days an explanation giving the station's opening and closing times, the time of the train and the time of arrival, as outlined in clause 4(7). Surely that will encourage antagonism and make it more difficult for the traveller to decide whether to

[Mr. Cryer]

sprint for a train. As it happens, the booking office at Shipley station is probably 120 yd from the main platform for the Keighley-Shipley-Leeds trains.

Moreover, a person is not liable for a penalty if he has no opportunity to obtain a ticket on a conductor-train service. Many of the urban services around Bradford are crowded, particularly at peak times. It will be extremely difficult for the conductor to get around to people who get on at, say, Bramley on the way to Leeds or uphill into Bradford, where no ticket collection service is available. Again, if they are sitting in a corner with others standing, the ticket collector may go past them. They will then become engaged in an argument about whether it was possible for them to obtain tickets on a conductor-train service.

That has occurred to me because I have travelled on a train and bought a ticket at the end of my journey, but have been ignored by the conductor—who has been involved in giving out tickets—in the press of people. On the short journeys for which the Bill is supposed to be designed, it is possible to reach one's destination before the conductor has had time to go round.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): May I raise a similar point? Clause 5 provides that the penalty "shall not apply to a person travelling on a conductor train service whose journey begins at a non-ticket station". There is then the problem of deciding what constitutes a conductor train and a non-ticket station, which is dealt with in clause 2.

At Dronfield station, where I alight for my constituency, there is someone selling tickets on the platform. That would seem to make Dronfield a non-ticket station, when that person is not there. Clause 2, however, states that

"'non-ticket station' means a station on a conductor train service at which there is no provision at any time for the sale of tickets".

There is a possiblilty of fare tickets being available at Dronfield station, but it is an open station: people can come in at the last moment and jump on to a train on which a conductor or inspector is going round with his machine. Will the Bill catch those who run to get on a train at the last minute because at the other end of the platform there may be someone with a machine issuing tickets?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend has illustrated the point that I made about Shipley station. He has demonstrated that Shipley is not unique. I also know Dronfield station, which was reopened through the efforts of a Labour-controlled local authority, and very welcome it is, too. However, the provisions will create difficulties.

The Bill provides for the Secretary of State to change the penalty fare. Every Government Department has introduced orders under which penalties or charges have soared. Increases by order of 30, 40, 50 or 60 per cent. are not unknown. On occasion the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments has been advised by our counsel that some of the increases in charges are so great that they can be regarded as an unusual use of the power.

One of my reservations about the measure is that powers are to be given to the Secretary of State to make orders that would change the penalty fares as he chooses.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: My hon. Friend will have seen the Minister give us a nod and a wink, suggesting that he would have been happier if provision had been made for the affirmative rather than the negative procedure. Does my hon. Friend believe that the promoters ought to give an undertaking to make that change in Committee?

Mr. Cryer: I agree entirely. An undertaking ought to be given to amend the Bill to provide for the affirmative procedure. The Minister—as Ministers are wont to do—gave the usual smug assurance that statutory instruments can be debated, but he did not say that they cannot be amended. They have to be either agreed to or rejected. Our examination of statutory instruments is shockingly inadequate. There ought to be more than an hour and a half in which to debate them. Some statutory instruments are more comprehensive and detailed than many major Acts, and more time ought to be spent on examining them.

I hope that the promoter will give us an assurance that in Committee he will seek to change the Bill to provide for the affirmative procedure. He knows that under the negative procedure the possibility of time being given to debate a prayer depends on who signs it and on whether the Government are in a generous mood and award an hour and a half for debate. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that a prayer can be debated for an hour and a half from 10 o'clock. If there is a Division at 10 o'clock, debating time is automatically cut by 15 or 20 minutes. The time for debate is limited. Important powers are to be given to the Secretary of State, so the affirmative procedure would be better.

A safeguard is provided in clause 8(3). It says:

"A warning notice stating the amount of the penalty fare shall be posted at every station at which persons may start to travel on a train service, in such a position as to be readily visible to prospective passengers and shall (however expressed) indicate the circumstances . . . in which they may be liable to pay a penalty fare."

That is an absolute, not a qualified, obligation. It does not say.

"so far as reasonably practicable."

No penalties are to be imposed if notices are not provided. If somebody is made the subject of a penalty fare and says, "I did not know about it", no provision is made for him to say that at Shipley or Dronfield station, or wherever it may be, a notice had not been posted. As it is to be an absolute obligation, it might help if the Bill were changed to provide for the members of the British Railways board to be prosecuted for breach of statutory duty if warning notices are not provided. No such provision is made in the Bill because members of British Railways board do not intend to lay themselves open to action if they fail to carry out their duty. The honest passenger will find, when circumstances conspire against him, that a penalty is imposed on him or her.

The Bill represents another step backwards by British Rail. More stations that look ugly and abandoned will still be open to the public. I would not like to catch a train from Forster Square station at night. There is no sign of any human presence. The huge, formerly magnificent midland railway terminus in Bradford is now a gaunt, empty shell with two railway tracks running into it. Late at night it presents a daunting prospect for me, but for many women and more slightly-built people it must seem considerably more daunting.

I do not want a British Rail of this character, but one which is well served, and which provides passengers with an excellent service from good staff who are well trained and committed to serving the people. That is what the staff

want to do, but they are inhibited by provisions that seem to say to them: "Brothers and sisters, you are shortly going to be made redundant, with a ticket machine in your place." If hon. Members were told that they were going to be replaced by ticket machines, that would not exactly increase their morale. I sometimes think that if we put the board and the management elite on the platforms and ticket machines in the boardroom, we would probably get a better system.

9.21 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: With the leave of the House, I shall comment on some of the points made in what has been an interesting debate.

It was perhaps inevitable that such a scheme would attract criticism of how it would work. However, I hope that I have also detected in the debate a consensus that something should be done to correct evasion. Hon. Members from all parties no doubt have their own pet schemes for dealing with it.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) talked about the infringement of civil liberties. The same argument could be levelled against the meter maids—the traffic wardens—who presume a person guilty and put a ticket on his car, even though he may have had a valid reason for not paying the meter. If that is regarded as an infringement of civil liberty, I am not aware that the hon. Gentleman has made much fuss about it. We are introducing not a criminal offence but a civil one, which will be a deterrent to people who do not pay their fare.

Concern has been expressed about the authorised personnel. I think that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish referred to people who impersonate driving instructors. He will know that the Bill sets out clear rules about how a person issued with a penalty fare ticket should seek the documentation of the authorised person. Frankly, in written terms, that is as fair as one can be. Inevitably, some people will try to dress up and cheat the passenger, but the passenger has the opportunity to seek the official's identification if he is at all concerned.

Deferred payment machines are already in place on the London-Southend-Tilbury line, though perhaps not in the numbers which we would eventually want. There are 100 automatic ticket machines in place and 1,000 on order. No matter how many are required, they will be provided.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish referred to the large numbers of people already being prosecuted. Earlier, I gave a figure of between 3,000 and 4,000. As the majority of offenders are within the £2 fare bracket, and since the national loss is about £50 million, about 20 million individual journeys may be involved. However, I accept the point made by other hon. Members that those are, inevitably, estimates. I was not trying, at the outset, to present them as hard and fast figures.

Over the years I have discussed a fair number of British Rail Bills with the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). He raised a number of important issues, many of them referring to the whole question of how a passenger who is challenged, but who might have good reason for not having a ticket, could be dealt with. Since these are important points it might be helpful to the House if I were to take a moment or two to indicate some of the types of discretion that one would expect to see exercised by the authorised person. This will come up in their training.

First of all, there are the procedures to be adopted by the authorised person when a passenger refuses or fails to pay. "Listen to the passenger for an explanation" is the very first and, I hope, golden rule. "If it is immediately obvious that British Rail is at fault, issue a ticket at ticket-office price. If there is reason for suspicion, press for details. If not satisfied, report to penalty fares office with brief statement from passenger. Check details given—name and address." I accept the point about the person giving a fake name and address—a matter raised by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek). Obviously one cannot guard totally against that. "Issue penalty fares notice and tell the passenger that he has 21 days to pay or to appeal."

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: What guidance is to be given to the inspector in respect of someone whose name coincides with that of a person who is well known? I have a constituent whose name is the same as that of a famous person. Every time my constituent gives his name to the police or to anyone else the first comment is, "Pull the other one." There is great difficulty in insisting that the correct name has been given. Anyone who has a name like Margaret Thatcher and is not the Prime Minister has problems.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I understand that there can be serious problems for some people, but I hope that the discretion to be exercised by the authorised person will take account of that. These are the sorts of questions that would be subject to discretion at the time or after the notice had been issued.

Let me come to some of the explanations that may be given. "Facilities not available." The authorised person's discretion should deal with most of these cases at the time; hopefully they will not go any further. "Waiting time excessive." "I thought the ticket was valid." "Office was closed." "Did not know about the machines." "Did not understand how the machine worked." "The last time I used a machine I lost my money." Since these machines are very reliable that is an excuse which, one hopes, will not be taken too seriously. "I can't read". That is a perfectly reasonable and valid excuse. "Did not know what ticket to get." "I fell asleep." "I did not realise I had got to my destination." "I am foreign." "The machine did not work." "I got on the wrong train." " I am pregnant, under the doctor." "I got on the train to help someone and was carried off." "I have been on the station but have not travelled." "I am disabled and could not get to the office."

If true, these are the sorts of things that the inspector, the authorised person, will clearly exempt.

Mr. Snape: It might have enlightened the House more if the hon. Gentleman had said who exactly will have to pay the penalty, given the list of exemptions that we have just heard.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I hope the hon. Gentleman will recognise that all those exemptions, or matters for discretion, are sensible, that these are problems that could genuinely occur. I want to make it crystal clear that the person travelling on the British Rail network who wants to buy a ticket has nothing to fear. A whole lot of people to whom I have just referred have nothing to fear. But when persistent offenders, over the years, undermine the

[Mr. McNair-Wilson]

structure of the railway management and, by so doing, cause increases in ticket prices, and so on, the board has a responsibility to do something about it.

Mr. Cryer: Does not the board also have a responsibility to ensure that young children do not have access to the railway? How does it reconcile that duty with the removal of barriers?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: There is no question of unstaffed stations or of a great empty concourse. I remember sponsoring a Bill about 10 years ago which increased the powers of the British Rail police. I also remember the resistance to it in various parts of the House. There is no question of allowing every drunk to wander on the track or on to a train.

Mr. Tony Banks: Was the hon. Gentleman giving examples of excuses which would be acceptable, or was it an exhaustive list? One could think of others such as "My local Member of Parliament stole my ticket, guv."

When British Rail was adequately staffed—it was known for being labour-intensive and for providing a good service once—was ticket fraud greater or less?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Ticket fraud is not new. In the past, the procedure was to use the Act to which I referred earlier. It is still in place. What is proposed is different—these are not criminal penalties. There has always been ticket fraud.

Mr. Banks: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. It must be true. Nevertheless, will he answer my question? Has there been a significant increase in ticket fraud? If not, why is British Rail presenting this Bill?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: There has been an increase. Much of it is opportunistic. Even between Second Reading in another place one year ago and now, the figure for Network SouthEast has increased quite steeply. There is a serious problem which needs to be resolved.

Mr. Snape: If what the hon. Gentleman has said is true, and if he says it we accept that it is true, how much of the estimated £36 million does he expect will be saved by the Bill, bearing in mind the list of possible exemptions that he has given?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I tried to cover that point in my opening speech. The board considers that a realistic figure would be a reduction by £9 million. That is its first objective, but if the scheme goes further, that is in everybody's interests.

Hon. Members spoke about ticket machines. Deferred payment machines take coins between 5p and £1 in value. Ticket machines are currently able to take £5 and £10 notes, but we hope to go up to £20 notes.

Mr. Banks: But that will buy only a single ticket on the Underground.

Dr. Marek: Perhaps I might bring the hon. Gentleman back to the £9 million saving. Has the board calculated how much that is lost through evasion could be saved by employing an extra 1,000 or 2,000 people?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: The board regards this as the most efficient way in which to do it, given that the barrier system in some stations leads to great queuing and crowding. I well remember when I was Member of Parliament for West Lewisham in south London, where there is a railway station at Forest Hill. Every hon. Member who represents a London constituency will know what the queuing was like at the various termini during the rush hour. Obviously it is in everyone's interests that people get off trains and reach their destinations as quickly as possible.

Mr. Banks: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to come with me on a trip to Stratford station which is part of Network SouthEast, the Central line and the Docklands light railway. The situation is just as he described although all the equipment is modern. Everyone comes up to one barrier, one single turnstile. It is crazy. the queue stretches all the way back towards the platform. What is the point of getting to the station more quickly to wait longer to go through a single turnstile?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: The hon. Gentleman makes the point better than I could. The new procedure is being adopted precisely to provide better access to and from stations.

The hon. Member for Wrexham referred to violence. The guards or ticket collectors who are responsible for maintaining order on the railway network are aware of the very serious problems that they face. Not too long ago there was an incident in which someone was stabbed in the eye at the end of a journey when a number of vandals got off a train. As I pointed out earlier, that is exactly why it is planned that the people authorised to carry out the scheme should work in pairs, or in larger teams, because such a danger exists. We hope that those who work in those very difficult and responsible positions will recognise that the proposals in the Bill are in their interests just as much as they are in the interests of the travelling public.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the problem of collection on the trains. I wish to make it quite clear that although there can be ticket inspections on the trains there can also be ticket inspections at stations. The Bill does not in any way rule out the fact that the scheme can be operated on the station as well as on the train. However, the objective is that it should take place on trains during shorter journeys. However, I take the point that was made by the hon. Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Denton and Reddish that some shorter journeys involve trains where it would be difficult to carry out such checks. The board will not introduce the system on any part of the railway network until it is satisfied that the criteria which I set out originally are in place. That is why the first likely candidate for the system will be the Tilbury-Southend-London route.

Turning to the speech by the hon. Member for Bradford, South, of course I take his point about the loading gauges. I am sufficiently well aware of railway operations to know the difference between what happens here and what happens on the continent, but for whatever reasons, open stations have become commonplace throughout Europe, and Britain is now almost alone in the operation of the barrier system which, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) pointed out, can lead to a great deal of queueing and inconvenience.

Mr. Banks: There is a problem at Stratford because British Rail Network SouthEast is trying to operate an open station system and London Regional Transport is installing new barriers. That is the nonsense. The barrier is

brand new and has been in place for only about 12 months so there is a total conflict between Network SouthEast and London Regional Transport. Surely that is another good reason for having a strategic transport authority for London.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: That is another matter, but I understand what the hon. Gentleman says. There is an inter-relationship between LRT and British Rail and where there is an interface as has just been described by the hon. Gentleman it is in everyone's interest to have a commonality policy. No doubt his remarks will have been heard by the board.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South referred to the figures. The hon. Member for Wrexham thought that the figures may be too low but the hon. Member for Bradford, South thought that they were too high. I accept that the figures are not precise. They are estimated figures and both the hon. Gentlemen could be correct. However, there have been meetings with the National Union of Railwaymen on that issue. Those meetings will continue and, as the Bill passes through its various stages, there will be opportunities for the discussions to continue.

It saddened me to hear hon. Members criticise the chairman of British Rail. He is very much a railwayman, unlike some chairmen. I was sorry to hear hon. Members attack him as if he knew nothing about the railway system. He started work on the railways as a young lad, much against the wishes of his family. He has been a distinguished chairman and I would like to think that the House believes that he has done a good job for British Rail.

Having sought to clarify many of the questions raised by hon. Members, I reiterate my view that this is a good scheme. Clearly, trial and error will show how good it is but I do not think that any of us would rest easy if we allowed a system to continue in which large sums of money are lost which could be used to the benefit of British Rail, and, more importantly, to the benefit of the travelling public.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 93, Noes 59.

Division No. 76] **[9.41 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thurnham, Peter
Wallace, James
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson
and Mr. Neil Thorne.

NOES

Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Galbraith, Sam
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Ingram, Adam
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Snape, Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Martin Redmond.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read a Second time and committed.

London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

9.52 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

London Regional Transport has a general duty to provide or secure the provision of public passenger transport services for greater London. It must pay due regard to the current transport needs of greater London and to the efficiency, economy and safety of the operation. Millions of pounds are being lost every year because the system lacks security. It is extremely important that those people who use the system and pay for its service should not suffer the cost while leaving many to get away without paying. According to the annual survey, it has been calculated that no less than £26 million a year is currently lost by London Regional Transport. That loss is far too big to be satisfactory. A proper system for reducing that discrepancy is needed and that is why the Bill is being introduced.

There are many good reasons why the Secretary of State has to be satisfied before the measure can be introduced. He has to be satisfied that there is adequate staffing, adequate availability of machines, that the arrangements for monitoring defective machines are adequate and that ticket inspectors are properly trained. There must be adequate publicity about the introduction of the scheme and there must be a disputes and appeals procedure. Those are important matters and the Secretary of State must examine them carefully and diligently. It would be wrong to assume that he was uncritical about the standards before he was prepared for the Bill to be introduced.

Most of us have suffered the inconvenience of using machines that are not up to standard, and in the past there have been many justifiable criticisms of ticket machines, especially those that are required to give change. Technology is moving quickly and in the near future we can expect major strides in computer and other electronic technology. We think that it is now possible to produce extremely reliable and effective machines. With that in mind we have to grasp the opportunity of being able to take advantage of modern technology, thereby reducing the volume of evasion and fraud in the system.

Questions will be asked about the security of the system and in that respect London Regional Transport is important because the volume of traffic is such that it is not possible for tickets to be checked on trains in the same way as, for example, they are checked on British Rail. The present maximum fare on LRT is £2·90 and a penalty of £10 in relation to that is appropriate. The penalty on the Docklands light railway or on the buses is £5. There is a major difference compared with any system proposed for British Rail, and that is to take account of the lower charges on the Docklands light railway and the buses. The penalty has been geared accordingly.

These powers are required as part of a new system of fare collection and the recognition of the importance of staff being introduced to the customers on the train. The system has worked extremely well on the Docklands light railway where the train captains have a close involvement with the passengers and perform tasks in addition to the mere collection and checking of tickets.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): London Docklands railway is accepting the same philosophy as British Rail—that of open stations and fare collection and checking on the trains—but the rest of the tube system is using appalling barriers. Is that not illogical? If fare collection on vehicles, which has cut down violence on the trains, if not on the stations, can work, why should it not work on the rest of the tube system?

Mr. Thorne: The introduction of a train captain has been extremely effective and the system can be reassuring to the passengers. The collection or validation of tickets has been a major problem on the Docklands light railway, so that system is to be replaced. It is not possible for that system to operate completely satisfactorily, so it is necessary to make that change.

Staff can do much and they should be much more involved in the success of the operation. There are many opportunities and it is no longer valid to continue the operation as it has been run for many years. Although fraud has always been a factor, it has substantially increased in recent years and if it is allowed to increase still further, it will be unacceptable, particularly for the genuine, honest fare-paying members of the public who are the vast majority of those who use this transport. It would be wrong to allow those who wish to indulge in fraud to get away with it any longer.

It is important that we realise that there will be major provisions to ensure that genuine travellers who are not trying to evade the fare will be able to call in aid an excuse. The passenger will not be liable to pay a penalty fare if there are no facilities available for ticket sales at the station at which the journey was started. If the passenger transfers to London Underground or Docklands light railway from British Rail and the British Rail station at which he starts has no facilities for sale of tickets, and if a notice was displayed at the station where he started the journey—whether British Rail, London Underground or Docklands light railway station—stating that it was permissible for passengers to travel from that station without a ticket or if an authorised person in uniform informed the passenger to that effect, he would not be liable to pay the penalty.

If a person is asked for his ticket or authority by the London Underground or Docklands light railway authorised official and says that he was not able to obtain it for one or more of those reasons, then it is for the London Underground or the Docklands light railway to prove that the reason is not correct. The onus is on them. If the passenger wishes to raise one of these reasons later, he has 21 days to do so from the day after the completion of the journey. Only then comes the transfer of the burden of proof. If the passenger does not provide the explanation in these terms on the spot or within 21 days, he has to prove that one of the defences applies.

This seems to be an effective and sensible way to conduct this arrangement. It is important that we should introduce it as early as possible so that we can take advantage of the available modern technology so as substantially to reduce the number of people who are defrauding their fellow passengers—a number that is likely to increase if we do not take some firm steps against such a practice.

10.5 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Whenever I listen to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) my memory goes back to county hall in the 1970s, when he was a great believer in strategic planning. If I remember rightly, he was the chair of the central area planning board. Unfortunately, he has now changed his position, but in the past he was committed to some form of strategic planning for London. I hope that eventually he will return to that view.

I am against those who evade payment on London Transport or any other form of public transport. Fare evasion imposes a greater burden on honest fare-paying passengers. We want to ensure that everyone contributes his or her share to the cost. It is not surprising that in principle we all agree that something should be done to reduce fare evasion.

It is also not surprising that more and more members of the travelling public are evading their fares, or attempting to do so. That is connected with the fact that London passenger fares increased by an average of 12·4 per cent. only last month, which was twice the level of inflation. The cost of a weekly inner zone travelcard increased by nearly 20 per cent. When the Government were stripping control of London Regional Transport from the Greater London council in preparation for the abolition of the council, I well remember the then Secretary of State saying that fares would increase broadly in line with inflation. That is another promise that the Government did not intend to keep or have somehow forgotten since control was taken from the GLC in 1984.

The more that the Government put pressure on London Transport to push up the level of fares, the more the public will evade the payment of fares. That is because in many instances they will not be able to meet the new fare levels. I think especially of the unemployed, the low paid and the homeless. There is a correlation between ever-increasing fares and the ever-increasing level of evasion.

The withdrawing of staff leads to an open invitation to the travelling public to avoid paying their fares. I said during the Second Reading of the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill that this morning I travelled from East Ham on the District line after a meeting at Newham town hall. There was no one staffing the ticket office. A queue of would-be travellers was waiting to put money into the machine. I did not notice whether it demanded the exact fare or whether it gave change. I heard the train entering the station and as I was anxious to get to the House, as I always am, I decided to leg it down the stairs and jump on the train. I paid my fare at the other end of the journey, but if I had been someone not as well heeled as an hon. Member I might have decided to declare that I had come from the Monument or Tower Hill instead of stating the truth.

The more that the Government force London Regional Transport or any other transport undertaking to withdraw the number of staff on stations, the more the travelling public will seek to avoid paying their fares. It is noticeable that London Underground Ltd. remains committed to substantial staff reductions in its determination to cut costs. I understand that it is about to implement the first stage of its action stations. Such a term suggests that something is taking place when often the reverse is the case. Under the action stations programme, a pilot scheme is to be carried out on the Metropolitan line at 13 stations from Harrow-on-the-Hill to Amersham and Chesham. The present complement of staff will be reduced from 169 to 142. As 20 of the 142 will be ticket examiners, the effective number of staff on stations will be 122, a reduction of about 25 per cent. In addition, London Underground Ltd. has announced the introduction of automatic ticket machines—they are now in place in almost all Underground stations—which will mean the loss of another 1,200 jobs.

It is true that London Underground has said that nearly half those jobs will be redeployed on general station duties and that will increase the availability of staff to help passengers. Nevertheless, the implication of the cuts is that there will be a reduction of about one sixth in the number of staff on London Underground. The more staff that British Rail and London Underground remove from stations, the more fare evasion will increase.

I asked the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) who promoted the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill whether there was any sign of an increase in fare evasion on British Rail in recent years. If it had not increased, why on earth was British Rail proposing such a scheme? The answer was that it had increased. Why cannot Ministers see that there is a correlation between a continual reduction in the number of staff on stations and an increase in ticket evasion?

When British Rail and the Underground were known to be more labour intensive, there was less fraud. There were also more jobs on the system. It is nonsense for the Government to suggest that they are not connected with the problems on British Rail and the Underground.

I very much oppose the Bill because I think that it is cosmetic. It misses the target. It is not directed at the real cause of fare evasion on the Underground or on British Rail, for the reasons that I have given so far.

The Bill refers to fares on buses and the fixed penalties that will be imposed on them. Bus fares are slightly lower than those on the Underground. Perhaps that has something to do with the relative economic prosperity of bus travellers in comparison with Underground travellers. There must be some connection there.

The system is moving towards fewer staff. I have heard Minister after Minister at the Dispatch Box say that the travelling public likes one-person operated buses. I use those buses frequently. I cannot understand why I always manage to travel on one when none of the passengers seems to be happy. I make a point of talking to my fellow travellers and I ask them whether they like the service. The majority of opinion is completely against one-person-operated buses in London. That is the view of the passengers and of other road users.

There are insufficient controls over parking restrictions in the capital. More and more cars and lorries therefore pile up behind one-person-operated buses which stay at a stop for a long time while the poor old bus driver tries to ensure that everyone pays the fare. He must ensure that no one nips through the exit doors—I have seen that happen frequently.

It is strange that it is apparently OK continually to reduce the number of people working on the mass transit systems, while on the more luxurious transport systems there are more and more people. Only a very strange airline would try to sell the idea of one-pilot-operated planes. A passenger might go to the entrance door and be greeted by the pilot who asks to see the ticket and then says, "Hang on a moment, I've just got to make sure that

[Mr. Tony Banks]

the engines are started. I will come back and then I'll go round with the drinks after I've switched on to automatic pilot." No one would travel on a plane in those circumstances. The adverts give the idea that passengers are greeted by smiling staff and each airline boasts of its staff-to-passenger ratio. That is considered to be an absolute asset. Why can that not be true for the buses and trains?

The travelling public would prefer to be greeted by the bus conductor or conductress who would show him to a seat, come round with the drinks halfway through the journey and announce the estimated time of arrival and that the passenger would be travelling at approximately ground level. That is the kind of thing people want on London transport.

The more staff that there are operating the transport system, the less fare evasion there will be. That is an obvious and straightforward equation, and I am surprised that it has not sunk into the psyches of Conservative Members that more staffing is the best way of dealing with not only fare evasion but safety and comfort.

The question whether ticket dispensing machines will work has been raised. Some of them are OK, but unless they are regularly maintained—and I am sure that the hon. Member for Ilford, South accepts this—they will break down. There will be increasing frustration as people have to queue up to put their money into machines that do not work. The *Evening Standard* published several articles about the annoyance and anger caused to passengers on London Underground as they found the machines either were inoperative or rejected coins. There are also matters of comfort and safety that neither the Bill, the Government nor London Regional Transport have addressed.

I do not know how often you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, use London Underground, or how often Mr. Speaker or Ministers use it. I know that one or two Ministers do. One of the few advantages of our working hours in this place is that we can usually travel outside the rush hour, and not encounter its full horror. When we do have to travel at the height of the rush hour, it all comes back to us like some horrible nightmare, and we wonder how much longer we must put up with such conditions.

To that discomfort, we now have the added obstruction of automatic ticket barriers, which are supposed to do something about countering fare evasion and smoothing the passage of travellers through the system. All that is rubbish, as anyone who has encountered the new ticket barriers can testify. I invite right hon. and hon. Members to examine the barriers at Westminster underground station. Again, the *Evening Standard* reported that passengers avoid using the automatic barriers, preferring to queue up at the barrier staffed by a uniformed ticket collector, because other passengers get stuck as they put their tickets into those wretched automatic barriers and find that they do not open.

I do not know who invented that machinery, but whoever it was should be shut into one of those barriers and left there to rot for a few years. He might then realise that those fiendish contraptions, which are now ringing London stations, are unacceptable and a complete waste of public money. There are all kinds of capital items on which London Underground could have used that investment to improve amenities. It is a useless system, just like that used for one-man buses. I guarantee that within a matter of a few years they will fall into disuse and the barriers will be permanently jammed open, if they are not already. I say that because I do not have a great deal of trust in the manufacturers' ability to make sure that those barriers do not jam. One day, people will ask who was the fool who invented the system.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I realise that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) does not often stray very far from Newham, but if he were to cross the Channel and travel on the Paris metro he would find there a similar ticket barrier system that has worked well for many years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We are moving away from the subject of the Bill, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will return to the point.

Mr. Banks: I trust that that stricture was not directed at me, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thought that I was keeping to the point. I would very much like to go to Paris. I would go there with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks), even though he is not quite my sort.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): If the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) had been here for the past three hours, he would have heard us exploring all the differences between the Paris metro and the Underground in this country.

Mr. Banks: It is all about capital investment, flat fares and a range of other issues. As one of my hon. Friends said, we should not make comparisons based on only one aspect of the system. If we are to make European comparisions we should compare the levels of capital investment, fares and wages, and the number of staff employed. Given our parsimonious attitude to investment, it is not surprising that London's transport system is approaching breaking point and we have to resort to silly, cosmetic, passenger-delaying manoeuvres.

The Bill does not address the real problem. It tinkers with it, as the Government do with so many other aspects of our transport life. The Government's transport policies, like their policies on other matters, actually produce problems; then they come up with some fart-arsed cosmetic idea to try to deal with the problems that they have created.

Ministers, with one or two honourable exceptions, do not use the public transport system. One of the reasons why all Back Benchers want to become Ministers is the chance of getting into one of those chauffeur-driven limousines, reading their red boxes with the light on. As we trudge down into Westminster underground station, the Ministers go past in their cars splashing mud all over us. If they knew what it was like to travel on public transport they would not be defending this wretched little Bill and the silly things that are happening to London transport.

The best way to deal with the problem of fare evasion would be to return to the flat-fare system that the GLC was trying to construct, and keeping fares at a low level. If the system is seen as a service, there will be no excuse for anyone to evade paying fares. [HON. MEMBERS: "Like in Paris."] As hon. Members say, that is what it is like in Paris.

We must start to look on transport as a social service, not a service that must always pay its way in straight

revenue terms. A proper social cost analysis for the economy as a whole, whether in London or the whole country, will show us that a flat-fare system would not only deal with the problem of fare evasion but would speed passengers through the system and take private cars off the road, because transport would become both cheap and attractive.

I suppose that the final solution would be a free transport system. I understand that there is no such thing as a free lunch—even for Members of Parliament—but given its economic benefits a flat-fare or free transport system would enable the service to pay for itself over and over again. It would be good for London, the travelling public, the Government and the economy.

I doubt whether that proposal will receive a very sympathetic hearing tonight, but the day will come when Labour Members are sitting on the Government Benches, and we shall return to the sane transport policy that the good old GLC tried to pioneer. That was stopped because we were having so much electoral success with our flat-fare system. Fare evasion was not the problem that it is now. When that day comes, I hope that I shall be standing at the back cheering on my good friend and saying what a wonderful job he is doing as a Minister——

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I shall be in Paris.

Mr. Banks: One hates to think who my hon. Friend might be in Paris with. Who knows? It might be me.

We should be looking at the new system and deciding that having got it wrong for so long we will get it right this time. This is no way to get it right, and that is why I shall vote against the Bill.

10.24 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): There is a danger that after the contribution by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) my contribution will seem a little dry. However, it may be convenient if I set out the Government's attitude and congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on explaining the Bill so lucidly.

The Government support the Bill, as they support the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill. We believe that London Regional Transport should be allowed the opportunity to levy penalty fares on passengers travelling on its services without having purchased the ticket required. London Underground Ltd. currently estimates that fare evasion costs £26 million a year. Such a measure can therefore benefit only the honest passenger and ease the burden on the taxpayer and the London ratepayer.

LRT of course already has powers to operate a penalty fares system under the London Regional Transport Act 1984, and specifically on the Docklands light railway under the London Docklands Railway Acts of 1984, 1985 and 1986. But because some dissatisfaction was expressed with these powers, the Government established a working group on penalty fares in May 1986 to review the principles which should apply to penalty fares schemes on public transport and to look at the existing provisions concerning LRT services. The Bill before the House is based closely upon the recommendations of the working group.

I do not propose to go into the details of the Bill. Suffice it to say that the Bill underwent considerable scrutiny in another place and a number of changes were made, primarily to ensure that the honest passenger is fully protected. The Committee stage in this House will allow further consideration of those matters, and others.

It should, however, be stressed that an activating order issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be required to bring the powers in this Bill into effect. It will be for LRT to convince us that it can operate a fair and workable penalty fares system on the particular service or services for which it is proposed before an activating order will be issued.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is it intended to introduce the system on one underground line at a time, or for the whole network?

Mr. Portillo: That will have to be considered at the time. It may help the hon. Gentleman if I set out some of the points on which we shall need to be satisfied.

Before any such order is made the Secretary of State will need to be satisfied that all the necessary arrangements are in place to operate the system and that these include safeguards to ensure that honest passengers are not penalised if no opportunity to buy a ticket has been provided. He will therefore need to be assured that ticket offices are properly staffed, that the necessary ticket and deferred authority machines are in place, that there are satisfactory arrangements for monitoring and reparing machines, that there are adequate publicity arrangements to inform passengers about the new system, that ticket inspectors are properly trained to operate the system and are deployed appropriately, and that they have adequate indentification. He must also be assured that procedures for disputes and appeals are in place.

10.27 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thanks to your interpretation of the rules, that I said a few words a short time ago about the impact of the Bill on London.

Once again the Opposition find the assurances about the Secretary of State's involvement totally unconvincing. The long list of assurances that the Secretary of State will need before he gives permission for the penalty fare scheme to be implemented led to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). He asked a short but succinct question about whether the system would be introduced on one line or throughout the underground system. It was a sensible question, despite the Minister's mirth. How will the Secretary of State satisfy himself or herself that all the arrangements that the Minister outlined in his brief speech are satisfactory and have been implemented?

Secretaries of State are good at giving assurances but they are not very good at coming to the House to explain any breaches that have occurred. I hope that the Minister will intervene during the next 30 seconds and tell me just how the Secretary of State plans to enforce that long list of arrangements. That part of the Bill has not yet been fully thought out.

The figure of £26 million—the cost of fare evasion—has been plucked out of the air. Without repeating my earlier opinion that London Underground does not appear interested in collecting fares late at night, I must say that that estimate is as wild as the £36 million mentioned in connection with Network SouthEast.

[Mr. Peter Snape]

When representatives of one of the railway unions approached London Underground Ltd. about the amount of late night fare evasion caused by lack of staff, the unofficial view, given him in an aside by management, was that it would not be worth paying staff to work overtime to collect the comparatively small number of fares that were evaded. So when London Underground wants to save on staff, passengers are honest; when it wants a Bill like this passed, they are dishonest and they cost Londoners, and those of us who are unwilling Londoners for a few days a week, a sizeable sum.

Although briefer, the Minister's contribution was no more satisfactory on this Bill than on the previous one. I hope that my hon. Friends will act accordingly.

10.32 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about ticket barriers. I also agree with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape).

There is a great deal of public concern about the deplorable extent to which London public transport has been run down, and it was incredible that the Minister should fail, in his very brief speech, to deal with that concern. He should be ashamed of himself.

When the issue of penalty fares on London Underground came up before, I brought up the subject of violence directed against staff—an immensely serious problem. Only a month earlier, staff at Leyton bus garage had stopped work to bury a colleague who had been killed. I wanted to know whether penalty fares would increase violence against staff who work for LRT. The reply I received failed to address the point and the Bill was expected to go through without doing so.

Now the legislation is here again. We have received only one document from LRT, and it arrived today, the day of Second Reading. Once again, it does not deal with our genuine concerns about the implications of penalty fares for the safety of staff. No one has said anything to me about them.

LRT is forcing this Bill through and treating hon. Members with contempt. That is reason enough to throw the Bill out. I cannot see a case for imposing penalties on travellers. Indeed, it should be the other way around: LRT should compensate passengers for the appalling journeys and risks they must undertake. I notice that British Telecom runs a scheme to reimburse subscribers whose phones are faulty. That is a bit gimmicky, but if it is good enough for Telecom, it should be used by LRT, too.

Serious safety problems for travellers have not been dealt with. I am sure we shall come to some of those in the debate tomorrow, so I do not want to encroach on them now. I realise that we are dealing with the question of penalty fares, but there is the question of such things as the public address system being inaudible and the risk that that can cause. There is also the question of dangerous overcrowding, which could well result in loss of life.

Mr. Tony Banks: Has my hon. Friend noticed the way in which the public address system on the London Underground always seems to start up just as the doors are closed? As the train is moving out of the station, one can just hear that there is a station further down the line where the lifts are out of action, causing delays. They do not seem to be able to get such messages announced on board the trains; they simply make the announcements at the stations, and it is very frustrating. Has my hon. Friend ever experienced that frustration?

Mr. Cohen: Yes, I have experienced it personally, and I have been told all sorts of horror stories about the public address system. Worst of all, a lot of the stories have been told to me after the Fennell report on the King's Cross disaster. It seems that that lesson has not been learnt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Member has been led astray. I am sure he is going to come back to the question of the penalty fares.

Mr. Cohen: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing myself to be led astray. The question that was raised was the automatic exit barriers, which, of course, is directly relevant to the penalty fares aspect. I am strongly opposed to the automatic exit barriers. As hon. Members will know, I have put down an early-day motion on that matter.

I think that automatic barriers are a danger in the event of a fire. They could result in more loss of life. A fire on the Underground is not just a one-off event; King's Cross is not a one-off affair. Tonight's "World in Action" reported that in a seven-week period between October and December there were 125 fires on the London Underground. Any one of those could have had fatal consequences, as could these barriers.

In this respect Fennell certainly has not been implemented. Many of the Fennell recommendations have not been implemented, yet these barriers are being put in place and creating problems.

Mr. Tony Banks: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the great work that he is doing in drawing attention to the shortcomings of this new automatic ticket gate system. Has he seen tonight's *Evening Standard* which says:

"Fire chiefs demand Tube gate changes

Fire chiefs have ordered modifications to London Underground's controversial automatic gates".

They consider that they are unsafe and they would not allow speedy evacuation of a station in—God forbid—another King's Cross type disaster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We cannot have a general debate on this Bill dealing with the London Underground. It is a fairly narrow Bill restricted to penalty fares, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman will address himself to the Bill.

Mr. A. F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Members will be aware that in the letter that we have had from the London Underground specific mention is made of the automatic ticket barriers and the new system of issuing and collecting tickets, to illustrate that it is improving collection. Surely, if it is reasonable for the promoters of the Bill to refer to the new ticketing machines and barriers as part of the build-up to the Bill, it is perfectly reasonable for hon. Members to make mention of them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The promoters, of course, do not decide what is in order in the House of Commons. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will direct his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Cohen: I will endeavour to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The key point, of course, is that penalty fares and the automatic exit barriers are part of a joint package from LRT in relation to fare evasion. I am not in favour of either, particularly the automatic exit barriers, which I think are dangerous. They affect each other, so I think that it is in order for me to mention them. Others have concentrated on the subject.

I pay tribute to the *Evening Standard* for trying to expose the dangers. On "World in Action" tonight, Mr. Richard Warburton, director general of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, described barriers as an obstruction, especially where there is heat and smoke.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West mentioned the article in the *Evening Standard*. I recently

[Mr. Cohen]

tabled a parliamentary question about LRT and London Underground Ltd. not publishing the fire brigade reports. I asked the Minister about

"all relevant correspondence, reports and documentation communicated between themselves and the fire authorities for London about the consequences for safety of automatic exit barriers installed at London underground stations; and if he will make a statement."

The Minister answered:

"It is for London Regional Transport, London Underground Ltd. and the London fire and civil defence authority to consider whether to make available such exchanges."—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. *210*.]

That is a negation of the Minister's responsibility, yet there is so much anxiety about the matter. They should publish what the fire brigade has to say about the subject.

The travelling public of London have a right to know if the fire brigade says that barriers are unsafe of if any station is unsafe. London Underground is going in the opposite direction. That must be stopped. It is up to the Minister to take more positive action. These barriers are a danger when there are large crowds. They run counter to the operation of London's underground. I shall consider fare evasion later—the unsafe implications of the barriers far outweigh any considerations about collecting fares. There is a far better way in which to collect fares—having proper staffing levels.

I know that we are short of time, so I shall not make a long speech. I could read any number of letters from women with children and passengers with luggage or shopping who find the barriers immensely inconvenient. Even commuting office workers with an umbrella in one hand and a briefcase in the other have written to me saying that they have only two hands and asking how they are supposed to get the ticket into the machine. I have letters from elderly people who are worried about the machines and from people who have paid for expensive season tickets which they put into the machine but do not get back. This is a thoroughly unpopular system which creates congestion and danger.

The machines do not even work. A fit youth can easily hop over them. In "World in Action", the reporter showed the immense congestion and how inconvenient the exit barriers are. He then said that he was travelling on a child's ticket and the machines did not spot it. They are not even effective. They should be withdrawn and no concourses should be closed off, especially after the King's Cross disaster. Hon. Members referred to the Paris metro, but the stations and the concourses there are usually much wider and do not have the safety problems that exist in stations in London. As has been said, the Paris metro operates a much cheaper fares policy so there is not such a great problem of fare evasion. We should be moving towards such a system. The real solution to fare evasion is not automatic barriers or penalty fares but more staff.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Hon. Members are pointing out quite rightly that the priorities being used at present accentuate the problem of fare evasion, but are disregarding the real problem within London Regional Transport. My hon. Friend is making a very good case. Does he agree that London's becoming the most congested and run-down transport system of all the capital cities in Europe?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman responds to that intervention, I am finding it difficult to relate some of his remarks to the Bill. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell me that his remarks relate to the Bill and identify the particular clause in the Bill to which his remarks relate.

Mr. Cohen: I can give you that assurance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am told that my remarks relate to my interpretation of clause 2.

The problem is how to tackle fare evasion. London Regional Transport has proposed a package of automatic exit barriers and penalty fares. The alternative, which I think is much better, is a cheap fares policy and increased staffing to collect fares and protect the travelling public. Many women find travelling on the tube an absolute nightmare, a descent into hell. Certainly many women fear taking that risk.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does my hon. Friend recall that during a recent debate on London Transport I mentioned the long delay in the repairs to the Pimlico escalator, extending over many months, since last May or June? It meant that many ladies and old and disabled people found negotiating that long stairway so difficult and demanding that they probably felt like evading the fare. Will my hon. Friend take note that when the matter was raised in the other place I am advised that Lord Brabazon immediately replied to the noble Lord who raised the issue? However, no Member of the House of Commons has had the courtesy of any comment from London Transport, although I understand that the escalator may well be in operation in another month or two.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman came in fairly recently, but the Chair allowed a fairly wide debate on the first Bill on condition that the debate on the second Bill would be related strictly to the Bill now before us. It would be an abuse of our procedures, and very unfair to hon. Members who have business after this, to have a wide debate. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will respond to what I have now said on a number of occasions.

Mr. Cohen: I shall do that, and therefore I shall not respond to the point about escalators, although my hon. Friend will know that at any particular time one in four escalators on the London Underground does not work. However, I shall not respond to that point because of your strictures, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A better way forward would be increased staffing, a proper railways inspectorate, and for more people to be employed on the London Underground for fare collection, to look after the travelling public and to assist them, with courtesy. The way forward chosen by London Underground, London Regional Transport and the Government will lead to chaos. London will become known as a black spot among European capitals. That is what it has become under the Government. Penalty fares and blocking the way out of stations will simply make congestion and safety problems worse.

The barriers are not cheap—they cost well over £3 million. What a waste of money, especially when London Transport intends to hammer London ratepayers with a 50

per cent. increase in the levy order which the House will be discussing in the future. Therefore, they are a waste of money in addition to all the other problems.

The real way to stop fare evasion is a cheaper fares policy. I appreciate that that would create problems. There is already overcrowding and some might say that cheaper fares would make the overcrowding worse. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West said, that has to be tackled by capital investment. New lines and new rolling stock should be introduced. Some of the rolling stock being introduced now means that more people will have to stand up because——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to be taking any notice of the appeals I have made to him. He must restrict his remarks to the Bill and not widen the debate. I have told him on more than one occasion and I must repeat to him that there is other business after this. He can talk for as long as he likes provided he stays in order but at present he persists in being out of order. This is the last occasion on which I am prepared to appeal to the hon. Gentleman in that regard.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am addressing the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask for your guidance? If a check on fare evasion is to be carried out on the trains, which is what I understand the Bill provides, why is it not relevant for my hon. Friend to refer to the rolling stock——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was addressing my remarks to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and I am sure that he will take notice of what I have said to him.

Mr. Cohen: I certainly will. I do not intend to evade the important issues and I do not want to filibuster. The points I want to make are too important for me to filibuster and concern the interests of the London travelling public. I am coming to the end of my remarks.

Instead of penalty fares and automatic barriers, which just make everything worse, we need a cheaper fares policy. We need more public investment and cheap, efficient and safe travel. We need a co-ordinated transport system that covers all modes of transport and helps ease the problems of overcrowding. We need a change of direction in investment with more money spent on the tube and less on the roads. We need democracy so that the people who run London Underground and London Regional Transport are subject to the democratic pressures of the travelling public and the people of London. If they were subject to that democratic pressure, I do not believe that they would introduce such penalty fares or the automatic ticket barriers. They would have to argue their case if they were electable. Democracy must be restored to our London transport system if we are to solve some of the problems.

Everyone who uses London Underground cares and worries about the safety implications. They do not want to travel in pig-sty or unsafe conditions; they want an efficient and proper system. They pay enough for it, so they deserve it. They care passionately about having a good London transport system. It is the Government who do not care and show that they do not care. They have a contempt for the travelling public for which they should be exposed.

10.55 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I shall be brief, because some of my points have already been made. I agree with the points made by hon. Members about what is wrong with London Regional Transport. It is, however, necessary to make some points as the two Bills are separate.

I admit that in relation to the previous Bill efforts were made to consult British Rail unions, and I understand that consultations are continuing. However, I am not sure that there have been any consultations with the unions about this Bill. If there were any consultations they were perfunctory. It is a pity that, whichever board or company is concerned, it does not gain the support of its employees in the first place. If there were a spirit of consensus, I am sure that many of our debates would be much shorter.

I know that many London Regional Transport employees are extremely worried about the provisions in this Bill. They do not appear to be consulted by London Regional Transport, London Underground Ltd. or by London Buses. As we are all in favour of cutting the number of fare evasions, it is a great pity that unions are not taken into partnership with the board—in this case London Regional Transport—so that a mutually agreed system can be put forward for the House to consider.

The number of assaults on staff on the London Underground in 1983 was 300; in 1984, 286; in 1985, 364; in 1986, 378; and in 1987, 409. I shall not go into why there is an increase in the number of assaults on staff, but I merely say that it is because of the society in which we live and those who are responsible for that society. I am sceptical that one or two guards, conductors or ticket inspectors will be able to deal with the average late night incident on the Underground when trying to exact a £10 penalty fare from a passenger. As we know, some passengers will have had more drink than is good for them, others will be argumentative and others will respond with violence at the drop of a hat. We know only too well what happens day in and day out on the London Underground. I do not believe that it is good enough that civilians or employees should have to exact the £10 penalty fare from people at the risk of physical harm.

If, of course, the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) will say that there would be British Transport police on every train or accompanying every penalty fare collector, I may modify my views. It is a sad historical fact that the number of London Underground police has been dropping, until recently, for reasons completely extraneous to London Regional Transport. If more police were employed, the public and employees would be more confident that violence would not occur. I fear, however, that such violence will increase as a result of the Bill.

I shall not dwell on the subject of barriers, which has been well covered by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), but I am concerned about the servicing of the fare machines. I am not confident in LRT's ability to operate machines that do not break down and that will always give change. As a result of poor servicing I fear that such machines will soon run out of change and will demand exact fare money only. If one is at a tube

[Dr. John Marek]

station where the machines are either broken or taking exact fare only, I have no confidence that the booking office will be open. If it is, there is bound to be a queue.

The public do not want the guarantee that for 80 per cent. of the time all stations will be functioning from 5.30 am until 12.30 at night. The public want to know that for 98 per cent. of the time all stations will be functioning. I do not believe that that is sufficient and I believe that that guarantee should stand for 99·9 per cent. of the time.

There are about four fare machines at Westminster and LRT should be able to guarantee within 0·01 per cent. that at least one of those machines will work all the time. I do not believe that such a gurarantee can be given. I do not believe that LRT has the will to fulfil that commitment. In common with British Rail, LRT is trying to get machines to take the place of people. That will not work. Has the board of LRT estimated how much it would cost to employ a couple of people at every underground station? There are 200 or more stations. It is easy to calculate how much it would cost to have three shifts of two staff at each station—1,200 staff would cost between £10 million and £12 million. The revenue lost as a result of evasion is put at £26 million and I would not be surprised if the employment of additional staff resulted in a £12 million reduction, if not more, in the cost of evasion. We should not give the Bill a Second Reading unless some estimate has been made of the cost and implications of such additional employment.

If extra staff were employed not only would fare evasion be reduced, but violence and vandalism. We would also have cleaner stations and help could be given to mothers and children. It seems that LRT is not worried about any of those extra benefits; all that it is concerned about is making people unemployed and putting machines in their place. I hope that the hon. Member for Ilford, South will deal with that later.

The Bill is not written in the same style as the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill and I believe that it is a little more authoritarian. Clause 5(1) on penalty fares on trains says:

"Subject to subsection (2) below, if a person travelling on a train service fails to produce a fare ticket or a general travel authority on being required to do so by an authorised person, he shall be liable to pay a penalty fare if required to do so by an authorised person."

Both Bills contain similar provisions. Clause 5 (2)(a) says:

"A person (other than one falling within paragraph *(b)* below) shall not be liable to pay a penalty fare under this section if at the time when and the station where he started to travel on the train service there were no facilities available for the sale of the necessary fare ticket for his journey."

The clause specifically says that there must be facilities for the sale of the necessary ticket. That means that if such facilities exist the person travelling will be deemed to be in default and liable for the penalty fare even if there is a mile-long queue outside the booking office with many people waiting to buy tickets to other destinations. The Bill does not say that such a queue can be an exception. Clause 5(2)(b) gives an exception because it talks about a person transferring to a service.

Clause 5(2)(c)(i) says that the penalty fare is not payable if

"there was displayed a notice (however expressed) indicating that it was permissible for passengers beginning a journey at that station."

Clause 5(2)(c)(ii) says that a person would not have to pay the penalty fare if

"an authorised person in uniform gave permission to the same effect."

In terms of legalities I am a layman, and on a layman's reading of the Bill it seems that it will make the innocent person guilty and put him into a worse position in terms of proving his innocence. I gave a specific example of a booking point that is open and has a long queue. As far as I can see from the Bill, a passenger will be liable for the penalty fare unless he waits for a long time in the ticket queue.

The Bill does not deserve a Second Reading. It is worse than the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill that we discussed earlier, and that is because of the questions that it raises about assault and civil liberties, and because the management of London Regional Transport seems to have made no effort to talk to the unions and employees concerned. I hope that the Bill will be roundly defeated.

11.7 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I have some specific and short questions for the Minister. First, what is the position on deferred fare authorities? Will he tell us whether they are intended for use only on the Underground system when they have been issued at a British Rail station or is it intended to make them available at all London Underground stations where for some reason machines are not working?

How will the ticket barriers work? Perhaps the Minister could give some guidance about how to proceed through a barrier when one is pushing a pram. I am told that it is extremely difficult to get both the pram and the adult pushing or pulling it through the barrier without either the pram or the adult being snapped at by the closing gates. What happens if a passenger inserts a ticket and the green light comes on, indicating that for some reason or other the ticket is not accepted, especially when many people standing behind are impatient to get out of the station?

The other day I saw a person put in a ticket. The green light came on but before the passenger could read the message he was pushed forward by the person behind him who put in his ticket and the two people came out through the gate. I do not know whether that happened because the gate was not functioning properly or whether it was supposed to happen, but it is fairly frightening when one is at the front of the queue with many people behind and for some reason a perfectly valid ticket is thrown out by the machine.

Will the Minister tell us what is to happen to the monthly, weekly and even daily tickets which are made of fairly flimsy material? They are placed in a plastic wallet and have to be shown on the way out of the station. That suggests that the material of which they will be made will have to be one that the machine will be able to read easily after repeated use.

We hope that the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) will be able to reassure us on these points. He should try to ensure that, if the Bill gets a Second Reading, it spends as long as possible in Committee. I am certain that the mood of people in London and of hon. Members is that the Bill should not become law until the new ticketing system on London Underground has worked out all its teething troubles, if that is possible. It would be

criminal for the House to give London Regional Transport the authority to carry out a penalty fare system when it cannot operate efficiently the system of collecting fares.

11.10 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I have a number of specific questions about compulsory ticket areas. These are defined in clause 2, which says:

"A 'compulsory ticket area' means that part of a station which, under the byelaws of the person providing a train service to which this Act applies, passengers are not permitted to enter without a fare ticket, general travel authority or platform ticket".

What instructions will be given to staff regarding compulsory ticket areas in an emergency? Ticket inspection staff will be operating in these areas, and they will be trying to check on people going into them. When there is an emergency, they will have to direct people through those areas, so the compulsory ticket area will have to be waived. What sort of instructions is LRT giving about what should happen in an emergency? We do not want compulsory ticket areas in which staff are operating being used as a barrier to people moving. In an emergency, such areas must merge in with the thoroughfares.

My hon. Friends have mentioned ticket barriers for leaving stations and the difficulties of inserting tickets and getting the gates to open. What pressure is required to use those barriers in emergencies? I am staggered that these automatic ticket barriers are being installed so soon after the dreadful King's Cross fire. I know that questions have been raised time and again about installing such ticket barriers when the lessons of the King's Cross fire show that there has to be rapid escape from a fire to get away from what is, in effect, the top of a chimney. What sort of pressure is involved? Could, for example, a slightly built woman move the barriers to one side, bearing in mind that she might have a couple of toddlers with her? If there is smoke, panic and fumes, could she move the barrier to one side, as LRT claims?

11.13 pm

Mr. Thorne: With the leave of the House, I shall reply. We have had an interesting debate and some important points have been made. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was not the only person to mention employment. We must be concerned about that important issue. If people have given their life to an industry, it would be wrong to cast them aside without looking after them.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned his journey from East Ham this morning, and the difficulty that he had because of the long queue of people waiting for tickets. One of the important aspects of the Bill is that the Secretary of State has to be satisfied before he agrees to the implementation of the scheme that there will be adequate facilities for automatic ticket dispensing machines to be available. At about the same time as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West was dodging a queue and boarding a train without a ticket, which he admitted, I was feeding my money into an efficient machine at Ilford station, which dispensed a ticket without any problem. There were more ticket machines than people who wanted to use them. There was a hiccup on the network line as some of the overhead cables had malfunctioned at Bethnal Green, but the Underground was able to relieve the pressure from Stratford and the system worked efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Tony Banks: I ask the hon. Gentleman to complete the story about my travel on the Underground this morning. I paid when I reached Westminster, and I want that to be on record.

Mr. Thorne: I would not dream of suggesting that any hon. Member did not pay the full fare on reaching his destination. That goes without saying. I accept that there must be a sufficient number of adequate ticket machines installed at East Ham station before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be satisfied that he can allow their introduction.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned the reduction of staffing at stations and suggested that it would amount to one sixth of the Underground staff. I hope that one of the main advantages of such a scheme will be to enable the system to redeploy staff.

Several hon. Members have mentioned their concern about safety on the Underground system. As recent events have shown, the public require more British Transport police to be present within the system. Undertakings have been given that over the next 12 months additional personnel will be deployed. I am sure that everyone will agree that with the advantages of new technology we should take the opportunity that is presented to us and redeploy staff where they are most needed.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West and others talked about the breakdown of ticket barriers and the need for comfort and safety. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must be satisfied that the ticket barriers will be of an adequate standard and will not break down, thus causing a gross inconvenience to passengers. Considerable experience with the machines has already been gained in other parts of the world. We can learn from the experience of others, and I trust that we shall have as reliable a system in Britain as they have in Hong Kong and various other countries, where it works extremely efficiently.

I agree that special attention must be given to comfort and safety. It must be understood that the ticket-issuing clerk and the ticket collector will occupy important positions and will both be on duty at all times when the stations are open. They will have access to a button to neutralise the automatic barriers and allow a free flow. That important safety measure will be required.

Mr. Cohen: I have received much correspondence about ticket barriers, and a section of it relates to an explosion —perhaps a bomb—in the Underground system. If the staff could not press the so-called magic button, the gates would remain locked. Is that a possibility?

Mr. Thorne: Anything is possible, but I do not think that that is likely to happen. There are special provisions that we must examine for smoke detection, for example. If any smoke is generated from an explosion, it would be noticed. The staff who would be on duty at all times would be present to take care of those situations. I am confident that the staff that we expect to be employed on the Underground will be of such a standard that they will be able to cope with those eventualities.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was particularly concerned about employment. I hope that his fears are unfounded and that we will be able to redeploy staff in the system more effectively and efficiently. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) criticised the Minister for the shortness of his statement. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Leyton was in

[Mr. Thorne]

the Chamber when the British Railways (Penalty Fares) Bill was debated, but my hon. Friend the Minister gave a longer explanation then. He also explained that he was not the promoter of this Bill and was adopting a neutral position. He was not replying to the debate. That is my job, with the permission of the House.

The danger to staff when collecting penalty fares is a very important and worrying point. I hope that more transport police will be involved and that it will be possible to protect staff who might be in danger. We must bear in mind that there is an undertaking that staff will at least work in pairs. Undoubtedly late at night, after drinking hours, we should expect them to work in threes and fours. In the very near future, possibly before this scheme is implemented, we hope that it will be possible to introduce radios on the system that can work underground. Therefore, a call could be made requesting police to be available at the next station, should that need arise. Staff safety is paramount and it would be wrong to try to introduce a system which put the staff at risk. That would not work.

The hon. Member for Leyton also referred to exits. Where automatic barriers are neutralised to allow free passage, it is possible for between 50 and 60 passengers a minute to pass through each barrier. We must remember that the space allocated for exiting is greater with automatic barriers than with manned. The constriction is greater with manned barriers than with a number of exit points. It should be possible to exit much quicker where automatic barriers are in position.

The hon. Member for Leyton also said that automatic barriers were unpopular. I hope that, like many things, they will become more popular as people become more familiar with them. He also asked about someone using a child's ticket. When a child's ticket is inserted in the machine, it is supposed to switch on a light to show that a child is passing through. One of the duties of the ticket collector is to ensure that the light does not come on when adults are passing through. His attention may have been distracted at that moment, but that is the intention.

The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) mentioned the absence of union consultations. Such consultations have taken place at a very basic level. Now that the process has been started, we hope that it will develop during the passage of the Bill. I hope that the Bill will receive a Second Reading and once it goes into Committee I hope that it will be possible to deal with some of the union fears in more detail and more positively. We should get these matters into perspective. If the proposals had been introduced a year or two ago, they would have been out of date now and we would have had to go through the whole matter again. I hope that I have reassured the hon. Member for Wrexham on that point.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke of assaults on staff by passengers who have been drinking, which I have covered, and expressed concern about mechanical breakdowns. The Secretary of State must be satisfied that there is an effective system for dealing with malfunctioning apparatus. I understand that a control panel will indicate which apparatus is malfunctioning, so that the area supervisor will be able immediately to know if an unacceptable number of machines are faulty and when to send help.

Dr. Marek: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that there will be an area supervisor at every London Underground station? I cannot see that happening.

Mr. Thorne: My understanding is that the machinery at a number of stations will be monitored at one particular location. Signals will be sent from the barriers at each station to a central control point. There will not be a supervisor or mechanics at every station, but if an unacceptable number of machines at any one station malfunction, assistance will be sent as soon as possible.

If long queues form, the staff on duty must indicate that there is an emergency and that passengers will be allowed through. The inspecting staff will be given notice that a number of ticket-dispensing machines have broken down. That will be part of the human input at the station concerned—it will be the responsibility of the staff there to take that decision. Provided a sufficient number of machines are working, such a thing should rarely, if ever, happen.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) mentioned inoperative machinery and I have answered that point. Passengers pushing prams will be able to pass through the manned barrier.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that there will always be an alternative to using the mechanical ticket barriers?

Mr. Thorne: The intention is that there will always be that option available.

I suppose that two people could pass through the barrier together, but, as the machinery becomes more sophisticated, perhaps that abuse will be defeated. Season tickets, like many other items, can be magnetically read. That can help prevent them from becoming tatty, in the same way that a credit card does not become tatty. I accept that the Bill's Committee stage will be important. All the questions that have been raised must be sorted out then.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) asked what instructions will be given to staff regarding compulsory exits in ticket areas in an emergency. In most cases, two points will be manned by staff, who will have the ability to neutralise the automatic barriers to permit free exit. The manned barrier will also be in operation, but the intention is that passengers, other than those pushing prams or in invalid chairs, will pass quickly through the opened mechanical barriers.

I hope that those replies deal with all the points that have been raised, and that the Bill will be given a Second Reading, so that its provisions may be further clarified in Committee.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 66, Noes 37.

Division No. 77] **[11.29 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Amess, David	Carrington, Matthew
Arbuthnot, James	Carttiss, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Chapman, Sydney
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Bevan, David Gilroy	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Boswell, Tim	Day, Stephen
Bottomley, Peter	Dorrell, Stephen
Brazier, Julian	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Durant, Tony

Fallon, Michael	Mills, Iain
Fenner, Dame Peggy	Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Forman, Nigel	Needham, Richard
Forth, Eric	Nicholls, Patrick
Franks, Cecil	Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Freeman, Roger	Paice, James
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Gill, Christopher	Portillo, Michael
Gregory, Conal	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Ground, Patrick	Stanbrook, Ivor
Harris, David	Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Summerson, Hugo
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*	Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Irvine, Michael	Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Jack, Michael	Thorne, Neil
Knapman, Roger	Thurnham, Peter
Lawrence, Ivan	Wallace, James
Lightbown, David	Widdecombe, Ann
Maclean, David	
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Mans, Keith	Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Miller, Sir Hal	Mr. Roger King.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Marek, Dr John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Meale, Alan
Buckley, George J.	Michael, Alun
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Moonie, Dr Lewis
Clay, Bob	Morgan, Rhodri
Cohen, Harry	Nellist, Dave
Cryer, Bob	Parry, Robert
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Patchett, Terry
Dixon, Don	Pike, Peter L.
Dunnachie, Jimmy	Prescott, John
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*	Ruddock, Joan
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*	Skinner, Dennis
Foster, Derek	Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Galbraith, Sam	Snape, Peter
Graham, Thomas	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Hardy, Peter	Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Haynes, Frank	
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	Mr. Tony Banks and
Loyden, Eddie	Mr. Martin Redmond.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*	

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read a Second time and committed.

Adoption Allowance Schemes

11.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move,

That the draft Adoption Allowance Schemes Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 22nd December, be approved.

I hope that it will be convenient for the House to take both orders together.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): So be it.

Mr. Freeman: The orders, the Adoption Allowance Schemes Order 1989 and the Adoption Allowance Schemes (Scotland) Order 1989, have the effect of repealing section 57(7) of the Adoption Act 1976 and section 51(8) of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978. Without the repeal of these sections there will be no provision for further approval of allowance schemes to adopters after 14 February.

The provision we are considering has its origin in a recommendation in 1972 of the departmental committee on the adoption of children—the Houghton committee. In its report the committee addressed the case for paying allowances to adopters in certain circumstances: circumstances in which adoption had been identified as the best future for a child, and a suitable family had been found, but in which there was a financial obstacle to the adoption. The aim would be to secure adoption for children who could not otherwise readily be adopted and who could face a childhood spent in care without a family of their own. The committee recommended that a small number of pilot schemes should be authorised as a trial of this new idea.

The proposal was taken up in section 32 of the Children Act 1975, now consolidated as section 57 of the Adoption Act 1976 and section 51 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978. During the passage of the Bill a number of reservations and cautions were voiced about the wisdom of the measure—natural and thoughtful reservations, to which I shall turn briefly in a moment. Accordingly, the Houghton committee's recommendation of an experimental period was adopted by Parliament. Adoption agencies were given the opportunity to seek the approval of the Secretaries of State to schemes for payment of allowances for a period of seven years from implementation of the provision. The provision would come to an end automatically after seven years unless both Houses agreed to its continuation, and the Secretaries of State were required to publish before that date a report on the operation of the schemes.

The provision duly came into force, in England and Wales and in Scotland, in February 1982. Adoption agencies began to put together and submit for approval schemes drawn up according to guidelines issued by the Department. These agencies were for the most part local authorities, although two voluntary approved adoption societies in England now have schemes. It became clear over the following few years that the experiment was taking a somewhat different turn from——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My hon. Friend mentioned that a few local authorities did not have such schemes. It is shameful that they should not. Can he identify them?

Mr. Freeman: Only four authorities in England do not have such schemes. That means that about 104 do, which shows that there is broad acceptance of the scheme.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Would the Minister be prepared to name the four authorities that do not have such a scheme?

Mr. Freeman: I shall draw the point to the attention of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, and if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will answer it later.

It became clear over the next few years that the experiment was taking a somewhat different turn from that expected. The interest and enthusiasm of local authorities far exceeded expectations, and many more schemes were submitted than the few envisaged by the Houghton committee. In England, indeed, the rapid flow of applications caused some strain on the resources of the Department of Health. However, we decided that this high level of interest was to be welcomed, with its potential benefit to children in need of adoptive families. Now, after seven years, there is universal coverage in Scotland and in Wales, where all local authorities have a scheme, and, as I have already indicated, in England 98 authorities and two voluntary societies have approved schemes, with a further six local authority schemes going through the approval process. That makes a total of 104 authorities either with schemes or going through the approval process.

Research projects were put in hand to investigate and report on the operation of these schemes—in Scotland by the social administration department of Edinburgh university, and in England and Wales by the National Children's Bureau. The Secretaries of State have published the reports, as they were required to do. Copies are in the Library, and I commend these excellent and valuable reports to hon. Members.

We have naturally been influenced by the reports in deciding to seek the House's agreement to the orders before us, and I shall touch briefly on one or two of the findings. We were, of course, particularly looking to the reports, first, to find out whether allowances had succeeded in their objective of enabling agencies to secure adoption for children who could not otherwise be adopted, however much they might need an adoptive family, and, secondly, to shed light on the concerns which were in the minds of some in the House when the experiment was originally agreed.

There is no doubt about the answer to the first question. The hope was that adoption allowances would benefit two groups of children in particular: children who were happily placed, in long-term placements in foster families, but whose foster parents could not afford to forgo the whole of the boarding-out allowance; and children with special needs involving a level of expenditure beyond the power of adopters to meet—children with mental and physical and emotional handicaps, older children needing help with behavioural difficulties, and groups of brothers and sisters who must remain together as a family. The two groups do, of course, overlap.

We now know from the research reports that in Scotland, up to the end of 1986, more than 500 children were placed with allowances. In England and Wales there were nearly 1,000 such placements by the end of 1986. At this point the researchers from the National Children's Bureau thought that numbers would slow down after clearance of the backlog of cases which were awaiting introduction of schemes. However, this has not proved to be the case. With more schemes in England continuing to come into operation, the arrangements have rather gathered momentum, so that the bureau now estimates that the number of agreed allowances in England and Wales has doubled in the past two years and has now passed the 2,000 mark. This is a trend which we can hope to see continue as more authorities begin to operate and appreciate the advantages of schemes.

In all the countries, the majority of adopters were foster parents. Up to the end of 1986, in Scotland nearly one half, and in England nearly one third, of children were adopted with one or more brothers and sisters. In Scotland, nearly one quarter, and in England and Wales nearly one half, of the children had special needs, in the sense of physical, mental or emotional handicaps or behavioural difficulties. Some were severely handicapped, with multiple handicaps.

The reports demonstrate that people adopting with allowances were people in modest circumstances, with many on low incomes. The allowances themselves were not extravagant. In England the average allowance is about £30 a week. Nor has adoption with allowances become the norm. The majority of adopters are still able to adopt without an allowance. All schemes have criteria for allowances, so that allowances are restricted to circumstances of special need.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The Minister says that the majority of people do not have an allowance. Does he have an exact figure?

Mr. Freeman: I shall certainly seek advice on that point, and I am sure that my hon. Friend will answer the hon. and learned Gentleman's question.

I believe we can now be satisfied that where children cannot be cared for by their own families, adoption allowances have their place, and a place of proven value, in the range of options open to agencies seeking to provide the happiest, most secure and best future for such children. I must stress that there is no intention to remove children from natural parents where there is economic difficulty or hardship and to subsidise them elsewhere. Children are placed for adoption using non-financial criteria, as I know that many hon. Members who take an interest in this subject realise.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend mentioned the figure of £30 a week as the average adoption allowance. Would he like to compare that with the cost of keeping a child in residential care?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend will know that the average costs of keeping children in residential care are greater, but I find that comparison invidious. We are concerned here with the welfare of children. Although I take the sense of my hon. Friend's question, I would not like to place too great an emphasis on the financial benefits. What really counts is what is best for the children. If the opportunity of adoption with this modest financial inducement means that they can come out of residential care, or if they are with foster parents and that can be made permanent through adoption, that is the main criterion.

I should like to add a final point in relation to the framework within which agencies pay allowances. In Scotland, I understand from my hon. Friend the Minister

that adoption allowance schemes have been introduced without particular difficulty and have worked smoothly. It is not intended, therefore, that there should be any change in the arrangements for schemes set out in section 51 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act.

In England and Wales, the position is different. The diversity of schemes led to much discussion between the Department and local authorities and at times there have been long intervals between application and approval. Many authorities are now finding, with the benefit of experience, that they wish to make changes in their schemes, and such changes require further approval by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The number and variety of schemes have provided rich feedback during the experimental period, but we see a need now to look for a less cumbersome and potentially frustrating system which requires less intervention from the central Departments.

Accordingly, we shall introduce as an amendment to the Children Bill, which is now proceeding through another place, a regulation making power so that agencies will be able to determine and pay allowances within the framework of regulations instead of within the framework of an approved scheme. It is our intention that regulations should draw on the experience of schemes and, like schemes, give agencies sufficient flexibility to respond to a diversity of circumstances. Until a regulation-making power is available and regulations made, the order will ensure that schemes continue in operation. I am talking about a prospective amendment so that, in future, the operation of these schemes becomes a little easier to adminster. Those few authorities that are still considering whether to put in a scheme can still do so. I ask the House to approve the orders.

11.52 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I thank the Minister for the lucid way in which he introduced the orders. We welcome the orders and the opportunity to discuss them.

The House, local authorities and the various agencies to which the Minister referred will feel that the experiment has been successful. It is right to renew the orders. As the Minister said, the allowance to adopt owes its origins to the Houghton report. Much of the controversy to which the report gave rise has dissolved in the light of experience. There can be no greater tribute or compliment to the Houghton committee's recommendations than the success of these schemes.

Allowances are made when adoption is the right course for the child, when a suitable adoptive family has been found, but there is some financial obstacle. In other words, the idea is to secure suitable adoption for children who would not readily be adopted if allowances could not be made.

The Minister has made it clear that the Government have performed their statutory duty by referring the National Childrens Bureau Lambert-Seglow report to the Department of Health and the Welsh Office, which enthusiastically endorsed it, and the Hill-Triseliotis report for the Scottish Office, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) would like to refer. They certainly said that the scheme should be retained. As the Minister said, the order was influenced by section 32 of the Children Act 1975. That had a controversial baptism. I understand that in Committee the Chairman had to use his casting vote. I doubt whether the same circumstances would arise were the same proposition put today.

According to the NCB report:

"Children with 'special needs' are being adopted and some who, hitherto, might have spent all their lives in institutional care now experience family life."

That can only be profoundly welcomed by all right hon. and hon. Members. I should like to ask the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Government consider that specific aspect of the orders as being consistent with a strategy for community care. Certainly Sir Roy Griffiths felt that community care embraces the rights of children with learning difficulties and their carers and adopters.

The point has been made that £30 a week in modern times does not offer all that much, given the expenses that parents have, so if the orders are considered as part of a strategy to embrace community care in the widest possible sense, we certainly welcome them.

The Minister mentioned the Children Bill. We are paying a great deal of attention to its progress in another place and we look forward to debating it in the House. The Minister said that an amendment will be tabled. When we debate the Children Bill, obviously we shall give the matter the utmost consideration and consult extremely closely with the voluntary bodies and the individuals mostly concerned with that amendment and with those sections of the Bill.

According to the NCB report, unemployment affected almost one in every five allowance families, and many others were subject to job or wage insecurity. Clearly, in the past, low income has been a stumbling block to adoption and the experiment challenged what amounted to an obstruction in earlier days.

The report to the Department of Health and the Welsh Office says on page 94 that provision is "under-used". Is that the case, and in view of the excellence of the reports and the welcome that they have received, what action do the Government intend to take to ensure that the provisions are fully used? The success of the scheme invites that suggestion.

Do payments continue when families move to other areas or to other local authorities? Are the Minister and the Government satisfied with existing arrangements?

I have mentioned, as has the Minister and as will my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the two reports before the House. I should like briefly to refer to the major points that emerge from those reports. The report to the Department of Health and the Welsh Office states:

"Our comparative study of adoptions with and without allowances showed that a significantly higher proportion of 'special needs' children were adopted with the assistance of an allowance, especially those with multiple difficulties. Other children, who did not have these specific needs, were school-age or were placed with siblings and they, too, were likely to be costly for the families to look after."

Elsewhere in the same report we read:

"Even though the adoption allowances received by these families were often paid at lower rates than the amounts calculated by NFCA relating to average family expenditure for children, they enabled these families to proceed with adoption. Our interviews with several families in this position indicated the sense of relief and gratitude generated by this additional security, and also pleasure at the recognition of their suitability to parent these children."

That is an impressive comment.

The report to the Scottish Office states:

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

"Let us briefly recap the main characteristics of those granted an adoption allowance. The majority of the children were aged over 5—indeed about half were aged over 10. Those who were younger mostly had some kind of handicap, of which Down's Syndrome was by far the most common. About 4 in 5 of all the children were to be adopted by their foster parents. Many had in fact, lived with the same family for several years, often since infancy."

The same report observed:

"Only a few of the families had above average incomes. The foster parent adopters included higher than usual proportions who were aged over 40, already had children of their own (some already grown up) and were working class. By and large they were stable, caring people who life-style was home-centred."

That is a tremendous tribute to the experiment but, more than that, it is a tremendous tribute to the adopters who have taken on a difficult role which calls for great dedication.

On behalf of my hon. Friends, I welcome the orders in a spirit of recognising that there is a need for care, concern and commitment towards those who do so much for children who started out with a considerable disadvantage. However, as a society, we recognise that the adopters are doing their best to assist those with that disadvantage.

12.3 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for introducing these welcome measures which take the place of the original measures introduced seven years ago as an experiment following the casting vote of the Chairman of the Standing Committee on the Children Bill in 1975. It is an experiment that has resulted in great benefit to over 2,000 children. As my hon. Friend said, it is the needs of the children that we must keep in the front of our minds.

The orders provide excellent news for thousands of children currently in care. I am uncertain of the number of children who are eligible for adoption, but I have seen figures suggesting that up to 3,000 severely handicapped children in residential care are eligible for adoption. These measures are a green light for families who have been thinking of adopting but have been uncertain about the arrangements. They can now go ahead with full security.

The old measures run out on St. Valentine's day and I ask the Government to put their heart on their sleeve and introduce such measures throughout the country. I hope that the four authorities that do not yet have schemes in place will introduce them and that the regulations to be introduced in the Children Bill will be sufficiently standardised for the Government to be able to advertise and promote the schemes widely. Next week ITV is running a series of programmes on families for children. I hope that the Government will support that and run advertisements.

The debate is about love. That is not a word we hear much in other debates in the Chamber. Financially, the measures will benefit the Government but it is the love for the children which causes parents to adopt children who, in the majority of cases, they have been fostering for some years. I am a parent who has been through that experience. We fostered our child for three years before we were able to complete all the legal formalities for adoption. I am sure that parents who have been wanting to adopt and who have been hesitating because of lack of certainty about the financial arrangements will welcome all the new measures.

There is a history of difficulty with some councils, and I hope that we can overcome any remaining objections there. The excellent book by Catherine Macaskil, published by British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, entitled "Against the Odds" summed up some of the difficulties that parents can have when they wish to adopt severely handicapped children. However, I hope and believe that that is becoming a thing of the past. I commend the work done by Bolton council, which has been prominent in helping families in deciding to adopt children from the Elizabeth Ashmore home for severely handicapped children. There have been wonderful examples of children adopted in that way.

Of course, my hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that parents who adopt children will be thinking not only of their childhood, but of what happens to them when they are older. I believe that the parents of natural children and those of adopted children will be asking what the provisions are for children when they reach the age of 19. I am not sure whether any of the existing adoption schemes allow for payments to continue up to the age of 19 or beyond, but, obviously, that is when parents have the greatest anxieties and when respite care schemes are of the greatest help in keeping children with their families. I hope that there will be an opportunity for us to debate care in the community on another occasion, because that will be an additional factor in helping families to take the benefits from these proposed measures.

I am not sure whether I will have the opportunity of being a Member of the Committee discussing the Children Bill—I would certainly like to be considered if I am not tied up on another Bill—when, no doubt, we shall be able to see more of the proposed regulations.

I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for bringing forward these measures. We look forward to their being implemented. We look forward to seeing St. Valentine's day pass by as the end of the experiment, with, as I have said, the Government wearing their heart on their sleeve in the future.

12.6 am

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I, too, am happy to support the orders. I have read the relevant sections of the reports that the respective Secretaries of State were required by statute to commission. If I draw a little more on the report commissioned by the Secretary of State for Scotland, I mean no disrespect to the authors of the report commissioned for England and Wales. I do so merely for the sake of convenience and, at this hour of the night, brevity. One understands, as the Minister has confirmed, that both reports reach broadly similar conclusions.

No discussion of adoption should ever begin without a generous recognition of those who are willing to take into their homes the children of others—children who, by cruel chance, are unable to experience the warmth and care of being brought up in their own families by their natural parents. In my professional life as a practising advocate, I have seen many cases where ordinary people, with no particular pretension to sainthood, with open hearts and much practical common sense, have given a warm and loving home to children who would otherwise have lived in institutions all their lives. Those were ordinary people giving ordinary children ordinary lives, and they would not have had it described in any other way.

It is perhaps easy now to understand why the Houghton committee's recommendations were received without universal approval, not only, I suppose, because of the existence of a general principle of law that banned the making of such payments—in Scotland at least—but because an uncritical response to those proposals could lead one to a kind of visceral reaction that such payments were intrinsically repugnant. I believe that the wisdom lay in the legislation allowing for a trial period and even further in the fact that, before the legislation could be reconsidered—as it is, in effect, being reconsidered—there was required to be a report, relying not upon instinct, but upon evidence.

I have no wish to detain the House unnecessarily with extensive quotation from the report commissioned by the Secretary of State for Scotland, but it contains a number of passages that repay careful reading. The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) made certain references to it, but I want to draw the attention of the House to paragraph 3.5 which states:

"What is more satisfying is that many families who start as temporary carers become attached to their respective children and eventually prefer to adopt them rather than see them experiencing continued moves and disruptions in their lives. The allowance is vital to many of these families if they are to continue providing the children with an accustomed and acceptable standard of living."

Paragraph 3.8 is most revealing as the authors write:

"As an example, the media who tried to sensationalise the introduction of allowances as an opportunity to profit gave a reasoned response following the publication of our first report showing the benefits of allowances to children."

That betokens a substantial sea change in public attitude. Paragraph 4.3 states:

"Some adopters were adding two, three or even more children to their families, which is a major undertaking from any point of view. Some children were enabled by allowances to move out of residential care and join a family on a permanent basis, including some children with extremely limited mental and physical capacities who were leaving hospital to receive individual care and attention."

It is probably impossible for us to calculate the improvement in the quality of the lives of such children who had the good fortune to find themselves treated in that way.

Paragraph 4.6 states:

"Special needs children make the kind of demands which stretch families' coping abilities requiring a range of resources to manage with the need for extra clothes and footwear, holidays, respite care"—

that important element is recognised much more now than it has been for a long time—

"visits to specialist services etc. In this respect the allowance was vital for the maintenance and stability of the placement, which was corroborated by the research."

The report does not contain instinctive reactions, but conclusions based upon observation and evidence. The report gives the most eloquent justification for the decision to set up the experiment, especially as we have been told that certain parts of its progress were furthered only by the casting vote of the Committee Chairman. Tonight we should give thanks for the foresight of the Chairman who was prepared to exercise his casting vote when the media reaction was far from universally favourable.

The orders are plainly necessary to continue and maintain a system that has served well the children—not the House—who are their subject. The essence of the law of adoption, north and south of the border, is that the interests of the child should be paramount.

The orders are necessary to ensure that the interests of many children who are either already or may become the subject of adoption will remain paramount and that such children will be given the opportunity that otherwise they might find denied to them. If that happened they would be put in a different position from others and, through no fault of their own, that would necessarily attend their lives. For that reason I and, I have no doubt, the entire House will be happy to support the orders.

12.13 am

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): In common with other hon. Members who have spoken, I give a warm welcome to the orders. It is particularly important that the legislation has not only been successful, but has been seen to be so, and seen to be fair. That is important when one considers the public attitude to the laws passed by this establishment.

On behalf of the Nationalists in the House, I accept and welcome the orders and the philosophy behind them, that the care and love of the child is at the heart of the matter. We cannot buy love and care for the children in our society, but through the orders we can certainly allow love and care to flourish in homes where not too much financial strain is placed on the people who adopt children.

Hon. Members have spoken about children with special needs. I have a social work background and am conscious of the great efforts that have been made by Scottish local authorities to ensure that such children are fostered and adopted. We tend to think of children with physical and mental handicaps, but there is a new area of concern in Scotland and I hope that the Minister will comment on it. I am speaking about the additional problem of youngsters with AIDS, or who are affected by the HIV syndrome. Will the Minister give us an assurance that the legislation could include positive discrimination in favour of families who are prepared to take on what is seen as a major risk to all other children in the family and to neighbours and others? We must address that problem because Scotland is facing an AIDS crisis.

I should like an assurance from the Minister that adoption allowances will not in any way affect the payment of child benefits. Many hon. Members, including the few who have remained to participate in the debate, are worried about the Government's decision to freeze child benefits. We need an assurance that the payment of adoption allowances will not be set against child benefit. It is important for families to know that they will not be penalised as a result of the continuation of the orders.

I have already had correspondence with the Minister on my final matter, which is about the definition of adoptive and natural parents. I had a case in my constituency of a natural mother, a widow, who remarried. Her new husband decided to adopt the children of her previous marriage but in the process of registration the natural mother was recorded as being the adoptive mother. She had great difficulty in ensuring that she continued to be recognised as the natural parent of her children. The original birth certificates were withheld from her, although photocopies can be made available.

In the process of adoption, I should like to see a recognition of the natural parent. I hope that the Minister will look at that. Perhaps it is not directly relevant to the orders, but in our society divorce is a regular occurrence and it is necessary to define natural and adoptive parents.

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

Would the natural mother that I have mentioned be eligible for an adoption allowance or would that be denied to her because she is the natural parent?

12.18 am

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I trust that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will have noticed our co-operation in merging the two orders. I hope that no hon. Member takes that as a weakening of our commitment to devolution. Judging from the speeches in the debate, one would think that Scottish Members had taken over. We have had contributions from the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), from the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), from my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), and the Minister, who is the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), is to reply. We are grateful for, and much appreciative of, the contribution made by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), who speaks with such experience and feeling on this matter.

As every hon. Member has said, we welcome these orders. The scheme has worked smoothly, particularly in Scotland. It was started as an experiment, for good and sound reasons. There were fears that paying for adoption would lead to problems, but those fears have proved to be without foundation. I pay tribute to the Chairman whose casting vote ensured that the Committee recommended this scheme. It has worked well, and has been to the benefit of children, which is what it is all about.

I have certain questions for the Minister, which I make not in a carping, but in an open and constructive manner because this matter should not divide the House. These questions will relate to Scotland, where my responsibility lies, but will, I trust, be relevant to the rest of the United Kingdom. Can we introduce a single national scheme? As the Minister knows, there are variations within Scotland, and a national scheme would be more simple, and would avoid competition. Some children would qualify for an adoption allowance in one area, but not in another. Will the Minister examine this point in detail?

Another problem with the variations is that the allowance is different in different areas. In Grampian, the value of the allowance is twice the value of that in Dumfries and Galloway, which is an anomaly that we should at least be examining, to avoid what can be construed as competition, and to make the whole scheme more simple.

Will the Minister also look at the criteria for inclusion in the scheme? As we know, there are many reasons for inclusion—mostly physical and mental handicap. One that is not included, although it can be on top of a physical and mental handicap, is simple emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some children have these alone, and it is doubtful whether they are included in the scheme. These children can be quite difficult to manage and to foster. Will the Minister consider widening the scheme to include these children, and will he also consider the actual, rather than the potential, difficulty in placing? The two do not necessarily go together.

Will the Minister also look at the matter of lump sum payments, referred to by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East? These are an important part of respite care, as they are an important part of any care, but they cost money, so it is important that lump sums are available. I understand the argument against such payments, but in respite care or when initial finance is needed to set up an adoption, they are particularly important. Other areas such as tuition are also important, and I reiterate the questions raised by the hon. and learned Member.

Will the Minister abolish the limit on the number of allowances? I understand why that was instituted—so that there would not be too many allowances. They were curtailed, not because of finance but to ensure that the scheme was not abused. With one exception, the limit of allowances has not been reached, so it would be appropriate to abolish them.

It would be helpful also if the Minister were to clarify the way in which different regions take into account the mobility and attendance allowances when considering the value of the adoption allowance. That could be done by the issuing of guidelines. A national scheme would avoid discrepancies between the various adopting authorities.

I trust that the Minister will accept that the issues which I have raised are constructive. The Opposition are seeking to improve the scheme, and we have no wish to be carping. We welcome unreservedly the orders that the Government have placed before us and we shall give them our wholehearted support.

12.25 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): This has been a useful debate and I welcome the support from both sides of the House that has been forthcoming this evening. The contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) was especially interesting. His direct personal knowledge and experience was valuable. I am glad that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Bearsden and Strathkelvin (Mr. Galbraith) gave such a positive welcome to the purpose that lies behind the orders.

The hon. Member for Moray asked which four authorities in England were without schemes. The answer is Staffordshire county council, Barking and Dagenham, Southwark and the City of London. I understand that the first three authorities are considering submitting a scheme. The City of London has an agreement with Westminster for the provision of child care and adoption services where needed.

The hon. Member for Bearsden and Strathkelvin was interested to know about take-up. Between 1983 and 1986 in England and Wales, about 6 per cent. of children adopted, excluding those adopted by step-parents who were not eligible for the adoption allowance, were adopted with an allowance. The signs are that the percentage has risen over the past two years. In Scotland, less than 25 per cent. of all adoptions by non-relatives that took place during 1983-87 attracted adoption allowances. That is covered by paragraph 3.1 of the report.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) asked about the Griffiths report. I can do little more than repeat what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health said in reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 24 January. He said:

"The Government are . . . engaged . . . in working up our own proposals for the future of community care."

The Government are mindful of concern that we should reach a conclusion as soon as possible.

"I hope to be in a position to bring forward our plans in the near future."—[*Official Report*, 24 January 1989; Vol. 145, c. 527.]

I note what my right hon. and learned Friend said about consistency.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West asked whether allowances continue to be paid if adopters move out of the local authority's area. I am glad to say that all schemes provide for allowances to continue to be paid if the family moves elsewhere within the United Kingdom. Many authorities include provision for allowances to be paid if the family temporarily moves overseas.

I have been asked whether the provision is under-used. As the hon. Member for Monklands, West will appreciate, page 103 of the report, which deals with adoption allowances in England and Wales and updates the 1986 report, makes it clear that adoption allowances are now well used.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East showed the House his extensive legal knowledge. He is correct in suggesting that, as a theme, it is important that the interests of the child should be paramount. I believe that the Scots courts have adopted that principle for many years. I agreed with everything that the hon. and learned Gentleman said and—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should not have said that. I must be careful in my further comments.

The hon. Member for Moray raised the question of the rights of an adoptive mother. If the hon. Lady raises the circumstances of the case to which she referred, I shall ensure that she receives a full reply.

The hon. Member for Bearsden and Strathkelvin talked about a national scheme. This is a simple, straightforward proposal, but it suffers from the fatal flaw of inflexibility. We believe that local authorities should be left to assess the needs and circumstances of individual children.

Uniform amounts of payments cannot be laid down because of the diversity of circumstances of the children and families concerned. The system of approval of schemes was intended to ensure consistency in basic principles while allowing for variations in the experimental period. In England and Wales regulations will draw on experience——

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): What does that mean?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the hon. Gentleman wants to ask a question, I will happily give way to him.

In England and Wales regulations will draw on experience of schemes and research to provide a universal framework with scope for flexibility in response to the differing needs of children and families. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will study the particular points raised by the hon. Member for Monklands, West and, if necessary, will write to him.

Hon. Members have not raised any fundamental objections to the orders. It is particularly appropriate that the hon. Member for Monklands, West participated in the debate in view of his long-standing interest in the disabled and the Bill that he piloted through the House. For my part, I was pleased to see the passage of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986, removing the stigma of illegitimacy, which has now been removed throughout Britain.

The basic principle in the order is that adoption allowance schemes should facilitate adoption of children who would not otherwise be readily adopted. Such children include those with mental and physical handicap and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Permanent placement for such children is difficult and problems may be compounded by the age of the children concerned who may have passed the young age that usually appeals to most adopters.

Adopters must be assessed for their ability to cope with special demands. In those circumstances, the availability——

Mr. Tom Clarke: As the Minister mentioned local authorities, can he tell us whether the Government have consulted the local authority associations such as the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities? If he cannot tell us now, perhaps he could write to me.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will have to check that. I am certain that the views of the local authorities have been made known to the Government. I will have to check up on the dates. I am constantly in touch with COSLA and I addressed a conference on Friday about the Widdecombe report. That meeting was chaired by the president of COSLA. I will have to check on the exact time scale and the number of representations and advise the hon. Member for Monklands, West.

Despite the full range of central benefits and local services, family breakdowns occur and local authorities have a duty to secure the welfare of children involved through the implementation of relevant care programmes. Adoption and allowance schemes, by complementing those programmes, serve as a small but enabling measure to assist children with special needs where adoption is in their best interests.

The hon. Member for Moray asked about young persons infected by HIV. Local authorities already counsel foster parents who care for HIV sufferers. They might well regard such children, if they are adopted, as children with special needs. I would expect that that would would be the case. The order would help children in the special needs category.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East suggested that children in the special needs category require a range of resources including extra clothes and footwear, holidays, respite care and visits to special services. Our position tonight is strengthened by research which corroborates the view that adoption allowances are necessary in some cases, even in situations where the family was initially hesitant about accepting an allowance. There is clear evidence from the research of families who came to appreciate the continued extra financial demands which children were making on them and were glad that the allowances were awarded, despite their initial hesitation.

As to the cost to local authorities, the current adoption allowance rates, which are in line with rates recommended by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, range from £25 to £46 per week, depending on the child's age. Child benefit is available to persons who adopt children, so those who may be eligible for adoption allowances will

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

generally receive allowances lower than boarding out allowances—whose recipients are not eligible for child benefit. In other words, child benefit is available to adopters but not to foster parents. However, foster parents are eligible for the boarding out allowance, which is not available to those who adopt on a permanent basis.

It is true that child benefit is taken into account, except where a family is in receipt of income support since in those cases the child benefit element is deducted at source by the Department of Social Security. In other words, families receiving income support will not sustain a double deduction—which I believe is the point that particularly concerned the hon. Member for Moray.

At present, more than 100 adoption allowance schemes operate in England and Wales. Individual approvals for such numbers create understandable processing problems for the Department of Health. A regulation-making power is therefore to be introduced for England and Wales, as an amendment to the Children Bill now before Parliament, to produce a less cumbersome system. In future, agencies will be able to operate schemes within specific regulations, rather than as a result of individual approvals. However, the scale of operation in Scotland is considerably smaller, with only 12 schemes, and allows for individual approval by the Secretary of State without regulations. Twelve local authority schemes have been introduced without particular difficulty and are working smoothly. It is not intended to make any change to the schemes as set out in section 51 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978. In those circumstances, I strongly recommend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Adoption Allowance Schemes Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 22nd December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Adoption Allowance Schemes (Scotland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 16th January, be approved.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Funeral Costs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

12.37 am

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): I have no doubt that the Minister will have read early-day motion 258, supported by 61 right hon. and hon. Members, asking for a specific and detailed inquiry by a Select Committee into the A to Z framework of the funeral industry. That motion quotes official figures from the Office of Fair Trading in the last three weeks showing that 75 per cent. of funeral directors ignore the very code of practice agreed between Government, this House and the industry's associations in respect of advising arrangers of funerals of their rights —particularly in respect of estimates.

This is a delicate and sensitive subject, and one that is regarded as being taboo. No one likes talking about funerals in terms of being a commercial proposition, but I shall do so this evening. Neither does anyone like talking about something that should usually be addressed in sympathetic and diplomatic terms. One is talking about distress, bereavement and other matters of delicacy.

It can be readily understood that the subject of death is largely taboo, and that the ordinary funeral arranger has traditional methods of dealing with the local funeral director. These are established family firms, with which —generation after generation—bereaved families have dealt. But certain problems have now arisen.

I use the word "arrangers" to describe those who "negotiate", as it were, on the type of funeral desired by the bereaved. The "industry" is now turning over £2,500 million a year in funeral costs and roughly £1,000 million a year in ancillary costs—flowers, obituary notices and so forth. It is big business, by any stretch of the imagination. And, as the OFT report points out, a monopoly is being created. Local firms are constantly being taken over by larger companies, while still operating as the same local family firms in the community. Ordinary people believe that they are still dealing with the same undertaker, well established for many years and with a local system, character and tradition.

According to the OFT report, funeral charges have escalated in the past 12 years at a rate of some 28 per cent. above that of inflation. Some 18 months ago I received a complaint from a constituent whose father had died. The funeral was arranged and the bill paid. Within three and half weeks the mother also died and exactly the same arrangements were made, but the bill differed from the first by £106.

When the funeral arranger and I asked the reason for such a discrepancy in a period of three and a half weeks, we were told that the firm had been subjected to a takeover bid: a larger company had bought it out, leading to an increase in overheads generally and an increase in what could be described—unfortunately—as "profit margins".

I then conducted an inside investigation—a modern technique. I spent some time with a couple of coffin manufacturers. I visited their factories and saw the investment that they had made in modern machinery. I examined their labour costs, which they willingly showed me, and also the supply costs to the directors and the various organisations that were now part of the monopoly.

I was astonished to find that the cost of a simple coffin —including all the trade names—to be used in

crematoriums showed, when prices were compared, that the profit margin varied by between 500 and 1,500 per cent. That is bringing the profession into disrepute. The selfish profit margin has been increased to a degree that most people deplore.

According to the report, prices for a coffin vary from £19·50 to £27, depending on the type and grade of coffin. The OFT report did not probe profit margins. It said that that was not its remit. It referred to 2,500 firms of funeral directors in the United Kingdom trading through nearly 4,000 outlets. There have been about 650,000 funerals each year during the last decade.

The report pointed out that the average cost of a funeral was £586. That figure enables us to work out the industry's approximate turnover. That turnover leads to considerable doubt about whether the industry is obtaining a reasonable profit margin. However, many independent funeral directors run their businesses with the dignity and respect that ought to accompany funeral services. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the big businesses that are creating monopolies. I intend to refer fairly and rationally to a few of them and to draw some comparisons.

The report refers to the code of practice that has been adopted by the National Association of Funeral Directors. It points out that 75 per cent. of funeral directors do not honour their code of practice. It says that if they cannot get their act together within the next six months, the Government ought to consider legislation to bring some discipline into the industry.

The report stated:

"Under the code funeral directors should 'provide clients with full and fair information about their services . . . The funeral director must explain to his client the types of funeral he has on offer, and their cost, and relate these to the wishes and needs of the client'".

Clients are understandably confused and distressed at such times. People usually accept what they are offered under such circumstances without questioning. But the association is not imposing and implementing the code.

The report describes how certain enterprises obtain monopoly control. Some firms still operate under their traditional local names. I am a member of the racing of bloodstock all-party committee. We know that four major firms control about 86 per cent. of dog and horse-race betting, but at least when those firms bought out the thousands of local bookies they had the common decency to use their own trade names. Hundreds of independent local funeral directors are being systematically taken over, but their new trade names are not shown. People still honestly believe that they are dealing with local established family firms of undertakers—but that is a myth. Deception and trickery are being practised. The sooner we open the doors of this highly secretive industry, the better.

The report says that estimates should be itemised before a funeral takes place so that the arranger can choose the type of funeral he wants according to what he can afford. That is not being done; 75 per cent. of firms do not do it. A constituent of mine asked twice for a estimate for a funeral that took place on 19 January 1989. I quote:

"Professional . . . charges . . . £350 . . .

Supplying Worcester Coffin . . . £158".

Disbursements are then listed. Funeral directors have no control over these, admittedly.

The bill was for a simple, dignified funeral. I shall list its basic elements, as agreed under the code of practice. My constituents had asked twice for estimates, but none had been forthcoming. So she decided to ask other firms and chose one of them—Monks—because of the shortage of time. The total cost was £791. I remind the House that the average cost for the whole country, according to the Office of Fair Trading, is £586. This was a simple dignified funeral—what we call a basic service and what the association calls a basic service.

I want to explain what happened. Because estimates were not forthcoming, quite understandably the woman had to accept that the sooner the funeral could take place the better. Later this lady received from a competitor firm an estimate for exactly the same amount.

The Bolton Metropolitan borough council—described as a very forward-looking, progressive authority, prudent with its finances and its ratepayers' interests—along with the Wigan Metropolitan borough council, is offering an exactly similar low-cost dignified funeral service: the embalming, the dressing, the plate, the funeral undertaker's chapel of rest, conveyance, arrangements for the crematorium or cemetery, hearse, following limousine, basic funeral staff, floral tributes if required, oak-veneer coffin, engraved plate and handles, fees for doctors and clergy, any particular religious request, and transport of the deceased to the church or chapel. The cost is £366. That woman would obviously have accepted that estimate, but she did not have the opportunity because what the code of practice of the National Association of Funeral Directors says was not delivered. In my view, that is contemptible.

I am not saying that the majority of funeral directors behave in that way, but I do say to the Minister that if undertakings given by the national association are not honoured this House is duty-bound to examine what is going on and, if necessary, to legislate. Even the report of the Office of Fair Trading says that if something is not done within six months to ensure satisfactory performance, in terms of open advertising of cost and code of conduct, some action will have to be taken. There is increasing public anger about escalating funeral costs and about the veil of secrecy in the industry, and unless something is done public reaction and mistrust will become greater and greater.

I hope that the Minister will respond positively. His civil servants put a query to me this evening, and I had the common courtesy to tell them that the report of the Office of Fair Trading would be the main basis of my remarks. I exhort the Minister to consider what has been said and to examine the industry, about the framework of which I have talked, and the high degree of secrecy—in particular Hodgson Holdings raising from one-twelfth to 6 per cent. its share of the total market. In the case of the funeral service I mentioned, the lady could have saved about £500. We really should be asking whether a monopoly is developing in the industry. I hope that the Minister has taken note of what I have said and will recommend to the Secretary of State that action be taken.

12.59 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on bringing this important subject to the House's attention. I hope that, in the eight or so minutes left to me, I shall cover as many of the points that he raised as possible.

[Mr. Eric Forth]

The hon. Gentleman rightly concentrated on the recent report by the Office of Fair Trading, which reviewed the operation of the National Association of Funeral Directors' code of practice, which has prompted a great deal of interest and, as the hon. Gentleman said so eloquently, some concern. We are all conscious that a funeral is not like any normal transaction. The House does not need to be reminded of that.

I would like to remind the House of the context of the OFT report. The Director General of Fair Trading has a duty under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to encourage associations to adopt codes of practice providing a standard which promotes and safeguards the interests of consumers. There are currently 26 such codes endorsed by the director general and they form a valuable part of the consumer protection framework. The Government are convinced that effective self-regulation is better than regulation.

The director general's involvement does not end with the satisfactory launching of a new code. In practice, he keeps an eye on its working and his mailbag and the various statistics he collects are often a good sign of whether problems are continuing. Periodically, he will do a formal monitoring exercise. The recent report on funerals is just one of these.

A sample survey was undertaken of recent users of funeral services by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for the OFT. The questions asked in the survey were linked to the key requirements of the code of practice and therefore covered the quality of service, the price charged, and the quality and detail of information provided. The results form the basis of the director general's recommendations for improvement in the working of the code.

The conclusion of the survey, done in 1987—that the average funeral director's bill was £586 and that this represented an increase of 28 per cent. above the rate of inflation since 1975—has attracted much attention. The hon. Gentleman dwelt on aspects of that. The comparison is with another sample survey done by the OPCS in 1975 for the Department of Health and Social Security. The OFT report is careful to point out important factors qualifying the figure which it uses.

For example, the funeral director has little control over the cost of disbursements included in his bill, funeral directors' own costs such as staff and equipment may have risen above the costs of inflation and the two OPCS surveys are not directly comparable. Indeed, I do not read the OFT report as necessarily suggesting that funeral directors are overcharging, but it highlights the fact that the cost of a funeral is substantial, and that the bereaved sometimes find the final sum larger than they had anticipated. The hon. Gentleman gave examples of that. Those involved need more information at the right time and in a suitable form.

It is important to note what the report does not cover. The director general did not carry out a survey of funeral directors, and collected no information about their costs and margins. As I have already mentioned, the cost of a number of the elements which are part of a funeral service, such as local cemetery charges, the attendance of a minister, flowers, and notices in the press, are outside the funeral director's control. Disbursements to third parties normally account for about 30 per cent. of total costs. The arranging of a funeral is a very labour-intensive service, and this also has a significant impact on costs.

The fact that during the past few years a number of small independent funeral director firms have been taken over—the hon. Gentleman stressed that development—is perhaps an indication that profit margins in some parts of the industry are low.

The hon. Member for Leigh expressed concern at the increasing concentration of the market, particularly in local areas, but the report tells us that the Co-op is the largest supplier of funeral services, with some 25 per cent. of the market. Hodgson Holdings has 6 per cent., Kenyon Securities has 4 per cent. and the Great Southern Group has 4 per cent. I do not think that those figures show excessive monopoly, although it is a trend which must be watched closely by the appropriate bodies and my Department. It is going too far to say that the market is in any way overwhelmed or dominated by that small number of companies. I am confident that the Director General of Fair Trading will remain alert to what is happening in the market and be ready to take action if and when the need arises. He has discretionary powers to refer abuses of monopoly and anti-competitive practices to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Indeed, the commission investigated the acquisition by the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd. of the Scottish funeral businesses of House of Fraser plc in 1987. It concluded that the acquisition would result in choice for the consumer being severely limited in certain areas in Scotland and the Co-operative Wholesale Society was required to dispose of certain companies it had acquired from House of Fraser. That shows that the mechanism is in place to deal with such developments as and when they arise.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will the Minister please respond to my hon. Friend's request for some action to be taken on the cost of coffins, which range from £19·50 to £27 but are sold for £150 or more?

Mr. Forth: The report has been produced and the OFT is examining carefully what is happening. It has already been in touch with the National Association of Funeral Directors and a meeting has been arranged for 22 February. That demonstrates the degree of urgency. There is no doubt that, as the association's national public relations officer said in a recent interview on Radio 4, the National Association of Funeral Directors is

"very disappointed about some of the aspects that have come out of the report".

It is clear that the association is taking the matter very seriously. The OFT is following it up with the association and I am confident, indeed optimistic, that the association now has every reason to address the problems that were dealt with in the report and the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman has raised. If it does not do so within the time scale mentioned in the report and by the hon. Gentleman, in six months' time further action can and may be taken by the OFT. My Department certainly will be watching developments very closely indeed.

In conclusion, may I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising such important matters and for drawing to the attention of the House the report, which I believe is very useful. I undertake that we shall watch very carefully the

OFT's discussions with the NAFD in the hope that they will lead to a very real improvement in the position that he has described.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 7 February 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. The Petroleum Royalties (Relief) and Continental Shelf Act 1989.
2. The Port of Tyne Act 1989.
3. The London Regional Transport Act 1989.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL *(By Order)*
INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL *(By Order)*
ISLE OF WIGHT BILL *(By Order)*
LONDON UNDERGROUND VICTORIA BILL *(By Order)*
PENZANCE ALBERT PIER EXTENSION BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 9 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

1. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the defence budget has been devoted to nuclear weapons in each of the last five years.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): The estimated percentage share of the defence budget devoted to strategic nuclear weapons in each of the past five years is, in 1984-85 2·3 per cent., in 1985-86 2·8 per cent., in 1986-87 3·6 per cent., in 1987-88 4·7 per cent., in 1988-89 5·6 per cent.

Mr. Evans: As Britain's defence budget has been reduced over the past three years from what it was originally projected to be, and as the nuclear element will be substantially increased if the Prime Minister's obsession with modernising tactical nuclear weapons is successful, will the Secretary of State give a categorical assurance that he will protect and defend the conventional weapons element of his budget in the future?

Mr. Younger: Yes, I can give that categorical assurance. The matter should be seen in perspective. The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that this year's defence budget, excluding nuclear strategic forces, is £¼ billion higher in real terms than the whole of the 1978-79 defence budget, even including the Polaris programme. An enormously greater amount is being spent on conventional forces than there ever was before 1979.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will join me in welcoming Mr. Gorbachev's efforts to reduce the Soviet Union's defence capacity, but when thinking of this country's future need for nuclear defence will he bear strongly in mind the fact that some smaller countries will have a nuclear capability—especially Israel and South Africa, both of which probably have that capacity already—and others such as Libya will, unfortunately, probably develop it? Does he agree that whatever happens between the two superpowers it is unlikely that this country will be able to do without an element of nuclear deterrence in the foreseeable future?

Mr. Younger: I certainly share my hon. Friend's pleasure at the improvements in the Soviet position and the reductions in Soviet weapon systems that have been announced. We shall be watching carefully to be sure that they actually happen. I also agree that, while seeking further reductions by every means that we can, it is still essential to keep up our strength in nuclear and conventional forces until the Soviet forces decrease to roughly the same level as our own.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In relation to the production of weapons-grade plutonium, will the Secretary of State make it clear that the decision by British Nuclear Fuels last week to announce a feasibility study into the construction of an advanced gas-cooled reactor or pressurised water reactor at Sellafield is in no way dependent on a contribution from the Ministry of Defence, that the only contracts that would go to BNFL for weapons-grade plutonium would be extending existing contracts from the facility already in place and that it is a misrepresentation by journalists to say that the plant will be built to fulfil Britain's nuclear weapons requirements?

Mr. Younger: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the announcement by BNFL last week has nothing to do with me. He will have to ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy as the announcement has no connection with the defence programme as such.

Soviet Union (Parliamentarians' Visits)

2. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on briefing hon. and right hon. Members undertaking visits to the Soviet Union.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence would be happy to consider any request for briefing from hon. or right hon. Members undertaking visits to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Moss: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Labour party's recent delegation to Moscow, in search of its defence policy and to audition for a part in the nuclear disarmament show, came back with a script that my hon. Friend's Department could have written in advance—that the Russians totally reject the Labour party's unilateralist approach and much prefer the Government's multilateralist approach?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. General Vladimir Lobov was reported as saying that although unilateralism is an imaginative gesture it is neither realistic nor a serious option for a major power. If that team of hon. Members had come for a briefing at the Ministry of Defence we could have given them the information and saved them the cost of the journey.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Minister agree that one important issue that could be raised by those visiting the Soviet Union is chemical weapons? Does he agree that although it is right to give a cautious welcome to Mr. Schevardnadze's announcement at the beginning of January we should urge the Soviet Union to provide a full and frank disclosure of its chemical weapons capability? Does he further agree that we should urge the Soviet Union to allow our experts the same kind of access that Soviet experts were recently afforded at Porton Down?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. and learned Gentleman is absolutely right. Access and verification are the keys to the whole business of controlling chemical weapons in the future. In that statement from Mr. Schevardnadze the Soviet Union admitted to having 50,000 tonnes of chemical agents—the first time that the Soviet Union had ever admitted to having any chemical capability—and even that figure differed greatly from our estimates of the tonnage of chemical weapons held by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Is my hon. Friend aware that as a member of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs I visited Moscow in November and met the same people as the Labour delegation met? That delegation will probably have returned in total confusion because it is clear that there is a high regard in Moscow for the consistent defence policy followed by the British Government? It is also clear that the Soviet Union has started its own reductions in the face of our steadfastness in the past.

Mr. Hamilton: That is absolutely correct. My hon. Friend is right that the Soviet Union respects people who negotiate from a position of strength rather than weakness.

Mr. Douglas: When briefings are given to politicians visiting the Soviet Union does the Ministry of Defence classify D5 Trident missiles as a first-strike or a second-strike weapon?

Mr. Hamilton: That is a hypothetical question because in practice no briefings are given to hon. Members visiting the Soviet Union.

Mr. Redwood: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is better to go to Washington and Brussels first when trying to construct a defence and disarmament strategy so that nothing is given away in talks to the Russians due to not knowing our allies' position?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. When formulating a defence policy it is strange to discuss it with the Communist Government. That must be an indication of the Leftward leanings of the Opposition.

Low Flying (Germany)

3. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from (i) German citizens and (ii) the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany seeking a reduction of low flying in Germany.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert): My right hon. Friend has not received any such representations from citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany, but last week he had discussions with his German colleague, Dr. Scholz, about a wide range of issues of mutual interest, including ways in which it might be possible to ease the impact of low-flying training on German citizens.

Mr. Fatchett: I am glad that the Minister is now giving some information about last week's meeting because the Ministry of Defence press release made no reference to German representations about low-flying aircraft. Are we to understand from the Minister's answer that there will now be a reduction in the number of low flights over West Germany? If that is the case, will there be a subsequent increase in the number of such flights over the United Kingdom? If so, may I advise the Minister that that would be totally unacceptable to the people of this country?

Mr. Neubert: None of those assumptions is correct. The hon. Gentleman might have helped himself by studying the transcript of the press conference given by my right hon. Friend and the German Defence Minister.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that the low flying carried out in West Germany and in this country is an integral part of our defence posture in terms of deterrence? Does he also agree that the amount of low flying carried out in this country is roughly the same as that carried out in West Germany and that the vast majority of the German population understand the need for it and would support its continuance at the present level?

Mr. Neubert: My hon. Friend is correct. Low-level flying is a military requirement and there is an essential minimum of flying training that must be carried out over West European terrain. There is substantial public support for that training because it is considered a crucial part of our operating capability.

Mr. Molyneaux: Does the Minister not feel that the German people, of all people, would understand the vital necessity of low flying training, bearing in mind that if Goering's Luftwaffe air fleet had crossed the Channel in 1940 at wave top height the outcome of the battle of Britain might have been very different?

Mr. Neubert: We can all learn from history and I am sure that the West German public will not be slow to take that lesson.

Anglo-French Reciprocal Purchasing Initiative

4. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been achieved through the Anglo-French reciprocal purchasing initiative.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The progress of this initiative has been good. Some contracts have already been signed and more tenders are under consideration on both sides of the Channel. A French contracts bulletin is now being published, three successful

conferences have been held and there are regular and increasing contacts between procurement staffs at all levels.

Mr. Davies: Given that public procurement in general would be on a non-discriminatory basis in the European single market after 1992, does my hon. Friend agree that in defence too, there are the strongest reasons for achieving maximum economies of scale in research and production and the greatest inter-operability of equipment? Does he accept that he and his colleagues will receive the strongest support in the House for any progress that they can make in that direction?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend is right in identifying three of the main advantages to be obtained from agreements such as the one to which the question relates. First, there is a saving in research and development expenditure; secondly, there are savings from longer production runs; thirdly, of course, he raised the important point that there are benefits to the alliance from greater inter-operability of service equipment.

Atomic Weapons Testing (Compensation)

5. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had about compensating those affected by British atomic weapons testing in Australia.

Mr. Sainsbury: Ministers have had a number of discussions with various groups and individuals on the question of possible compensation for those who have claimed that their ill health is attributable to participation in the United Kingdom's nuclear test.

Mr. Martin: The Minister will know of the recent Australian Supreme Court decision when Mr. Rick Johnstone, an ex-airman who was present at a British atomic site in the 1950s, was awarded £300,000 compensation. Surely it is only fair to the families and to the surviving airmen, some of whom are in great pain and discomfort, for the British Government to provide proper compensation for men who were present at those sites in good faith.

Mr. Sainsbury: The judgment of the Australian court is not yet available in this country. We shall certainly study it with great care when it is available because we are anxious to be as fair as possible and to treat all our service men on an equal basis. Indeed, if we established to our satisfaction that there was a link between a person's presence at the atomic tests and an illness we would be anxious to give compensation. When the Australian judgment becomes available, however, we may find that it is not directly relevant to the issue with which the hon. Gentleman is concerned.

Mr. Churchill: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that it is beyond the bounds of what is reasonable to expect British ex-service men who took part in this country's Australian and Pacific nuclear test programme in the 1950s and who are now suffering from leukaemia and various forms of cancer—some have already died—to prove, as the Government at present require them to prove, that their illnesses are a direct result of that nuclear test programme? Bearing in mind the service that those people gave to this country in the prime of their youth, would it not be more satisfactory to consider whether there is a reasonable balance of probability that their illnesses were caused by exposure to radiation during that test programme? Will my hon. Friend consider that?

Mr. Sainsbury: We have the greatest sympathy with those who are suffering ill health and who genuinely and sincerely believe that that is attributable to their participation in tests. My hon. Friend will be aware, as will the House, of the National Radiological Protection Board's extensive research programme and of its findings, and we are continuing to keep that under review. My hon. Friend will also be aware that in our actions we must be fair to all service men—those who took part in the tests and those who did not—and treat all of them fairly and equally.

Mr. Boyes: In view of the strong comments from both sides of the House, is not the Minister's reply complacent, insulting and a kick in the teeth for British service men? Is the Minister saying that British service men are worth less than Australian service men, that British service men suffered less than Australian service men or that British service men are more resistant to radiation than Australian service men? If the answer to those questions is no and Mr. Rick Johnstone receives £300,000 compensation, should not British service men receive an equal amount for their suffering over the many years following those tests?

Mr. Sainsbury: I appreciate the concern on both sides of the House about this important issue. That is why the National Radiological Protection Board conducted its independent research, and it would be unreasonable completely to ignore the outcome of that research. It might be wiser for the hon. Gentleman to delay his somewhat outspoken comments about Mr. Johnstone until we have all had the opportunity to see the Australian court's judgment which is not yet available in Britain.

Belize

6. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he intends to visit Belize.

Mr. Younger: I was in Belize last month to visit British forces there. I was greatly impressed by the efficiency and enthusiasm with which they are fulfilling their important role. I was also able to meet the Prime Minister of Belize, Mr. Esquivel. I have no plans to visit Belize again in the immediate future.

Mr. Ashby: Without wishing to give Guatemala a wrong signal, will my right hon. Friend consider the good will towards Britain and the progress towards democracy in Guatemala when deciding upon the level of the defence forces to be kept in Belize?

Mr. Younger: Yes, my hon. Friend is correct. I found great good will towards the British defence forces and the British Government, and the Prime Minister of Belize expressed his gratitude for all that the British forces do there. My hon. Friend will know that talks are continuing with the Government of Guatemala, but in the meantime I assured the Prime Minister that British forces would remain for an appropriate period at the request of the Government of Belize.

Mr. Frank Cook: When assessing the conditions of service men and service women in Belize, will the Secretary

of State bear in mind the comments made during the debate on the Defence Estimates about pay, allowances and conditions throughout our armed forces and give a categorical assurance that he will consider council house —*[Interruption.]* A Freudian slip, Mr. Speaker—I would buy another if I had the chance. *[Interruption.]* It is Labour party policy.

Will the Secretary of State give the House a categorical assurance that he will consider the points made about house purchase assistance and that service pay and allowances will be guaranteed against inflation?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's remarks and I recall what was said in the recent Estimates debate. I assure him that we give high priority to trying to obtain an appropriate form of military salary with a mix of allowances to reflect service men's conditions. As the hon. Gentleman knows, every year the armed forces pay review body has made recommendations and every year the Government have implemented them in full.

I found the soldiers in Belize living in conditions less comfortable than in Britain or the British Army of the Rhine, but all were clear that they greatly enjoyed being there and found it most valuable training.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Belize is the last place where British soldiers can have experience of jungle warfare? Will he therefore take a robust line with his Treasury colleagues?

Mr. Yonger: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. Belize is certainly a good place for jungle training. I was able to take part in some jungle training myself—*[Interruption.]* It is very valuable and useful in the House. Training in such conditions is undoubtedly valuable for British forces, all of whom have expressed great satisfaction at the training facilities available.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Secretary of State accept that the so-called temporary nature of the British military presence in Belize has been used as a reason not to provide the kind of investment in facilities that is really needed in such an extreme climate? As British troops have been there for 40 years, can we not give them the decent living and working conditions that they deserve if they are to stay there much longer?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. We are examining the accounting methods used for planning improvements in Belize. I shall be looking at that very carefully in future.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in that part of central America the presence of British forces in Belize is regarded as a strong force for stability, especially in the run-up to the Guatemalan presidential election? Will my right hon. Friend also comment on the role of British forces in Belize as a forward emergency task force in the case of hurricane damage in the Caribbean?

Mr. Younger: During my visit it was made very clear to me by all concerned that the presence of British troops is very welcome to the people and Government of Belize and also, I believe, to the Government of Guatemala. All concerned made a point of expressing to me their tremendous gratitude for the help that the British services gave during hurricane Gilbert earlier last year.

United States Secretary of State for Defence

7. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the United States Secretary of Defence; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Younger: I met the United States Secretary of Defence at the Wehrkunde conference at the end of last month. A range of matters of mutual interest were discussed.

Mr. Mullin: What discussions has the Secretary of State had with the Americans about their plans to double their spending on military bases in Britain in the next two years? Has he been consulted, and does he have any plans to tell Parliament about them, or must we rely on reports from Washington?

Mr. Younger: Any such improvements to American bases in this country have to be subject to the approval of the British Government. We understand that the projected improvements are to improve existing facilities for existing services at those bases.

Mr. Oppenheim: In considering the general principle of discussing defence matters, does my right hon. Friend agree that Bruce Kent got things right for once when he said that anyone who needed to go to Moscow to discuss defence matters obviously did not have a defence policy of their own?

Mr. Younger: I saw a report of that remark, but I have not raised or discussed it with the United States Administration.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Secretary of State agree that the doubling of defence expenditure on bases in Britain by the Americans would broadcast completely the wrong signal to the Soviet Union at this time and would undoubtedly strengthen those forces in the Soviet Union who are trying to slow down the pace of Gorbachev's proposals for disarmament? Will the Secretary of State therefore join what I think would be the overwhelming majority view in Britain, ensure that the expenditure does not take place and instead respond positively to Gorbachev's proposals and give a European lead towards reducing the presence of American troops in Europe?

Mr. Younger: I have already explained that the expenditure on United States bases is to make existing facilities more effective. The hon. Gentleman is way behind the game with regard to reductions, and Mr. Gorbachev is miles behind this country and NATO in the reductions that we have made. Since 1979 we have reduced our nuclear warheads by 2,400, even before the INF treaty was implemented. That is a reduction of about 35 per cent. in nuclear warheads. Mr. Gorbachev has a long way to go before he gets anywhere near that.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend next meets the United States Secretary of Defence, will he bring to his attention that it is essential that the United States Air Force and the Royal Air Force maintain the ability and capability of flying low and fast to hit targets? Never again must we have the situation that we faced in 1940, when air crew were required to fly with great valour Fairey Battles and Bristol Blenheims against heavily defended targets at

the cost of severe losses. Winning a Victoria cross was never a substitute for the ability to take out a target effectively and properly.

Mr. Younger: I thoroughly agree with my hon. Friend, and so does all of NATO. Although I feel sure that it will not be necessary to remind the new United States Secretary of Defence of that fact, I feel sure that he, too, agrees strongly with my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Sean Hughes: In view of the reply by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to my question last month, in which he stated that there will still be a role for tactical nuclear weapons in the event of conventional parity being reached, did the right hon. Gentleman explain to the United States Secretary of Defence that the British Government have unilaterally changed the basis of flexible response, which they have consistently argued allows for the tactical nuclear option because of the Warsaw pact's overwhelming conventional superiority?

Mr. Younger: There has been no change in the doctrine of flexible response. If, as the hon. Gentleman and I hope, the stage is reached where there is parity of conventional weapons, a very different situation will exist in the world of arms control generally. No doubt all sorts of matters would have to be examined afresh.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we owe the Americans a great debt of gratitude for their commitment to Europe? Does he further agree that, at a time when the American foreign exchange costs of keeping their forces in Europe are approximately equal to their entire overseas payments deficit, future agendas should include discussions on burden sharing?

Mr. Younger: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that the debate on burden sharing in NATO should continue in the months ahead. I have no doubt that there is now better appreciation on the other side of the Atlantic of the large amount that European nations do in their own defence —and there is a determination to do more whenever we can.

Nuclear Accidents (Emergency Planning)

8. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice is given to area health authorities for emergency planning in the event of radioactive emission from a nuclear-powered submarine while in port; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Area health authorities are represented on the liaison committees that produce safety schemes for all United Kingdom ports in which there are berths for nuclear-powered submarines. They are provided with information on possible consequences of, and hazards from, any submarine nuclear reactor accident, and advice on suitable protective measures to deal with such an event.

Mr. Alton: Has the Secretary of State had an opportunity to consider a report published recently by academics at the University of Wales, suggesting that the Royal Navy grievously underestimates the effects of a nuclear submarine accident on the civilian population in places such as Plymouth, Liverpool and Cardiff? Has he read today's report from Greenpeace, suggesting that levels of radiation are nine times higher than official acceptable levels in places near to bases in Scotland? Does the Secretary of State agree that safety levels should be reconsidered, that local authorities should reassess their plans for dealing with nuclear accidents, and that restrictions should be placed on submarines entering densely populated areas?

Mr. Younger: We are extremely strong on nuclear submarine safety. We would never allow a nuclear submarine to enter any port unless it was thoroughly approved by the nuclear safety inspectorate concerned, which reports directly to us. The hon. Gentleman can be well assured of that. As to this morning's report from Greenpeace, I see nothing to quarrel with in the methodology used in calculating estimated radiation levels, but I quarrel with the conclusions that are drawn. As I understand it, the Greenpeace study concludes, that, at worst, approximately 1 per cent. of the permitted level of radiation might be suffered by somebody affected in the areas studied. To place that in perspective, it is equivalent to the amount of radiation to which we are all exposed on a return shuttle flight to Glasgow. It is absurd to suggest that that causes any danger to anyone.

Mr. McFall: The Secretary of State knows that the emergency planning procedures for the Clyde public safety scheme have been revised. Will he give an undertaking today that the Ministry of Defence will have meaningful discussions with the local authority, and to demonstrate that approach will the Secretary of State allow the local authorities funding for independent monitoring so that public confidence in the area may be maintained?

Mr. Younger: I can certainly assure the hon. Gentleman that we are consulting local authorities, and will continue to do so, on an ongoing basis to draw up public safety schemes. I understand that authorities in his area are among those taking part in such discussions. With regard to reporting on these schemes, we provide the maximum information that we can, and that should be sufficient for everyone to take a full part in the discussions.

NATO Secretary-General

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the secretary-general of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what matters he hopes to discuss.

Mr. Younger: I next expect to see Dr. Wörner at the meeting of NATO's nuclear planning group in the late spring. We shall discuss a range of subjects of mutual interest.

Mr. Riddick: When my right hon. Friend next meets the secretary-general, will he discuss the urgent need to modernise NATO's short-range nuclear missiles, particularly bearing in mind the great superiority of the Soviet Union in this area? Can he assure the House that if there is a change of policy in this area it will be as a result of tough negotiations with the Russians rather than of having accepted the cosy advice of the Russians?

Mr. Younger: I note what my hon. Friend says. NATO will have to come to the question of the modernisation of short-range weapons and I am sure that it will bear in mind that there are very strong arguments for having such weapons—arguments that I have often deployed myself. There are also strong arguments, although I do not agree

with them, for not having these weapons at all. But I submit that there are no arguments for having out-of-date unmodernised weapons, which are useless to all concerned.

Mr. Duffy: Will the Defence Secretary impress upon Dr. Wörner the supreme importance of defence co-operation in these days of escalating defence costs, if the era of structural disarmament is not to be hastened, because the latest thinking of Tom Callahan on his familiar theme is really very alarming? Will he, further, remind Dr. Wörner that no member nation has done more than the United Kingdom to promote joint collaboration?

Mr. Younger: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. The more collaboration there can be between allies, the better. Indeed, if we do not pursue that we shall find it increasingly difficult to afford the systems we need.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Soviet forces have a great preponderance of short-range nuclear weapons compared with the NATO Alliance and, furthermore, are continuing to modernise them?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The Soviet Union has modernised all its shorter-range systems in the last few years. It is, therefore, a very obvious ploy to try to discourage NATO from doing the same. Decisions will have to come up soon on that and I am quite sure that the balance of advantage is to make sure that NATO still has an adequate range of options for its flexible response strategy.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is still desirable that the Irish Republic should play a part in NATO? Will he take the opportunity when he meets the secretary-general to discuss that as a real possibility?

Mr. Younger: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but strictly speaking that is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Hill: In the discussions with NATO perhaps my right hon. Friend will remember that the burden sharing throughout Europe could be well represented by the European pillar of NATO, which is, of course, the Western European Union? I feel that groups such as WEU should be involved more than they are at present in such discussions.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I are joint chairmen of WEU this year, I strongly agree with what he says and I think that the WEU is acting as quite an effective way of expressing the European contribution to our collective defence.

Mr. O'Neill: Given the Secretary of State's enthusiasm for short-range weapons, could he, in his discussions with Manfred Wörner, take account of German anxieties about these weapons, because it is over Germany's land area that they would travel? Could he explain to the House his views on a follow-on to Lance, for which very little enthusiasm is being expressed in the Federal Republic? Does he think, therefore, that there will be any decision before December 1990, when the Federal Republic has its Bundestag elections?

Mr. Younger: I feel that I should begin by saying, "Welcome back." I was beginning to fear from the hon. Gentleman's notable silence earlier that he must have visited a Trappist monastery in Russia, with due results.

Of course I agree that shorter-range nuclear weapons are an important subject. Negotiations are still an essential part of our flexible response strategy, and that applies just as much to the defence of Germany as to that of any other part of Europe.

We shall have to address the possibility of a follow-on system to Lance, but as no such system has yet been selected, we are not in a position to say whether we shall take part.

Mr. Nelson: In view of the chairmanship of the independent European programme group which my right hon. Friend will be undertaking over the next two years, will he say what discussions he may have with the secretary-general about the importance of transnational co-operation on an industrial base to ensure that we in Europe continue at least to keep a proportion of the equipment with which we supply our own defence needs?

Mr. Younger: Yes, I shall be keeping the secretary-general in close touch with the work of the IEPG during the next two years when we shall be chairing that body. I know that he fully supports what we are trying to do. At present we are trying in particular to create an open market in defence equipment throughout western Europe, which should be greatly to the advantage of collaboration and the procurement of our equipment generally.

Dr. Owen: Would it not be wiser, in view of the divisiveness on modernisation in the Federal Republic of Germany, to concentrate first on a stand-off air-launch missile—on which it is probably possible to reach unanimity in NATO—and essential modernisation for Tornado and F-111 aircraft, and to leave aside the question of Lance for the next couple of years?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's point. As he knows, we are considering with our allies the best course to follow in replacing our free-fall bombs, and one of the possibilities would be a stand-off air-launch missile. Discussions are continuing.

It is worth pointing out that, while there are still divisions among our friends in Germany about the precise course to take, all concerned in the German Government are clearly agreed that they must not do anything that could lead to a third zero, which would be gravely damaging to the policy of flexible response on which we all depend.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend will be aware of Dr. Wörner's interest in the announcement of the Tornado midlife update. Will he tell us when that will occur?

Mr. Younger: We shall be making announements about the precise details, but I have no doubt that the Tornado midlife update will have to be brought forward soon, as it is a high priority.

Polaris Fleet

11. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest annual cost of maintenance of the Polaris fleet.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the current financial year it is estimated that some £271 million will be spent on the maintenance of the Polaris fleet.

Mr. Cryer: Is not that sum staggering when we bear in mind the recent expenditure of £500 million on replacement rocket motors? Will the Minister comment on the Government's morality—a morality which cuts back expenditure on, for example, new school building in my constituency, yet can lavish nearly £1 billion on new motors and annual maintenance?

Will the Minister also comment on the morality of deploying Polaris missiles which, if used, would bring about more exterminations than Pol Pot and Hitler put together? Why does the rest of the world reject that disgusting morality?

Mr. Hamilton: Any defence expenditure must be seen in terms of its deterrent effect, and there is no doubt that our independent nuclear deterrent has proved to be very good value for money. That view was accepted by the last Labour Government, who agreed that the Polaris system should be subject to the Chevaline update and were so ashamed of their decision that they kept it secret. They were worried about the reaction of unilateralists on their own Back Benches such as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Leigh: Does my hon. Friend think it likely that the subject of the cost of maintaining the Polaris fleet was raised at the meeting between Labour party leaders and the Soviet leadership in Moscow recently? Could the deafening silence from the Opposition Benches today on that visit be explained by a large dose of pique at being snubbed by a Soviet Government who would much rather deal with a party not imbued with what Brezhnev called "the naivety of unilateralism"?

Mr. Hamilton: One problem we have is that the delegation that has come back from Moscow has been quiet about what was discussed. It would be helpful if the members of that delegation could reveal rather more of their discussion.

European Fighter Aircraft (Radar)

12. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the latest procurement plans for the EFA radar system.

Mr. Sainsbury: A report by the prime contractor is currently under consideration by NEFMA, the international management agency for the EFA programme, and by the collaborating nations. I would hope that a decision on the winning consortium could be made early this year.

Mr. Meale: Will the Minister comment on the specification and supply of EFA radar systems—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading"]. Will he ensure that his decision will not prejudice Britain's electronics and radar industries—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading"]—research base, and—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sainsbury: I regret to say that, whether or not it was read, I was unable to hear the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question.

Mr. Meale *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must get on. Questions to the Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including the Spanish Foreign Minister. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Soviet Deputy Prime Minister. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Porter: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread concern about fraud; about reports of the siphoning off of EEC funds to the IRA and the Mafia and about often poor policing of basic EEC rules? How does my right hon. Friend intend to protect the interests of the British people in general and the taxpayers in particular?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the extent of fraud in the use of EC funds revealed by the Court of Auditors is a matter of great concern. Some of the remedies are in national hands, but we believe that the rules applied by the Community must be tightened up and any suspect cases investigated vigorously. The Parliament has also raised this matter with the Commission, and I shall hope to raise it at the next European Council.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister say why, in meetings with the water companies, the Government have given the green light for huge increases in water charges?

The Prime Minister: There are two aspects of the water companies. The water companies as such are the privatised section; the water authorities are being denationalised. The water companies—as the right hon. Gentleman will see if he looks at the record for the last four years—have had both lower price increases and have charged for the last four years much lower prices per household than have the water authorities.

Mr. Kinnock: With an answer like that, I wonder why the right hon. Lady's Ministers say that these huge rises are unjustified. Will the Prime Minister confirm that at a meeting at the Department of the Environment on 1 December it was agreed with the private water companies that they should

"raise their tariffs to the maximum permitted"

and that they were further

"strongly advised not to suggest that privatisation as such makes their tariff increases necessary"?

Why that advice and why the deceit?

The Prime Minister: The facts I have given to the right hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*—he can get from the tables. They show that the water companies have been charging for the last four years prices below those of the nationalised statutory authorities. Several statutory companies have announced increases in prices. The amount under regulation that they will be able to charge will depend on the cost of the service that they provide and their reasonable profits. Therefore, there is virtually no point in putting up their prices now.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister is now telling us that those rises are justified. Why did the Leader of the House tell us yesterday that those rises were not justified?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman did not listen. I said that the increase in prices—if they are trying to start from a higher base—will have virtually no effect because we are introducing a better—*[Interruption.]* He should listen.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister has been asked a question and must be given the opportunity to answer it.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman clearly does not like the facts. We are introducing a better system of regulation for water companies, under which they will need to satisfy the Director General of Water Services, introduced under the Bill, that the proposed increases are justified. At the moment, their prices are below those of the nationalised authorities.

Q2. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Has my right hon. Friend seen that shares in the National Freight Corporation were quoted for the first time on the stock exchange yesterday, and that its employees saw the profits from their small shareholdings in that privatised company rise enormously? Is she aware that if the Labour party had had its way, those employees, instead of receiving that profit for their families would now be working for a sterile nationalised industry?

The Prime Minister: Yes. The privatisation of the National Freight Corporation has been very successful, both for consumers and for those who worked extremely hard in the industry to make it successful. Hard work has given them an excellent reward; they have been able to build up capital, which they would never have been able to do under a Labour Government. We wish them well and thank them for their great endeavours.

Q3. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Prime Minister give a guarantee to the House that, under the health review, existing district health authorities will retain their accident and emergency departments? Since this is a life and death issue, will she answer yes or no?

The Prime Minister: The district health authorities and the self-governing hospitals will have to retain their accident and emergency departments because that is a fundamental core service. Either the district health authorities or the self-governing hospitals will have to run effective accident and emergency services.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether she has extended—and if not, whether she will consider extending today—an official invitation to visit this country to President George Bush, to ensure that the alliance between Great Britain and America stays as strong as it has always been?

The Prime Minister: President Bush knows that he will be welcome in this country at any time when he is able to come. He might have other matters on his mind at the moment. He will be visiting Europe for the economic summit in July and there is a possibility of a NATO Heads of Government meeting. We need have no fear about the special relationship. It will continue as staunchly in the future as it has in the past.

Q4. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Vaz: The Prime Minister has spent the past 10 years lecturing the nation on law and order. Is she aware that in Leicestershire violent crime has risen by 73 per cent. during that period? In his miserable attempt to deal with the problem, the Home Secretary has announced an increase of only an extra 18 police officers, despite the request by the chief constable for an extra 89 officers. When will the Government end their conspiracy with the muggers, rapists and others who survive to destroy society because of this Government?

The Prime Minister: Of course, I reject totally what the hon. Gentleman has said. A Government who have increased the numbers of police enormously, the amount of money enormously, the amount of equipment enormously and the amount of training enormously and have received a great deal of co-operation from the public, a Government who support the prevention of terrorism Act, and a Government who have increased maximum sentences, are a Government who have been fighting crime. We wish that we had the full co-operation of Opposition Members.

Mr. Yeo: Will my right hon. Friend convey to her ministerial team at the Treasury the warm thanks of the charity world following yesterday's announcement that charitable expenditure on new construction work is largely to retain its existing zero rating for VAT purposes?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course. Yesterday the new VAT regulations following the judgment of the European Court were published. We have taken full advantage of the latitude that is permitted to give a very good deal to charities and also to provide transitional arrangements for others who will be adversely affected. A very good job has been done.

Q5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given that it is Government policy that before a school moves out of local authority control there should be a vote by parents, and before housing moves out of local government control there should be a vote by tenants, why is it not explicit Government policy that before a hospital such as Guy's in my constituency moves out of local authority control—*[Interruption.]*—

local health authority control, there should be a vote by the users of that service, namely the patients in the Lewisham and North Southwark district health authority area? Will the Prime Minister give an undertaking that those people will have a vote, and, if not, why not?

The Prime Minister: Schools come under local authorities, as do council houses, so it is very obvious that parents and tenants should have a vote. But hospitals, as the hon. Member knows, do not.

Mr. Hayes: Will my right hon. Friend express her deep concern to the Dutch and Belgian authorities about their failure to prosecute two Irishmen who were found in possession of weapons allegedly used in the murder of two British service men? Does she agree that international terrorism will be beaten only by international co-operation?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree wholeheartedly with that proposition, and from most countries we get such co-operation. As my hon. Friend is aware, there are times when we do not succeed in getting people extradited, but for the most part we get increasing co-operation, particularly among the police and the security services, in the fight against terrorism.

Q6. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: Has the Prime Minister seen the league table that was published in *Hansard* on 11 January showing that the Derbyshire county council, which is Labour-controlled, has the best staff-pupil ratio of any shire county? It is top in special education, top in secondary education, and second, by a hair's breadth, in primary education. Will the right hon. Lady congratulate the Derbyshire county council on this achievement?

The Prime Minister: I understand that it also has very, very high spending. But I am very glad if it has excellent education; the hon. Member must be very pleased with Conservative education policy.

Mr. Hayward: Will my right hon. Friend consider the monopoly that currently operates with the BBC and ITV in terms of the prior publication of programmes, particularly since we now have Sky TV's competing channels?

The Prime Minister: Yes, but the whole of broadcasting is, in fact, changing because of the speed of new technology and, of course, because of the alternative channels. I think that we shall soon have the debate on the White Paper, when we shall be able to consider these matters and how to deal with them in legislation.

Q7. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Buchan: Has the Prime Minister yet had the chance to reconsider her grossly offensive speech in Scotland on Friday? Has no one told her that she united practically the entire Scottish population with her objectionable views? Does she not realise that the stupidity of her declared veto is as dangerous as the stupid separatism of Scottish Nationalists? Are they in consort with each other?

The Prime Minister: If I may say so, in the place where I gave the speech before 675 people, many of them journalists, it was very well received. I pointed out that under a Conservative Government, Scotland is doing better than ever and that Scotland could not possibly have achieved that response to Conservative policies without being in tune with them, even though many people, like the hon. Gentleman, find it difficult to admit it.

Q8. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adley: Now that the Russians are leaving or have left Afghanistan, the Cubans and South Africans have left Namibia, and the Vietnamese are leaving Kampuchea, will my right hon. Friend join me in hoping that ere long the Israelis will leave the occupied west bank and Gaza?

The Prime Minister: The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan is a great tribute to the resistance who never let up in their fight for their country. Also, it is a great tribute to Pakistan which has received so many refugees. We are very pleased that the withdrawal is virtually complete. I join my hon. Friend in hoping that we shall soon see negotiations begin on a settlement to the middle east problem.

Road Safety (White Paper)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the Government's proposals to reform road traffic law. A White Paper, called "The Road User and the Law", has been laid this afternoon. The White Paper responds to the recommendations of the North review of road traffic law, published last April. I pay tribute to the review committee for the valuable work which it did.

The Government's determination to improve road safety is clear. We are committed to cut road casualties, especially those killed or seriously injured, by one third by the end of the century. The proposals in the White Paper will play a major part in achieving that target.

This country now has the best road safety record in Europe. But there is still a long way to go. Over 5,000 people died and more than 300,000 were injured as a result of road accidents in 1987. Behind those stark figures lie appalling personal tragedies. Probably every Member of this House has known someone hurt or killed on one of Britain's roads.

The White Paper brings forward a wide range of proposals to tackle the next steps in improving safety on our roads. These proposals aim to improve the structure of road traffic law, to increase its public acceptability, and to make it operate more fairly and simply. We aim to ensure that the penalty matches the offence and that those who drive very badly are properly punished.

The present reckless driving offence does not operate satisfactorily in England and Wales, and must be changed. At the moment drivers are escaping conviction, because the law turns on the driver's state of mind rather than the state of driving. The Government therefore propose to replace the reckless driving offence with a new offence of dangerous driving based more firmly on the observable standard of driving. This offence will have two ingredients: the standard of driving must fall far below that expected of a competent and careful driver, and the driver must carry a danger of physical injury or serious damage to property.

The present offence of causing death by reckless driving will be replaced by a new offence of causing death by dangerous driving. The present lower level offence of careless driving will be retained.

One of the most serious threats to safety on the roads is drink driving. There is much public concern about the inadequacy of the present law for dealing with drunk drivers who kill. The Government will meet this concern.

As the House is aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department announced last week a period of public consultation on possible changes to police powers to require breath tests. In this White Paper we propose to create a new offence of causing death by careless driving while unfit through drink, drugs or certain other forms of medical incapacity. The maximum penalty will be tough for this offence: five years' imprisonment, obligatory disqualification of at least two years, and an unlimited fine.

There has been mounting concern about the mindless behaviour of vandals who drop objects from motorway bridges, endangering lives. We intend to clamp down on this kind of malicious hooliganism by creating a new criminal offence. There will be a maximum penalty of seven years for those who endanger road users by intentionally obstructing a road or interfering with traffic signs and signals where they are, or ought to be, aware that personal injury or damage to property may result.

The surest way to reduce road casualties is to improve standards of driving. We are therefore proposing that certain categories of road traffic offender must pass a new, longer and more stringent driving test before a licence is restored following a period of disqualification. We shall introduce retesting on a phased basis, starting with those convicted of the most serious bad driving offences. Ultimately, the test could be extended to all drivers disqualified as a result of careless driving and other accident offences. The private sector will be encouraged to develop suitable training courses. We shall monitor progress closely and will seek powers, for use as necessary, to require instructors intending to offer retraining to be licensed specifically for that purpose.

We propose to set up an experiment to see whether we can change the attitudes of drink drivers. Powers will be sought to allow the courts in selected areas to order those convicted of drink-driving offences to attend special rehabilitation courses.

The penalty point system has proved very successful. To make it even more effective, we intend to make certain changes. These include a new range of three to six penalty points for speeding offences dealt with by court proceedings, which will enable the courts to deal more effectively with the more serious cases. The maximum penalty for the offences of failure to stop and failure to report an accident will be increased to include six months' imprisonment.

Technology has an important role to play in the detection of certain traffic offences. The Government therefore intend to amend the law so that cameras can be used as sole evidence for speeding and traffic light offences. Safeguards will be provided to ensure that the equipment used is both accurate and reliable. We shall continue to monitor the development of enforcement technology in other areas of road traffic law and will consider allowing its wider use as and when equipment of sufficient accuracy and reliability becomes available.

The White Paper contains a wide variety of proposals to make road traffic law simpler and easier to understand in a variety of ways. Most of the proposals will apply throughout Great Britain. However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is considering whether the new dangerous driving offence should extend to Scotland, where the present reckless driving offence has not given rise to the same problems of interpretation as in England and Wales.

The Government's proposals will bring about significant changes in statute and in the operation of road traffic law. Further work to implement the proposals will start as soon as possible. Specific recommendations in the North report have been drawn to the attention of the courts and the police, and consultations are being initiated with representative bodies of these organisations. Consultation will be undertaken with the local authority associations, motoring and other organisations on the detailed implementation of the proposals. Legislation will then be brought forward as soon as parliamentary time can be found.

This White Paper strengthens, modernises and clarifies road traffic law. I commend it to hon. Members on both sides of the House as a major contribution to the Government's drive to make Britain's roads safer still.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I welcome the White Paper and its proposals to improve our traffic law and road behaviour. I believe that it will reduce deaths from accidents, and the House and the country will welcome that.

May I offer our grateful thanks to Dr. North and his committee for their most thorough report. Whilst one would like to consider the full implications of the White Paper proposals, I am happy to endorse the broad thrust of them. Indeed, it will make the law more definitive and more uniform. The tougher penalties, with retraining and rehabilitation for drink drivers, are to be welcomed.

The Secretary of State spoke about testing, retesting and retraining. I hope that he is prepared to increase the number of staff available to deal with training and testing because major difficulties are experienced at present. Like the Government, I reject some of Dr. North's recommendations, most notably that the penalty fine for an offence should cover administrative and court costs —in a sense, privatising the costs. I accept the Government's view that the fine should represent a punishment and a deterrent and should reflect the seriousness of the offence.

Will the Secretary comment on the proposals so obviously missing from the terms of reference and which make a major contribution to reducing drink-driving accidents—random breath tests which are carried out openly by some police authorities without the express agreement of Parliament, or the necessary protection that would be imposed? Does his statement and that of the Home Secretary last week mean that their proposals will be included in a new traffic Bill? Will random breath tests be included in that Bill, and when is such a Bill likely to come forward?

In substituting the offence of reckless driving for the two offences of dangerous driving and careless driving, will the advice given by police officers in exercising that judgment be publicly available and discussed by the House and by other interested parties?

The Secretary of State mentioned the use of technology such as videos and cameras as the sole evidence for prosecution. Is he quite convinced that technically they can be relied upon to be absolutely sound? I am sure that that problem will exercise many minds.

Is the Secretary of State aware that, in extending the penalty points for speeding offences from three to six in the case of those who choose to go to court, he appears to be loading the case against citizens who exercise their right to have their cases heard in court instead of being dealt with by policemen on the spot? Is that not a penalty against one's right to pursue one's case through the courts?

The Secretary of State accepted Dr. North's rejection of the suggestion that the courts should not be burdened with compensation issues related to traffic offences. Is he considering any other ways of dealing with that distressing and vexed question that is involved when one pursues a civil action?

Finally, will the conclusions of the experiment to be carried out in Scotland in relating fines to one's ability to pay them—that is clearly against the Government's taxation policy whereby the rich do not pay—be included in the next traffic Bill to come before the House?

Mr. Channon: I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) for his generous welcome to the thrust of the proposals. I shall try to deal with all the points that he raised, but if I omit any issues I shall be in touch with him.

In regard to random breath testing, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced only a few days ago that there would be consultation. He has asked for the consultations to be completed by 30 April. Were it to be decided that changes in the law should take place, there is no reason to assume that they could not be fitted into a new traffic Bill. As to when such a Bill will be brought forward, the hallowed answer to such requests is "As soon as parliamentary time allows." *[Interruption.]* I note that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is pressing for the Government to be speedy, and I shall convey that to my ministerial colleagues.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East referred to technology. It is absolutely essential that the technology should be reliable and accurate. Equipment will be subject to rigorous testing. I shall have to approve devices and the equipment will be regularly maintained to prescribed standards. Of course I shall not approve a device unless I am satisfied that it is accurate and reliable. Obviously the House will wish to pay very close attention to that. Provided that standards can be met, it is clear that it is no longer a game on Britain's roads and we must have the most efficient way of catching offenders in order to reduce road accidents.

I note the hon. Gentleman's views on the question of the courts and speeding and I shall consider them. He will know that the position will not be changed enormously. At present, speeding incurs a level 3 fine of £400 and a discretionary disqualification of three penalty points. All that is suggested is that the three penalty points fixed penalty should remain, but that there will be a right to go up to six in court proceedings. We shall consider the hon. Gentleman's comments in the period before there is any suggestion of legislation. I shall also consider the other points he has made and be in touch with him.

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his White Paper will gain general acceptance and a good welcome, but that the further extension, through the use of cameras, of the principle that a motorist or a keeper of a motor vehicle can be found guilty of an offence without the same burden of proof that would be required to find him guilty of any other form of offence is becoming a little worrying and that some of us may find it difficult to agree with him on that point?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's initial remarks. I know of the views expressed in the latter part of his remarks and that has, of course, given me some concern about whether to press ahead with the proposals. However, with 5,100 people still being killed on our roads —although our road safety figures are now the best for deaths since 1954—and 300,000 being injured, my view is that, provided we can have reliable equipment which is subject to rigorous testing and that it is used where improved enforcement can have the maximum effect on

[Mr. Channon]

accident reduction, it is in the public interest. There is bound to be controversy, and the House will wish to debate the matter at length.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I too welcome the terms of the White Paper in principle, especially the attempt to fill the unhappy and sometimes distressing lacuna in our law which has meant that deaths in circumstances in which drink was taken were not always possible to deal with in a way that was satisfactory not only to the relations of those killed, but to the views of the public. That provision will be warmly welcomed.

I should like the Secretary of State to deal with one point that is perhaps more directly relevant to Scotland than elsewhere. He says that the Secretary of State for Scotland must consider whether the change in legislation for England and Wales is to apply in Scotland. The substantive road traffic law has always been the same throughout the United Kingdom, and if the Secretary of State were to take the view that that should not be the case, for the first time the law in Scotland on a matter of that nature would be different from the law in England and Wales. That would be a substantial departure in principle and one to which I hope the Secretary of State will give serious consideration.

Mr. Channon: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for his preliminary remarks and for what he has said about the new offence of causing death by drunken driving. The law in England and Wales is the same as the law in Scotland, but in Scotland the courts have interpreted the law in a wholly different way and there has not been the same difficulty of interpretation or the same rigorous suggestion that it depends on the state of the driver's mind. As I am advised by my Scottish colleagues, the law is working satisfactorily in Scotland. In those circumstances, they must decide whether they want to change it or to continue with the present satisfactory state of the law in Scotland. I shall convey what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said to my right hon. and learned Friend, but it is difficult to weigh up the two conflicting points.

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the further evidence of the Government's determination to cut down the appalling slaughter and injuries on our roads. I assure him that the White Paper will receive widespread support in the House. Does he agree that it will depend largely on driver co-operation and that that could be jeopardised if there is widespread suspicion about the use of photographic devices for speeding offences, especially if, at the same time, drivers are discouraged from challenging the offence in court because of the deterrent effect of extra penalty points? Would my right hon. Friend look at that matter carefully? Does the White Paper include any encouragement for regular eye testing, and if not will my right hon. Friend consider that?

Mr. Channon: Driver co-operation is extremely important. It is because there has been massive co-operation between the driving public and the authorities that in the past few years the driving accident rate has been coming down significantly, which is a different position from that in many other parts of the world. At one point in the past 10 years, deaths peaked at about 6,800 per year; they are now down to 5,100. The trend for the first three quarters of 1988 shows a further decline. There is no doubt that a combination of things, including driver co-operation, has led to that effect.

Of course, I shall consider my hon. Friend's point, but the thrust of the White Paper is that we should not penalise motorists who commit trivial offences from time to time —as I suspect many hon. Members do—but should punish those who seriously offend. I hope that the driving public does not think that this measure is designed to penalise those who make a trivial mistake from time to time.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston: The review was set up following the report on road safety by the Select Committee on Transport in 1984-85. I welcome the report and am grateful to the Secretary of State for his letter today offering to meet the Select Committee to discuss it. On behalf of the Committee, may I say that we are all looking forward to that meeting.

As hon. Member after hon. Member has emphasised, the major factor in road safety is drinking and driving. As the introduction of random breath testing would do more than anything else to combat that problem, if the Secretary of State wants to save Government time, will he give Government support to the Bill sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson)?

Mr. Channon: That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who is consulting on it. I shall put the hon. Gentleman's suggestion to him but it would be odd to accept it when one is out for consultation on that subject. I am much looking forward to meeting the Select Committee—any place, any time.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I join in the general congratulations given to my right hon. Friend for seeing that those who commit serious motoring offences have a corresponding penalty. When he is considering the range of penalty points, will he ensure that a degree of flexibility is allowed to magistrates so that those who are technically guilty of an offence do not suffer the heavy penalties of those who are guilty of dangerous or reckless driving?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. We hope that, for small offences, there will be a greater use by the police of warnings than there has been in the past.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I join the general welcome for the Secretary of State's proposals, especially those relating to retesting as a standard penalty for many traffic offences. Has the right hon. Gentleman considered the possibilty of retesting people solely on the theory of road practice, given that most drivers do not commit offences because they are not in control of the car, but because they ignore "The Highway Code"? Retesting on the theory of "The Highway Code" as opposed to a full driving test could be introduced quickly over a whole range of driving offences, and for all but the least serious.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has reminded me —the House may already know—that we are going to produce a new highway code in the not-too-distant future. The present one has been in operation for about seven years, so it is about time that we had a new one.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome for the retesting proposals. We shall introduce a new extensive driving test for certain categories of offender. Although we

shall start with those convicted of the most serious offences, we have not ruled out the idea of extending the testing later to include other categories, if that becomes justified. I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the severe problems caused by bus doors that catch limbs and clothing, dragging people along and causing nasty accidents? Is there anything in the White Paper on that, or has my right hon. Friend anything further to add? I remind him that it is now more than eight months since my constituent, Mrs. Ethel Dunne, met with precisely that type of accident which severely disabled her. Can my right hon. Friend offer any hope to my constituent and others like her?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be making an announcement about this in the not-too-distant future. He is having discussions with the Bus and Coach Council on that point. I believe I am right in saying that that matter is more relevant to the debate that follows, but, generally, the number of accidents involving buses is going down rather than up. My hon. Friend has raised an important constituency case and my hon. Friend will contact her about it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have on obligation to take account of the motions on the Order Paper. There is to be a debate on transport in which these matters could be raised. I shall allow questions to continue for a further 15 minues, but then we must move on.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I wholeheartedly welcome the proposals in the White Paper and , therefore, I am sorry to have to introduce a slightly discordant note. I am surprised that there is not recognition in the Minister's statement of the European Commission's suggestion that blood alcohol levels should be reduced from a maximum of 80 to 50. Would the Minister give that serious consideration when he brings forward legislation?

Mr. Channon: Of course, if the Commission proposes such a limit—which I believe it is considering—we shall have to give it serious consideration. However, I would very much like this House to express a view about that suggestion rather than accept blindly what the Commission wants. I am not necessarily opposed to it, but—

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The right hon. Gentleman must be unique among Ministers.

Mr. Channon: Not at all. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister expresses her views with considerable robustness.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Has my right hon. Friend considered making stronger the rules regarding lane discipline? If not, will he consider that matter when redrawing the rules of the road?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an important point. Lane discipline in this country is not nearly satisfactory enough, especially when compared with that in many other countries. It is largely a problem of the education and the training of drivers, and I fear that it will take years to change that position. We are, of course, examining what can be done about it, but it is by no means easy to give a direct answer. I shall be in touch with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Secretary of State has referred to the retraining of offenders after the event, which is most commendable. However, does he agree that perhaps it is just as advisable to improve the standards of motoring before the event? Does he not commend the work of such organisations as the Institute of Advanced Motorists and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents? Could he not further encourage their work by encouraging more insurance companies to offer motorists reduced premiums for the acquisition of an advanced motoring award?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has made a good point. I certainly commend the Institute of Advanced Motorists and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents for their excellent work not only in this but in other areas. The hon. Gentleman's point about insurance companies and their premiums is correct. We are in contact with insurance companies about a range of road safety matters. They are doing their best to help in this area, especially General Accident, to give but one example.

I believe that retraining will be welcomed by the House, but it is important to cut down road casualties generally. As I have said, the number of road casualties is on a downward trend—the situation is better here than anywhere else in the Community—but it is still far too high. I do not wish to sound complacent, because I am not. I am determined to reduce the number further. We must, however, set the results in their context. Quite a lot has been done about improving driving standards already.

Mr. Iain Mills (Meriden): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations on this major step forward in road safety? The introduction of a new dangerous driving offence, the penalties that he is proposing for drink driving and especially—this has not been mentioned so far—the penalties for failure to stop will be excellent in creating a better road safety environment. However, will he accept my strong recommendation that he should reconsider—I say this after 20 years in the tyre industry—more sensible and sane tyre tread depth legislation which would save lives by giving cars a better grip of the roads?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his initial remarks. Driving with illegal tyres is already an offence. We are always happy to consider research evidence on what the legal tyre tread depth should be. I know that my hon. Friend has strong views about the matter. We shall continue examining tyre tread depth in the light of the evidence produced to us.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I, too, congratulate the Secretary of State on the proposal that he has brought forward today and welcome the Government's commitment to reducing the number of accidents, injuries and deaths on our roads and their determination to tackle drunken driving. Northern Ireland has had breath testing for a long time. It is accepted and it is proving effective in dissuading people from drinking and driving. However, will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to discuss with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how at the same time we in Northern Ireland can benefit from the new proposals?

Mr. Channon: I shall do as the hon. Gentleman suggests. It is not a matter for me, but I shall discuss with my right hon. Friend the hon. Gentleman's wish to have many of the provisions incorporated in Northern Ireland legislation.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the public have long felt that we have not been nearly harsh enough with serious offenders, such as the drunken drivers who kill and those who drive without insurance or after disqualification, and that far less serious offenders are often penalised unreasonably? Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the proposals are not too draconian for the average driver, the person who is human who commits an offence occasionally but who by and large is a good citizen on the roads?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. The general thrust of the White Paper and Dr. North's proposals is that the bad driver should be punished more severely while the driver who makes the odd mistake should, if anything, receive more warnings than he does at present. We are talking about a comparatively small number of offences caused by bad drivers. From memory, there were about 8·9 million motoring offences in 1987, the latest year for which we have figures, and of those only 30,000 were tried on indictment, which must have been the most serious cases. That is a small proportion of the generality of motoring offences, but my hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that there are varying views on the advisability of introducing random breath testing, thus extending the powers of the police? Would it not be far better to reduce the blood alcohol level and to introduce a system of disqualification for five years for the first offence, with no chance of having one's licence returned early, and disqualification for life for the second offence, with no chance of one's licence being returned? Will the right hon. Gentleman give further consideration to his decision to introduce three new offences for which a term of imprisonment is to be considered? It does not make sense to have a term of imprisonment of five years for an offence for which the term of disqualification is only two years. Those two do not go together and the Secretary of State has not thought that out properly.

Mr. Channon: With respect, I have thought the matter out, and, more importantly, so has Dr. North. The White Paper gives the maximum term of imprisonment, not the length that the courts will usually impose. This applies only to the worst cases. The obligatory disqualification for causing death by dangerous driving will be a minimum of two years and could be more. That is merely expressed in a different way. The hon. Gentleman need not be worried that there is any inconsistency. I am only too well aware that there are differing views on random testing, and it will be interesting to see the result of the consultations. The House and the Government will soon have to take a view on the blood alcohol level.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My right hon. Friend's proposals are welcome, but will he re-emphasise the importance of not allowing the law to become too bureaucratic, thus alienating the citizen? Will he, alongside the proposals, further encourage the motor manufacturers to produce vehicles that are not only crime proof but have safety features to prevent road accidents?

Mr. Channon: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said, and I shall take it very much to heart.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Does the Secretary of State accept that the use of good quality, accurate cameras to catch those who cause carnage on the road is as justifiable as their use in catching people who rob banks? What is the estimated cost to the economy of the 100 deaths a week on the road? It must run to millions of pounds. Could the money that is saved be used for a large scale programme of small engineering works at road junctions?

Mr. Channon: I do not have the exact figure——

Mr. Prescott: Half a million pounds.

Mr. Channon: That is the estimated cost, but in fact the costs are far higher than that. The estimated cost is £500,000 per death. If the hon. Gentleman cares to multiply that by 5,125 he will quickly get the answer. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support on the question of cameras. He shares my view, and I hope that that will be accepted by the House.

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): Would my right hon. Friend comment on the growing menace of so-called couriers, particularly in London, who weave in and out of the traffic, appearing to consider themselves above the law? How effective will my right hon. Friend's proposals be in dealing with them?

Mr. Channon: Couriers are subject to the law just as much as anybody else, and if they are caught by the police breaking the law they can be prosecuted in the same way as any other driver. I am not sure whether there are any additional proposals, but if my hon. Friend has any ideas, we shall certainly consider them.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I support the broad thrust of the proposals, but may I enter a caveat? If cameras are placed on motorways while we have a 70 mph limit there will be severe bunching of vehicles. If cameras are to go on motorways, that limit should be increased to 80 mph because of the danger of many additional accidents.

Mr. Channon: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. If we were to increase the speed limit to 80 mph it would increase the number of deaths on the motorways and the bunching would just occur at the higher figure. Cameras on motorways would be particularly useful at contraflows where there is twice as much danger as where the motorway is clear and where it is important that people should obey the limits. Most cameras will be used at places such as red lights in cities where the maximum effect can be obtained.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): My right hon. Friend suggests that the introduction of the new camera speed guns can save hundreds of lives a year. Will he give us an assurance that he will try to have that new technology in widespread use in Britain within two years?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. We shall do the best we can, but I have still to convince other hon. Members to accept it and that I shall try to do.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Home Office consultation on random breath testing offers two extreme options—either the status quo, or to go the whole hog and for the police to have unfettered discretion to stop and breathalyse anyone at any time? Will he consider the provisions of the private Member's Bill that I shall be introducing on 24 February which would enable the Secretary of State for Transport to make regulations which would provide for the principle of random checks, properly regulated in a way that would deter drunken driving while protecting civil liberties?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman's Bill is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and, as I said earlier, I shall draw his attention to the remarks that have been made today. However, my right hon. Friend is seeking to carry out a genuine consultation process and that will not be over until the end of April. It is difficult to expect the Government to come to a conclusion before the consultation period is over. However, I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement will be particularly welcome to the Guild of Experienced Motorists, of which I have the honour to be president, which has urged for some time the implementation of the North report? I welcome any attempt to crack down on the drunken motorist, but will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that four out of five accidents are caused not by drink but by motorists driving too fast too close behind another vehicle? Some of the worst offenders are the heavy goods vehicle drivers whose conduct on the M11 and M25 in the fog earlier this year was nothing short of scandalous. Will my right hon. Friend's proposals do something to rectify that menace?

Mr. Channon: I agree with much of what my hon. Friend has said. One in five accidents which we believe are caused by drunken driving is a high proportion and is equivalent to about 1,000 people being killed annually, and we are trying to do something about that.

I shall keep the problem of heavy goods vehicles closely under review. Their safety record has been getting better, but I shall none the less examine what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): What my right hon. Friend says is widely accepted, but why does he set his face against revising the basic driving test, and why is a secondary test not implemented particularly for towing caravans and horse boxes, where the number of accidents is increasing, to ensure that those who take these lethal weapons on the roads are competent to do so?

Mr. Channon: I assure my hon. Friend that we have not closed our minds to reviewing the contents of the driving test, and we shall keep the matter constantly under review. Suggestions that come, alas, once again from the European Community may insist on harmonisation requirements. We shall have to consider that. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall keep all the components of the driving test under review and change it if necessary.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I am sure that the general reaction to my right hon. Friend's announcement about the taking of stricter measures against those who kill when drunk will be "About time too", but will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in addition to a longer period of disqualification, there will be a requirement for a test to be taken again before those people ever drive again?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. We shall have retesting of those who have committed the worst offences, and we are considering extending retesting further. Certainly the purpose will be to retest those who are convicted of very bad driving offences. I think that that will be generally welcomed. A longer and more extensive driving test will not be altogether easy to pass.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr Speaker: Order. I shall bear in mind the four hon. Members I have not been able to call when the matter is discussed again.

Points of Order

4.12 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I asked question No. 12 during today"s Question Time, but, because of the noise from the Conservative Benches behind the Minister, the Secretary of State for Transport was unable to hear my supplementary question. May I ask you, Mr. Speaker, through your good offices, to inquire of the Minister whether he would give me an answer to my supplementary question? I also wish to raise with you, knowing that you have such a difficult job, especially at Prime Minister's Question Time, the question whether Conservative Members should refrain from defending their Ministers and instead be more concerned about the defence of the nation.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Opposition Members must not complain if they fail to put their questions in the proper way and have to read them.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Let us have a bit of balance here. The hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) put a question to the Secretary of State for Transport and everybody on this side of the House heard him read the question. Nobody stopped him or cared too much about it. However, in the hurly-burly of Question Time, just before the Prime Minister answered questions, my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) was subjected to abuse. Quite frankly, the rule ought to be the same for everybody.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is always helpful, has drawn attention to an important matter. It is not in order for hon. Members to read their questions. It is a practice that causes hon. Members on both sides of the House to challenge hon Members who do so. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman further. The hon. Member for Meriden (Mr. Mills) was not reading his question, but was referring to notes.

Mr. Meale: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understand the rules of the House, it is in order to use copious notes during the course of a debate. I was using copious notes because I wished to put a specific and technical question to the Minister.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is in order to use notes—although I hope not too copious notes—in debates, but not at Question Time.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the exchanges on the important matter of transportation you said that those who were unfortunate enough not to be called would be able to take part in the debate immediately following questions. Is that at all possible, Mr. Speaker, or was that a way of saying, "Do not keep persevering ; you may or may not be called during the later debate"?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not read too much into these signals. I said that the content of the statement would be a subject for the next debate.

Postal Privilege (Amendment)

4.15 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to remove the exclusivity of the postal privilege.

My Bill would amend the British Telecommunications Act 1981 by deleting the clauses that give the Post Office the exclusive privilege of conveying letters. It would provide for the licensing of firms that sought to offer an alternative postal service to the public and thus would bring letters into line with parcels.

There has already been a step in this direction with the suspension of the exclusivity until 2006 of items costing £1 or more. But, frankly, this is not much of an incentive for firms to provide an alternative service; nor is it much of an incentive for the public to use it.

I put the Bill forward in a spirit which is in no sense doctrinaire, unless it is doctrinaire to believe in providing a better service for the public. However, I do put it forward by way of representing the frustration, disappointment and anger of many of my constituents. For them, in common with many other residents of south-west London, the Post Office has signally and abysmally failed to provide a service that comes anywhere near its boasts this Christmas. Indeed, Christmas cards and letters are still trickling through to their destinations.

Nevertheless, let me say that I am conscious of the many postal workers and managers who work hard at their job, day in and day out, come rain, come shine, in London and in the even more physically demanding areas of remoter Britain. Nothing in my Bill threatens those who work hard for the Post Office. Indeed, it will help those within the Post Office who want to provide a better service to the public. The only people who will be threatened will be those who seek to use their monopoly position to hide their inability to cope with competition. I have to say that I am a little surprised that the Post Office management should be so panicked by this proposal as to put on a rather partisan political hat in its six pages of selective quotations and wishful thinking that were sent to hon. Members as a briefing for this debate.

In recent years the Post Office has sometimes appeared to make some improvements but its dramatic claims have never seemed to add up to the less than well-served public. The reality is that in the 1980s the Post Office repaired some of the declining service of the 1970s, but that is all it has done. Many of its claims are achieved by either an extraordinary ability to move the goal posts or by a degree of optimism that would have put Mr. Micawber in the shade.

Indeed, Mr. Micawber's experience of expecting something to turn up is not a bad analogy for the Post Office. First class mail is supposed to be delivered the next day. The Post Office regularly claims that 90 per cent. does so turn up. The Post Office Users National Council, on the other hand, showed in its 1987 surveys that less than two thirds of first class mail arrived on the following day. That, I think, matches much more nearly the public's perception of the service; Micawber-like, some 35 per cent. of letters are waiting to turn up.

Where second class mail is concerned, the only thing that seems to move with any sense of urgency is the goal posts. I suspect that most people think that second class mail is supposed to be delivered on the second day after

posting, but that was changed in 1975 to the third day after posting, and then in 1978 to the third day after collection. Each time the target was relaxed a surprised and bemused British people was informed that its service was getting better.

The reality is that the Post Office needs the spur of competition, and the consumer needs the safety net of an available alternative. It worked with parcels and it can work with letters.

Before competition arrived, Post Office parcels regularly made a loss, but since then it has regularly made a profit—and so have its competitors. If the Post Office gets its act together, with its long experience it should have a reasonable chance of seeing off the competition. If it does so, it will be because it provides a service that meets the public's needs and expectations. If the Post Office does not meet those needs it will see at least some of its business lost to its competitors.

The question of rural postal services must be considered to see whether they should be protected by legislation. One can argue that dwellers in rural areas do not subsidise the cost of higher house prices in urban areas and therefore —swings and roundabouts—there is no need for urban dwellers to subsidise rural postal services. However, I am not saying that. One could also examine other social needs, which we seem able to provide without a monopoly of supply. We do not require a monopoly to ensure, for example, that milk or newspapers are delivered in rural areas. Our practice is rather to identify a need and then to think about helping the needy to meet its cost. We could subsidise rural posts courtesy of the taxpayer, but I do not propose that either. I am very much aware of the potential for endless arguments as to what can be classified as a rural area—and anomalies will abound.

My preference is for the proposals in the London School of Economic's report for a levy of 5p, say, on every item carried by an independent firm, which would be paid to the Post Office as a specific contribution to its costs in providing a service to remote areas. Such an arrangement would remove the creaming off arguments and the last justification for a monopoly. We would then have a fair and competitive service, with all the excuses for a monopoly removed.

The Socialist French Government have just announced a comparable measure, which will allow free competition in the collection and delivery of letters. I cannot believe that that is right for France but not for our country. If we do not like our butcher, we can shop around. If we do not like our doctor, we can hunt for another. Food and health are two basic needs and services where there is competition —but if we do not like our postal service, and unless we are rich enough to pay £1 per letter, we must lump it.

I call in aid of my arguments the views of a man who advocated abolition of the Post Office monopoly many years ago. He said of such a proposal:

> "It implies the removal of an offence from our Statute Book and the probable rise of a wholesome competition wherever the service is performed with less than the greatest efficiency and cheapness."

That advocate was Rowland Hill—the father of the penny post. As we approach the 150th anniversary of the penny post, perhaps the House will salute Rowland Hill's memory by heeding his advice and supporting the Bill.

4.22 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I wish to oppose the Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). I must declare my interest in postal matters, because I am a Member of Parliament sponsored by the Union of Communication Workers. There is no question of financial gain to myself, but I have spent a great many years in the posts and telecommunications industry.

I have some sympathy with the hon. Member for Battersea in presenting a Bill of the type that he has on this day of all days, when, during Prime Minister's Questions, the right hon. Lady struggled like mad to justify increased water charges by private water companies resulting from privatisation of the water industry. That example of something that could also happen in the postal service was eloquently cited today by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, and is there for all to see.

With respect to the hon. Member for Battersea, I have never heard such patronising remarks about people living in rural areas. His right hon. and hon. Friends representing constituencies in Cornwall, Devon, the Highlands and Islands and in other rural and remote areas will not accept the patronising argument that private carriers should collect 5p per item to subsidise mail deliveries in rural areas of England, Wales and Scotland, but will see it for what it is worth.

As to the proposal itself, the Post Office is not afraid of competition. The parcels sector already has it, and it is very successful. Also, the trade union idea of Girobank has provided competition in the banking sector for several years. It has been so successful that the Government now want to move Girobank out of the public and into the private banking sector. Neither those who work in the Post Office nor those who manage it are afraid of competition.

With the exclusivity that the Post Office enjoys there also goes responsibility. The hon. Member for Battersea obviously does not understand that that responsibility is to deliver letters and other mail to every part of the country at the same price. If exclusivity is removed, the hon. Gentleman, as a former researcher at Conservative Central Office, must know that the cost of sending a letter to the outer islands of Scotland, Cornwall or Devon will be about £1·50, compared with the 19p charge for first class mail that is currently made.

The hon. Gentleman's proposals would also place at risk the future of rural sub-post offices, which are inextricably linked with the postal delivery service. They stock the stamps, cash and all the other items that are required for a rural sub-office to function. It is the postman who delivers those items, and, as sure as night follows day, rural sub-offices would close under the system that the hon. Gentleman proposes. That is why his hon. Friend's Bill was defeated last year, and why the hon. Gentleman's Bill will also be defeated. If he does not understand, as a Member of Parliament representing an inner-city constituency, the obligations that the Post Office has, and must discharge, to people living in remote areas, his right hon. and hon. Friends representing rural constituencies must do so.

I went through the 1971 postal strike, which started on 20 January and continued until 11 March that year. During that strike, private letter carriers were established, particularly in the Manchester area. They charged 2s 6d. per item, which at today's values is equivalent to £2. When the strike ended, nearly every one of the items for which

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

private carriers had charged the equivalent of £2 each to deliver were put into the postal system with a cheap first class stamp on them for the postmen whom the hon. Member for Battersea criticises to deliver. There was no question of private companies being able to deliver that mail. It was absorbed into the postal service for the Post Office to deliver.

We have seen this hardy annual appear for the past two or three years. I ask that, in the time-honoured tradition, this hardy annual also should be buried at the end of its season. I oppose the Bill.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and Nomination of Select Committees at Commencement of Public Business):—

The House divided: Ayes 100, Noes 174.

Division No. 78] **[4.28 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Carrington, Matthew
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Dicks, Terry
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hayes, Jerry
Hill, James
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shelton, Sir William *(Str'm)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tredinnick, David
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Wilshire, David
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Miss Ann Widdecombe and
Mr. Graham Riddick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*

Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Dave Nellist.

Question accordingly negatived.

Opposition Day

[4TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Transport

4.40 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to move,

That this House expresses its deep concern at the transport tragedies of the last two years of the 'Herald of Free Enterprise', King's Cross, Clapham, Lockerbie and the M1 air disaster; condemns the Government's failure to invest in an integrated transport policy, which has created an unprecedented level of congestion in all modes of transport, has increased fare levels and produced a poorer quality of service in public passenger transport, has reduced safety standards and heightened concern for personal security, especially amongst women; calls for an urgent inquiry into the Government's failure to ensure either that the nation is able to take full advantage of the economic and social benefits of the Channel Tunnel or that environmental concerns are protected; and believes that the Government's policies of deregulation, privatisation and reduced public spending have met Treasury requirements but have also produced one of the worst transport systems of any developed economy, placing an ever increasing burden on both British industry and the travelling public who feel less secure and pay more for a poorer service, and that these problems have been worsened by a Department of Transport that does not believe in a public transport system and is inept in administering its responsibilities.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Before we begin the debate, I must announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Prescott: Transport debates like today's are normally called by the Opposition because the Government have provided no time for them. The making of the White Paper statement today was, I believe, a parliamentary tactic, reducing the time available to discuss the Government's record. I admit that such tactics are not unique to Tory Governments: Labour Governments have been known to do the same. Both parties, in such circumstances, do not wish to debate the issue that is to follow—in the present instance, the Government's record on transport. Again, the Government are attempting in their amendment to the motion to blame their Labour predecessors—after 10 years in office.

As well as the White Paper, our motion has produced a number of measures. The London Underground has responded to the Fennell report on underground safety. It was announced today that a freight integration centre is to be built in the Yorkshire-Humberside area in connection with the Channel tunnel, and I was told on the telephone last night of a new initiative by the Secretary of State to bring in yellow stickers advising air passengers of the part that they can play in improving safety. We can at least say that we have contributed to obtaining more information from the Government for today's debate.

Perhaps the most astounding development has been the report in *The Independent* today that tolls are to be introduced, despite the claim by the Secretary of State at Question Time that he did not believe in them. That may still be the case, but *The Independent* seemed very sure of

[Mr. Prescott]

its sources, and reported that he had been calling loudly in Cabinet for the return of private financing. Perhaps we shall learn his true stance this afternoon.

Our motion reflects the sad decline in what was once recognised worldwide as a good integrated public transport system, implemented by various Governments. Today we have increasing congestion, increasing fare levels and increasing violence, against the background of a reduction in quality and choice and lower safety standards. After 10 years of Tory ideology, a commitment to privatisation, competition, deregulation and massive cuts in public financial support have produced nightmare travel conditions and increasing insecurity in cars, trains, buses and planes. A decade of Tory rule and Tory policies has produced what last night's "World in Action" programme described as a national scandal. I think that anyone using public transport today will identify with that term, and with the description of the London transport system as a European black spot.

Unfortunately, we can only expect the position to worsen, despite all the Secretary of State's rhetoric and the plans that he has announced over the past couple of weeks. Certainly the possibility of Cabinet changes concentrates the minds and statements of various Secretaries of State. *[Interruption.]* If we are to accept that what the Secretary of State does is associated with his future, I am bound to say that he is more concerned for that future than for the travelling public.

Even if the Government's rhetoric and promises are accepted, their proposals will not deal with the growth in the transport system that we anticipate by the end of the century. It is predicted that the number of cars will increase by at least 25 per cent., lorry movements by 15 per cent. and London peak demand by 20 per cent. All the proposals in the central London rail study will at most deal with the growth—I do not believe that they will meet the new demands—leaving us with our present levels of congestion, even if promises materialise as resources.

The daily experiences of most people as revealed on television and in newspapers does not coincide with the views expressed in the Government's amendment. Nor can we accept that the Labour Government, who have been out of office for 10 years, can be blamed for the transport mess that the Government claim they created. In the rail industry, demand since 1979 has increased by 20 per cent. and the number of seats has been reduced by 13 per cent. That inevitably means congestion.

The claim that passengers will not have to stand for journeys lasting for more than 20 minutes in the south-east, the inner city or the provinces is a national joke. Even the buses are less used, less reliable, less accessible—as minibuses—slower, dirtier, older and clog up bus lanes. That leads to some increases and redundancies. Inner-city car movement has declined from 25 mph under a Labour Government to speeds of 8 mph and 12 mph under the Tory Government. The Prime Minister promised us Victorian standards, and now we have them. We are moving as fast as the horse and cart of 100 years ago. When the Prime Minister said that she intended to put Britain back on its feet, I did not know that she meant that we would be walking because that was faster than using public transport in the inner cities.

That is a humorous interpretation, but when inner London is so clogged that no one can be guaranteed an immediate response from the ambulance or the fire engine, a dangerous situation is developing. It is all very well for the Secretary of State or his Ministers to say on television that students are causing traffic jams, as though such incidents were unique. Super-jams are becoming a regular feature of inner-city movement in London and other parts of the country.

It is laughable for the Secretary of State to tell the House that he has discovered a new solution, a new technical toy—the autoguide. We must all fit it on to our cars and ask where is the empty road to which we are to be diverted when our route is congested. I know of no roads that are free of congestion around London, and anyone who drives a car will have the same experience.

It is noticeable that more people are travelling on foot, and the increase in deaths and accidents among pedestrians is worrying—although the improvements in other kinds of accident figures are welcome. Our motorways and main roads are massively congested. A report from the Civil Aviation Authority this week tells us that by the end of the century congestion and rationing of flights from Heathrow is likely unless immediate investment is made in airports and new runways.

In the British Rail system we see the Government's prejudice against any form of public transport. Tragedies such as the Clapham junction crash show that investment in the railways is inadequate. The Government's amendment claims that investment is at record levels and contrasts it with that under the last Labour Government —*[Interruption.]* I refer the Minister for Roads and Traffic to the evidence given to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into the rail system. He seems to be disowning the remark, and indeed it is not true. The report states that the average investment under a Labour Government, given 1985-86 prices, was £518 million a year, while under the Tories it has been £421 million a year. It simply is not true that the real investment in British Rail is higher under a Tory Government. It is another Tory lie.

Consider the resources available for British Rail, via the public service obligation grant. In 1983 it was running at £1 billion. It is now being reduced in real terms, at 1988 prices, to £800 million.

I see the Minister for Roads and Traffic gesticulating. I do not understand what he is trying to tell me and I will willingly give way if he wishes to intervene. We have got used to his rhetoric, but unfortunately he never backs up his statements with facts. I shall continue to give him the facts.

The public service obligation grant at 1988-89 price levels was running at over £1 billion. That will now be reduced to £800 million in 1986-87 terms. The Government have thereby saved £270 million. That represents a cut of 25 per cent. The Government are now requiring the grant to be cut further, saving another £200 million, or 25 per cent., by 1988-90. The grant is to be slashed to £470 million by 1990-92.

The Government have saved that sum in their public service obligation grant to the British Rail system. It means that almost £3 billion has been lost by BR in financial support. In other words, while the Government have withdrawn that huge amount from the BR system, fare levels have been increasing, and we shall see fares

increase well above inflation levels in the coming five or six years. Perhaps the Secretary of State will say, when he replies to the debate, how he sees the future of fares.

We have also witnessed a poorer quality of service, with overcrowding, poor arrival times, declining cleanliness and maintenance and longer ticket waiting times. All have deteriorated, yet all are measures of the quality of service.

I received a letter from a passenger who uses a route on the central Kent rail network system. Her letter complained about the deterioration in the quality of service. She informed me that the letter had also been sent to the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman did not reply; somebody in his Office answered the letter and told the writer to complain to the central rail consultative committee. The lady then complained to that committee. Will the Secretary of State explain what difference such a complaint can make, when the central rail consultative committee said in its last report:

"The committee was unanimous in the view that the quality of British Rail services had been adversely affected by the reduction in subsidy and . . . senior BR staff often cited this as a reason for cuts in service quality."?

Here the central body dealing with consumer complaints is making precisely the point that, because the Government have reduced the level of support for BR, there has been a decrease in the quality of service. Indeed, my hon. Friends and I believe that that reduction in resources has had an effect on overall safety provision.

At the time of the Clapham tragedy I pointed out that the number of collisions on BR between 1982 and 1987 had increased considerably, that serious collisions were up by 18 per cent., that serious injuries and deaths had increased by 30 per cent. and that derailments had gone up by 5 per cent. My statement at that time was derided by the Secretary of State, who in a later parliamentary reply confirmed the statistics that I gave. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will now retract what he said on that earlier occasion. It is clear that there is increasing concern about safety.

In personal security terms, the number of assaults and crimes of violence on the British Rail system and on the Underground have been increasing alarmingly. Hence the need for the Guardian Angels, who are arriving. Now the Government are rushing to bring in more police, an action that they should have taken from the beginning instead of deliberately keeping their numbers at a low level.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will comment on a BR report which received publicity in the *Evening Standard* recently. That newspaper spoke of a secret report produced by BR dealing with the fear felt by women when travelling on city trains and the fact that the report would not be published. Will the right hon. Gentleman agree that such evidence should be published and debated so that we may have a proper assessment of safety and security on BR?

The Opposition view is that more public resources must be put into the system if we are to improve the quality of service. Indeed, looking at the issue from a European point of view, instead of the £800 million in public support that we have at present, the figure—if we pitch it at the same level as that operating in France and Germany—should be £2 billion. That shows the sort of public resources given to the transport systems of other European countries.

The Government's solution is to privatise everything, including British Rail, by the 1990s. With that in mind, BR has embarked on a policy, as with all privatisations, of creating surpluses and cutting costs. It is achieving that by selling assets and property, thereby receiving hundreds of millions of pounds; it is reducing costs by sacking tens of thousands of workers; and it is proposing to reduce the extent of the network, as we see with the Carlisle-Settle railway and the bus substitution possibilities. At the end of the day the consumer is worse off, the Treasury is better off and the railways are not able to do anything to relieve the congestion on the roads.

On London Underground it is the same old story, and King's Cross reminds us of the tragedy in the industry. The Government claim that no investment proposals have been turned down. I am reminded of the question in the Fennell report, when the manager was asked why he had not put forward proposals to change wooden escalators for metal ones. His reply was that, despite requests that had been made and recommendations in previous fire reports, the financial climate was such that there was no point in putting forward such a proposal.

That is precisely the dilemma of BR in relation to Government investment today. It is another reason why Fennell greatly underestimated the contribution that the reduction in resources had made to safety standards and the quality of service on the Underground system.

Parliament is supposed to debate the London transport system since the Government nationalised it and took it away from the GLC. It is our task to debate the interests of Londoners. When will the Secretary of State provide time for us to debate the Fennell report and its conclusions? It is crucial that we debate the major considerations on safety and security that arise from that report.

The congestion that is clearly visible in the whole system is relevant to the situation on the Underground. It is an over-priced system where the passenger has no choice. It is under-invested and less safe. I welcome the Government's proposals to bring in more police, but I must remind them that the Ministries involved and London Underground put a moratorium on the recruitment of police. That is why the level is low now. The Department has simply brought it up to the established level.

That has happened since the accident and the increasing number of violent crimes. Unfortunately, it is always after the event that the Government take action. The same has applied to the reduction in the number of inspectors in the shipping and aviation industries. Their numbers were reduced, and as soon as a tragedy occurred the Government lifted the recruitment embargo and the establishment levels were achieved.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch) *rose*——

Mr. Prescott: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. He is always writing to the Leader of the Opposition complaining about me. Perhaps Conservative Members are taught to take that sort of action in public school—writing letters instead of having it out verbally across the Floor of the House.

In terms of the level of Government grant, the Underground system expressed pleasure at being able to repay to the Government £100 million, as a reduction in the taxpayers' contribution, not in the two years over which the Government asked for the money back but within one year. The irony is that the first year's expenditure recommended by Fennell on all the safety

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proposals recommended before the Kings Cross accident is equivalent to the £100 million taken from London Underground and now being returned to it by the Government.

Will the Secretary of State make it clear tonight that the other £200 million will be made available so that the system can comply with necessary safety commitments? London Underground made it clear in its statement last Monday that the Government had said that they would provide the necessary funds for that purpose. That money must be provided because safety should have the highest priority in any public transport system. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will make that clear, because there is increasing concern about escalator breakdowns—one in four is no longer working—about the fact that there has been a considerable increase in the number of fires, even since the King's Cross tragedy, and that people feel that ticket barriers will make it more difficult for them to get out of the system.

London Underground is taking many of these measures because it wants to save on staff. By reducing staff numbers by 1,200, costs can be reduced—and this at a time when the visibility of staff, including ticket collectors and police, contributes to greater security. It is no surprise that we have the Guardian Angels.

The Government set great store by, and have great faith in, the roads system. They identify that as an expression of freedom. The Secretary of State, in a speech to the Tory party conference—his remarks were published in the *Conservative Newsline*—said:

"So good roads bring increased personal mobility and increased personal freedom—two Conservative ideals".

One would think that the Secretary of State would want to give greater priority to roads. He said in the same speech that Government spending was

"50 per cent. higher in real terms than under the last Labour administration."

That is not true. I asked the Secretary of State and his answer can be found in the parliamentary written answers —*[Interruption.]* It was a question put to the Secretary of State to find out what proportion, in real terms, had been spent on roads. The reality is that 10 per cent. more was spent on roads under the Labour Government than under the Conservative Government. If the Secretary of State wants the figures confirmed, he should look at the reply that he gave me.

Our road system is about a third of the size of that in France or Germany, and we have a programme to increase the road network by 200 miles of motorway by the end of the century. Germany and France, by contrast, plan an extra 2,000 million miles of road. If the Government's argument is that they cannot afford——

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The figure is 2,000 miles.

Mr. Prescott: I accept the correction.

Let us consider the argument that we cannot afford to improve our road network. We must bear in mind that we have a lower car ownership than elsewhere in Europe, that the M25—designed for 80,000 vehicles—now carries 130,000, and that the M6 and the M1 have become virtual car parks. The National Audit Office is critical of the way that the Department of Transport deals with planning our road systems.

No Government have ever used all the money raised through road transport taxes such as petrol, car vehicle or lorry tax. In 1979, £7 billion was raised from transport taxes. Under this Government the money raised increased to £14 billion, but the extra £7 billion was not spent on roads. Only £1 billion was spent on any form of transportation. To meet the Treasury's demand to cut income tax, the Government introduced what became a transport tax, while the poor public paid even more for the privilege of travelling.

The Labour Government spent, on average, 35 per cent. of the money raised. Under this Government, the amount spent has fallen to 24 per cent. If they were spending the same proportion of the tax as the Labour Government did, this Government would have an extra £2 billion in the kitty to spend on the roads and on transportation systems. In Europe, an average of 50 per cent. of the money raised in such taxes is spent.

There has been a massive deterioration in the transport systems of road, rail and buses. Private capital is not the solution, as the Secretary of State knows. It would be interesting to hear where he stands on the matter of tolls.

In my transport industry—shipping—the Government have partly solved the problem. They have reduced the British shipping fleet from 1,200 ships to 400.

We remember the terrible tragedy of the Herald of Free Enterprise. During the past year, as the Secretary of State will know from the questions that have been asked of him, the number of ferry fires in this country has risen by four times the annual average of the past four years. Why are ferry fires increasing—particularly on P and O ferries? For six months I pushed the right hon. Gentleman to prosecute a company for a clear breach of the law. It was not until the last day of that six months that the Secretary of State took any action, and that was because a Sally Line vessel caught fire in the channel. We shall have to wait to see what the courts decide.

I used to hear in debates in this House that safety on ferries had not deteriorated. I then asked questions about it, because the rhetoric is so different from the reality. I do not see the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) in the Chamber now, but he had much to say when he denied threats to the safety of ferries.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Many people heard the hon. Gentleman when he appeared on television addressing a rally on Saturday. He said that records showed that P and O ships were unsafe and asked holiday-makers if they were prepared to risk their lives by travelling on them. What specific evidence does he have of lack of safety on the St. Clair, the St. Ola and the St. Sunniva, which travel from the Scottish mainland to my constituency? If he has no evidence, will he retract his comments rather than jeopardise the livelihoods of many of my constituents?

Mr. Prescott: Fires on British ferries have increased recently, and a number of them have occurred on P and O ships. I have tried to obtain detailed figures from the Government. I was telling the people at that dispute that anyone travelling out of the port of Dover on those ships should bear in mind that fires have increased fourfold during the past year. That was a justifiable comment.

The aviation industry, Lockerbie and the M1 disasters and the problems over the manufacture of Boeing have increased concern about safety——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does the hon. Gentleman blame the Government for those disasters, too?

Mr. Prescott: I am not blaming the Government. I am concerned about passenger safety—and Conservative Members should be as well. The blame does not lie solely with Government, but airport security involves the Government.

The Secretary of State has come to the House after each incident and assured us that he is satisfied with the enhanced security and safety at Heathrow and other airports.

After again assuring us that airport security was satisfactory, the Secretary of State told us that the British Airports Authority's report has recommended a further 100 changes. Airport security has not given the Secretary of State his finest hour. I make these allegations not solely against the Secretary of State but against his Department. The Select Committee's reports on airport security made recommendations which, to its credit, all needed to be implemented.

The Secretary of State has said that his Department has implemented most of the Select Committee's recommendations. Why then did he not answer when I asked him the same question in a letter a week or so ago? I shall tell him why: because not all the recommendations have been implemented. The important ones about the control of the police and on airport security fund were all dismantled by the Government in 1983, which made our airports less secure. The Government have much to answer for because of the reduction of security and safety at airports. */Interruption./* I shall not give way to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) because he merely goes off and writes letters to the Opposition Leader. He is a "snitch" or a sneak. I think that is the term used in public schools; I did not go to one myself.

The Government amendment mentions the problems of planning and integration. It rejects central planning, but nobody is advocating that—*/Interruption./* It is quite all right, we have a decentralised way of dealing with planning. If the people of Kent thought that the people dealing with Channel tunnel matters and deciding on the route were concerned about the environment and the interests of the people of Kent, they might be happier. However, the Government have given over the responsibility of making the decision to British Rail. The private Bill is concerned about least cost, not public subsidy. The Government are happy for the Bill to contain a clause that no public money should be used to support the Channel tunnel investment. Public money will be necessary to develop the rail links in Kent and to improve the infrastructure investment for the Channel tunnel corridor to Scotland.

I wrote to the Secretary of State about the matter, asking his view of my suggestion that instead of leaving it to the House of Commons and a private Bill Committee to fight out the Bill line by line, he should accept—as he did with the central transport rail study—a 12-month study on the environmental and regional consequences. The Labour party advocated that when the White Paper on the Channel tunnel was issued. There should be an immediate inquiry so that the people of Kent and London can make representations about their concerns.

I thought that the Conservative party and the Government were concerned about the individual but it is clear that they are riding roughshod over the individual's rights in relation to the Channel tunnel and overriding the interests of the people in Kent and London. The Labour party offers a proposal that will give the Government a chance to listen to those representations but which will not delay or extend the planning blight, because the Bill will go through the House in two parliamentary Sessions. It provides a chance for justice, a chance for a voice to be heard, and a chance for public money to be used in such a way that we get the best route in the Kent area and in the London area.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Does the hon. Gentleman realise that a delay of the sort he is suggesting would leave a blight throughout Kent?

Mr. Prescott: I do not know why I continue, because the hon. Member is not listening. It is my judgment that the private Bill presented to this House will certainly create an awful lot of injustice and environmental damage in Kent if it is left as it is. I believe that that Bill could be delayed a while here.

A central study similar to the central rail study could be carried out, because the Secretary of State is to receive an environmental report and a regional report. He has now received the northern local authorities' report on the Channel tunnel. If he were to treat it in that way, and within 12 months make a recommendation to his House, the blight problems would still be there because there will be no decision in this House—in my view—for 18 months, and the Channel tunnel will certainly not be opened until 1993 or 1994. Those are the realities of the case.

If the Government had accepted our amendment when the White Paper on the Channel tunnel came before this House we would not have this problem today. We foresaw these difficulties at that time, but every hon. Member now going along with his constituents in Kent voted against that proposal, and those Members are now ganging up with early-day motions and assuring their constituents that they are going to press the Government for change. Where were they when the vote was taken in this House? They were not looking after the interests of the people of Kent. But we will look after the interests of the people of Kent, and perhaps they will have a better representative here in the next Parliament.

The Channel tunnel is a classic example of how the public interest has to be taken into account. Public and private money will be utilised in the development of the transportation system, but it is important that people be taken into account.

A further accusation that I make against the Government is that the Department of Transport is indeed an inadequate Department, though I am bound to say that I thought it was inadequate also under Labour Governments. It is a Department that does not have a very proud history. I have always been ashamed that it has not given the highest priority to safety—and, as one who has been involved in the shipping industry, I say so in respect of the decisions taken there.

It is a Department that is really the outpost of the Treasury. It refuses to fight for the travelling public and is for ever agreeing with the Treasury to impose more and more taxes by the reduction of subsidies on the travelling public. It is anti-planning and anti-integration and is obsessed with roads, though its record in that respect is not very good. It pursues policies that reduce the number of

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safety inspectors in aviation and shipping and on the railways, with dire consequences for safety in those industries.

It is also a Department that delays its inquiries. I refer, for example, to the Manchester air disaster three years ago and the loss of the Derbyshire eight years ago, and the delay in the production of these reports, to the Department's reluctance to instigate prosecutions in respect of the Herald of Free Enterprise or in respect of ferry fires, and to the handling of the Lockerbie tragedy and the fears for airport security, on which it appeared to be inept and incompetent. It suffers from a unique blend of ideological obsession and—yes, I must say it—ministerial incompetence.

Overall, the policy is also at fault. It has insufficient commitment to public transport. It has starved our transport system of finance, thus making it one of the poorest in Europe, and it is shifting the burden from the taxpayer to the passenger, who will have to pay considerably more for lower and lower quality.

That is the reality of 10 years of this Government's transport policy. That is the reality that we shall take to the people of this country, the reality of which they know from their own experience. The alternative that we shall provide, whether to the voters in Kent or to the voters in Scotland or to the voters in Humberside, will be to vote for a sensible transport policy that meets the needs of our nation as I ask the House to do tonight.

5.14 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"expresses its deep concern at the transport tragedies of the last two years of the 'Herald of Free Enterprise', King's Cross, Clapham, Lockerbie, the M1 air disaster and the daily toll of deaths and injuries on our roads, and extends its sympathy to all those affected; applauds the Government's determination that safety and security must remain paramount, and welcomes the urgent steps it has taken to that end; congratulates the Government for bringing about an economic revival which has resulted in record levels of investment in roads and railways, and for recognising that the only way to provide customers with an efficient and safe public transport system is to set demanding objectives for quality of service and performance; welcomes the Government's record of approving every investment scheme put to it by British Rail and London Regional Transport, and its radical proposals to extend the public transport system in London; congratulates the Government for having recognised the limitations of central planning; and calls on the Opposition to acknowledge the legacy of neglect and under-investment which this Government inherited.".

I must say that I thought that the good temper of the earlier statement would pretty soon disappear, and it has, though the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is in quite a jolly mood, I have to confess, and I hope that he will remain jolly throughout my speech. I will try to deal with the subjects that he has raised—at slightly less length, in view of the shortage of time available for this debate. *[Interruption.]* I think that the House of Commons would have been very cross if we had had a major statement on safety immediately after the debate. I can just hear what hon. Members would have had to say about that.

I want to start with a point on which I think that there is no controversy. I shall not take long on it, but it is nevertheless important. I refer to the three terrible tragedies in the past few months—in particular, the two disastrous air crashes. As the House knows, everyone is appalled by these disasters, so I need not go into that again in any detail. I should just like to remind the House where we stand at present. The investigations into the causes of the Lockerbie and Kegworth tragedies are being handled by the air accidents investigation branch of my Department. It produced a formal interim statement on the Lockerbie disaster once it had been established conclusively that the crash was caused by an explosive device in the front cargo hold. It has not yet issued such a statement on the Kegworth crash, but it will do so once the range of possible explanations has been narrowed to the point at which a statement is justified.

As to Clapham, as the House knows, the formal inquiry will be conducted by Mr. Anthony Hidden QC, with three expert assessors. It will be for Mr. Hidden and his assessors to decide which matters are relevant to their work and which are not. Until the causes of the Clapham and Kegworth tragedies are established, there is a limit to the amount that can usefully be said about them. I have said before, and I say again—I think that I have the support of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East in this—that it is futile to speculate about the causes of such disasters ahead of the evidence. It is not only futile—it is extremely unfair to the parties involved.

That does not mean that we have to delay action until the final reports are received. Indeed, British Rail is checking, for example, that there are no wiring defects in the signalling system elsewhere. British Rail conducted an internal investigation into the Clapham crash, but that is not intended to prejudge the conclusions that Mr. Hidden will reach. The same is true of the various checks that have been carried out on Boeing aircraft in the wake of Kegworth. We can also tighten up our own domestic security arrangements.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is wrong about Sir Norman Payne's report. It does not say that 100 actions need to be taken—if refers to 100 actions that have been taken, are in course of being taken, or will be taken. There are a whole host of them, and BAA is well advanced in implementing them.

We also have to promote international action. The modern terrorist threat, as we all know, has an international dimension—and so must our response. That is why the British and American Governments sought a special ministerial meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organisation. I want to see tighter controls on what is taken on to aircraft, tighter controls on people who have access to aircraft, and changes to aircraft design so that they offer fewer places to hide a bomb and are easier to search. Only concerted international action can achieve this, and I hope that in Montreal next week we can move towards such action.

As to the Fennell recommendations addressed to London Regional Transport, my hon. Friend will have more to say about this when he winds up the debate. I believe that the statement made yesterday was a serious and responsible answer to the points raised in the Fennell report. The overwhelming majority of the recommendations in that report have been accepted and are being implemented. One or two, however, cause genuine difficulty. For instance, London Underground has not yet

been able to find a non-inflammable escalator lubricant. I give that merely as an example of a recommendation that is difficult to follow up.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the Fennell report, irrespective of the recommendations that have been made, and welcome as they are, may I ask him whether he does not agree that some questions relating to the conduct of the inquiry and the degree to which matters should or should not be taken into account have not yet been cleared up? That can be done only across the Floor of the House, especially bearing in mind that the Secretary of State quite properly used the long-standing Act of Parliament to set up an additional inquiry under Mr. Fennell.

Mr. Channon: I made a very full statement on the Fennell inquiry. I know that the Opposition have been asking for a debate on that matter, and I think that in recent times my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has always given a fairly sympathetic answer. That is a matter that must be pursued through the usual channels. Of course, there will also be the debate on the London Regional Transport levy, which will have to come in the fairly near future. This is the time of year when that is always debated, as the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East knows well from his experience.

Of course, after three serious transport accidents we have to look very carefully at every conceivable cause, but the search for underlying causes very often seems to result in broad generalisations which are either unhelpful or untrue.

The motion tabled by the Opposition seeks to suggest that penny-pinching economies are the real threat to safety. The suggestion is that private sector operators may take a conscious decision to economise on safety so as to boost profits, and that public sector operators may do the same to meet the financial targets set by Government. I simply do not believe that that is true. Cutting corners on safety is both socially and commercially wholly irresponsible. There should never have been any doubt in the minds of public sector operators—I do not think there was—about where their key duty lies. Nevertheless I have taken the precaution of reminding them that safety comes first so that there is not the slightest room for any possible misunderstanding on that point.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is it not true that the Fennell report recorded that there was an atmosphere of pressure to cut back on safety expenditure? That arises from Government pressure on spending and the general concept of the enterprise culture.

Mr. Channon: It does not come from Government pressure on safety expenditure. The hon. Gentleman is right that there were severe criticisms of the management, and the chairmen of London Regional Transport and London Underground resigned as a result of the Fennell report.

The argument that no savings must be made in any quarter because savings would compromise safety is dear to Opposition Members, but it is wrong. It is a specious argument and should be exposed as such. I remind the House of what Fennell said in his report:

"In my judgment there is no evidence that the overall level of subsidy available to London Regional Transport was inadequate to finance necessary safety-related spendings and retain safety standards."

On staffing, he said:

"I found no evidence that the reduction in the number of operating or maintenance staff contributed directly to the disaster at Kings Cross."

I see no reason why efficiency and safety cannot go hand in hand. On the contrary, the drive for greater efficiency is likely to involve management in looking much harder at all aspects of its operations, including safety. Laxness and inefficiency would be far more worrying.

Another claim hinted at in the motion, though not so much in the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, is that congestion also poses a real threat to safety. That is not the case. For example, despite the massive increase in air travel, there has been a considerable improvement in safety. *[Interruption.]* The point that I am making is that congestion and safety are two separate matters. We shall see what Mr. Hidden says in his report. The aviation point makes my case for me.

Mr. Adley: As the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), was afraid to give way in case I asked him a question, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he agrees with me on two points? First, does he agree that the rapid increase in mobility is itself a comment on the Government's economic policy? Secondly, does he agree that it would have been helpful if the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East had made even one constructive proposal as to how any future Labour Government—if there were ever to be such a thing—could run the economy in such a way as to raise the money required to do all the things that the Opposition keep talking about?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend on both points.

I have one final point about safety. Recent events have ensured that the safety of public transport will engage the attention of the House today. That is understandable, but I remind hon. Members that the safety of public transport —by road, rail, sea and air—is in general very good. Appalling though the recent death tolls have been, we should remind ourselves, as we were considering earlier, that more than 5,000 people were killed and a further 300,000 injured on the roads in 1987. Cutting road casualties by one third by the year 2000 must therefore remain a top priority. The White Paper published today and all the other measures that we are taking to improve road safety have far greater potential to save lives than any conceivable improvement that we could make to the safety of public transport systems.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my right hon. Friend accept his own thesis that motorways are safer to drive on than ordinary roads? In that context, how can the Government justify not extending the M1 to the north-east instead of fiddling about with junctions which are making the position worse?

Mr. Channon: I thought that my hon. Friend might make that point. He makes it vigorously on all conceivable occasions. Perhaps he will await the publication of the revised road programme to see whether his representations have had the desired effect. If they have not, no doubt he will be at me again.

The motion censures the Government on two main counts. It criticises us for allowing safety standards to slip, which is not true, and it also holds us responsible for congestion. I am very fair and I am prepared to do a deal

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with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. I am prepared to accept 50 per cent. of the blame if he will take the other 50 per cent. We will accept responsibility for having created the healthy economy and the competitive transport market that have led to a massive upsurge in the demand for transport if the Opposition will accept responsibility for the years of under-investment before 1979 when the nation was in hock to the International Monetary Fund.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said, there has been no under-investment in transport under this Government. We have been making good the backlog of neglect that we inherited in such vital areas as motorway maintenance as well as investing to meet the increased demand that our policies have generated. For instance, investment in roads has never been higher. We have behind us a major roads building programme, though not so great as my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) would like. Government expenditure has been targeted on the bypasses and relief roads which bring the quickest and most effective relief to traffic and to local communities. We plan to spend over £3 billion on new trunk roads over the next five years and £1·3 billion on maintenance. Let me assure the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, in case he doubts it, that maintenance expenditure is running in real terms at two and a half times the level that we inherited from the Labour Government.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The Secretary of State will be aware that there has been much complant about the Department's traffic forecasts prior to the building of new roads. This has caused much inconvenience, as well as huge expense, to the taxpayer, through attemps to rectify problems. What is the Secretary of State doing to improve the efficiency of his Department?

Mr. Channon: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that point. It is interesting that the M25 has been a target for criticism. I cannot remember the exact details, but the M25 was opened two or three years ago. It takes 10 years to build a road. The forecasting for that road was done in the middle of the Labour Government's period of office. I accept the criticism, and I understand why the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East was critical of the Department of Transport under its ridiculous ministerial control at that time.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Perhaps the Secretary of State can tell the House whether the civil servants who gave the Labour Government that advice, which turned out to be wrong, are still sitting in the officials' box, or have they been promoted?

Mr. Channon: I believe in ministerial responsibility. I do not hold civil servants responsible for forecasts—I hold Ministers responsible for accepting the forecasts. I suspect that Labour Treasury Ministers may have had something to do with the blame for those forecasts. *[Interruption.]* I am coming to the Underground, but I want to finish with roads.

There are currently more than 300 schemes in our forward construction programme, with an estimated works cost in the region of £5 billion. We all know that there are serious congestion problems and bottlenecks that have to be dealt with. If hon. Members want to know why we have problems, I will give them the two necessary pieces of information, at which I have already hinted, and leave them to draw their own conclusions. Fact A is that it takes 10 to 15 years to build a major new road; fact B is that capital expenditure on roads was cut by a massive 40 per cent. between 1976 and 1977-78. I am very glad that I was asked about forecasting as it enabled me to make it clear that the cause of the present inadequacy is the time that it takes to build roads and the massive cuts in resources which took place under the Labour Government. The record speaks louder than the hon. Gentleman's words. I do not think that I can impress the hon. Member at all with the fact that we are spending record sums of money on roads, because he will say roads are a special case even if he agrees with it—which he does not—and that the Government are investing in the roads but only at the cost of ignoring public transport. Indeed, he has said something about public transport, but that argument will not wash either.

Let us consider the railways. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me about this. After decades of decline, in which we read of nothing but line closures and station closures, BR's business is now booming. More than 80 stations have been opened or reopened since 1983. BR has invested more than £2 billion in the past five years and plans to invest more than £3·5 billion in the next five years.

I am glad to be able to announce today that I have just given approval for two further investments. Network SouthEast has been given the green light to purchase 77 new Network turbo vehicles to operate on services from Marylebone. I have also approved the electrification of the Cambridge to King's Lynn line and the associated purchase of seven four-car electrical multiple units. That is good news for rail travellers in the Chilterns and East Anglia and continuing good news for other travellers on Network SouthEast and elsewhere where there is a continuing and growing rail investment programme.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way. It is indeed extremely good news that my right hon. Friend has announced a substantial investment for the Chiltern line. That will be good news for Metroland, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, and I suspect that there will be much rejoicing among the commuter public about that. To ensure that commuters actually dance in the streets, will my right hon. Friend please make it clear that he will shortly be announcing his decision on the final stage of the M40 link—because once the M40 is built and the Chiltern line complete, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire really will be able to take advantage of their geographical location.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope not to keep him waiting too long on the latter point either, but I am not in a position to make an announcement today.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I am grateful for the announcement about electrification in Cambridgeshire. That will certainly be welcomed by people in my constituency, who have been campaigning for six years. Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that without the support of local business and developers

and the £650,000 guaranteed by the local borough council the scheme probably would not have gone ahead? Can he also tell us when it will start and how much it will cost?

Mr. Channon: I can probably give the figures for that. If I cannot, my hon. Friend will give them when he winds up. It will not take long. I agree with the earlier part of my hon. Friend's question. I am very glad that we have managed to approve the scheme and I hope that it will be of benefit to King's Lynn and to other stations on the line. Indeed, some of my hon. Friends have been very excited by that as well.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Will my right hon. Friend accept from me that this is indeed welcome news, and does indeed have potential benefits for other stations on the line, including commuters from my constituency? Could I ask him, though, whether he would be prepared to listen to representations at a later stage about whether just one class of rolling stock is suitable for this project?

Mr. Channon: I will certainly do that. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is considering the point. Perhaps my hon. Friend will be in touch with him.

I think that the answer to the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) is that the scheme will cost about £20 million and should be open in 1991.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said that we were not investing enough in British Rail, but investment now is the highest in real terms for 20 years. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, it is—I have the figures. I have the famous answer that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East keeps talking about, and it is true—£560 million at 1988-89 prices is being invested in British Rail now. What the Opposition will not understand is the difference between the public service obligation—which does not go on investment—and investment, which is what is needed to improve British railways. In the next few years, far from remaining at £560 million in real terms, investment will go up to an average of £755 million—the highest for years. That is at 1988-89 prices, in real terms. When the Labour party was in power between 1974 and 1979 the highest it ever reached was £474 million, so let us hear less nonsense about underinvestment in British Rail.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister has been telling us how the Government are committed to the railways. When will he make the announcement that instead of being minded to close the Settle to Carlisle railway the Government will tell British Rail to make a success of it, to develop the success that the line has already become under the threat of closure and give it the new lease of life that it deserves?

Mr. Channon: I know the hon. Member's views about the Settle to Carlisle line and I am considering all the representations that have been made. They need careful study and I will make an announcement as soon as I can, but I think that it will be a little while yet.

The point that I still cannot get into the heads of Opposition Members—I simply cannot understand why not—is that facts are facts. *[Interruption.]* Yes, they are. The fact is that investment in British Rail in real terms at 1988-89 prices will be £755 million on average for the next four years. That is about £200 million more than what it is now, which is already nearly £100 million higher than the highest figure under the last Labour Government.

Of course, BR is not the only undertaking investing in railways. The private sector is financing the biggest rail investment of them all—the £6 billion required to build the Channel tunnel. The London Underground also has ambitious investment plans. The re-equipment of the Central line alone will cost more than £700 million. Work is under way on the Bank extension of the Docklands light railway, and work is planned on the Beckton extension if Parliament approves the Bill now before it.

We have recently published the report of the central London rail study and have commissioned the east London rail study. I have no doubt that these studies will result in further investment in new railway lines for London. Moreover, London is not the only city to get new lines—Manchester will have its Metrolink, and a number of interesting ideas are in the pipeline for other cities.

There has been no shortage of finance for airports either. Two new terminals for Heathrow and Gatwick have been opened and the new terminal at Stansted is under construction. There is no overall shortage of airport capacity in the London area at this stage. Since 1981 we have supported more than £300 million worth of investment in the local authority airports through special capital allocations. Last December's regional airport allocations will allow work to start on the major new terminal at the East Midlands airport and, all told, the number of passenger movements handled by regional airports should double or treble between now and 2005.

The real problem of congestion in the airports last summer was a Europe-wide shortage of air traffic control capacity, aggravated by an industrial dispute. Even the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, with all his persuasive powers, cannot stop foreign air traffic controllers going on strike. Perhaps he will celebrate when they do and have his nice picket line, but I can and will tackle the problem of air traffic control capacity both domestically and internationally. Last October I agreed a two-thirds increase in the Civil Aviation Authority's capital expenditure. There are very difficult operational problems in introducing a new air traffic control system while keeping the existing system fully operational 24 hours a day, but I can assure the House that finance is not a constraint. On the international side last year we used our presidency of Eurocontrol to promote a number of initiatives, of which the most important is the central flow management unit to streamline the routing of aircraft across Europe.

Under the GLC, investment in the London Underground was at a lamentable level. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is not here to justify the level of investment when he and his friends were in power. Lots of money was spent on subsidising fares but none on improving the underground system. That system, above all, takes time to improve because it cannot be closed while improvements are carried out and we all know that it is very old. Fare increases on the London Underground have been well below increases in average wages since 1980 and are no higher in real terms than they were then.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East has got it completely wrong and cannot sustain with any credibility his criticism of the transport infrastructure. We also hear criticisms from the Opposition, though not so much today. Usually we are told that we have committed the heinous sin of asking those who benefit from new investments to bear the cost, but I must point out that in

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the bad old days when we operated on the doctrine that the state alone must provide the state actually did not provide. Under this Government the state is beginning to provide and to improve all the systems. I live in hope, and tonight I shall go down on my knees and pray that one day I shall be able to make the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East understand the facts and figures on investment, although it is no doubt a forlorn hope that in Lent he will come to repentance.

The Opposition's second line of attack is to say that all the investment is unco-ordinated. That objection is even sillier than the previous one. The Government were wise to do away with central transport planning, but in reality it died a natural death before we took office. Our achievement was to do away with the burden of superfluous regulations, which no longer served any purpose, and to put something more effective—market forces—in their place.

When we have just announced two more radical policies—one on transport in London and another on road safety—it is richly ironic for the Opposition to attack us for lacking a transport policy. Where is Labour's transport policy? The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East spent 35 minutes criticising us, but he has not one constructive idea to put forward. In recent months we have answered three debates on transport at the Opposition's behest, and we were expecting to hear something of their policies, but three times we have been deeply disappointed. Perhaps the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will tell us when he winds up. When shall we be told the Opposition's intention? Is the subject so low on their list of priorities that we cannot be told what they would do? Perhaps they need to go to Moscow to find out. Are their internal party wranglings so bitter? Perhaps Mr. Todd will not come on side. *[Interruption.]* Or is it merely that there is a complete dearth of original thought among Opposition Members?

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East spends far too much time on the picket line; I have a charming photograph of him in a Sunday newspaper backed by the motto, "Loyalty and Honour"—qualities for which he is so renowned by his own leader. I am considering using that photograph as the Department of Transport's Christmas card this year.

This Government have made spending on transport a top priority. I understand that the slimmer right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has declared his intention to keep a very close eye on the expenditure commitment of Opposition spokesmen. Surely the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, in his blunt and succinct manner, should have told us the amount of money to which he is allowed to commit Labour on transport spending. He continually talks about the Treasury. What about his own future Treasury if Labour ever returned to Government?

Since the hon. Gentleman has proved unable to answer that question, the House must assume that he speaks with neither the authority nor the commitment of his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East because he cannot tell us anything that Labour proposes to do. Everyone who takes a serious interest in transport deserves an answer to that question. The House will agree that the hon. Gentleman's failure to provide any suggestions whatsoever has shown up all the Opposition posturing on safety and congestion as the sham and fraud that it is. Their silence speaks volumes and I ask the House to reject their ridiculous motion.

5.43 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The last words that will be heard in the House of Commons tonight, in emptied halls, are, "Who goes home?". It is a historic hangover from the time when Members of Parliament needed to be escorted by link men. Those words will not be heard by the majority of those who rush to the taxi point or out to their cars, but quite possibly they will be heard by a number of people who work in this building. I am very disappointed at the Secretary of State's performance this afternoon in which he displayed superficial but quite savage contempt for those people who are most concerned about public transport.

Most women in this country care about what happens to the bus system and to the railway system because almost without exception they use it. They know about the total unreality of the Secretary of State's figures for the provision of staff on the Underground and on the railway as it is reflected in the danger that they face when they leave here every night. The women who work in the Refreshment Department are a clear example. They are not particularly concerned about the billions of pounds that we are told are now being spent. They will be concerned that violent crimes on all the railway systems have increased noticeably. They travel in emptier carriages with fewer staff and with much less access to any help and they are in increasing danger of attack or assault. They know that the Government needed to be goaded by the most bizarre set of comic-book characters from America into beginning to face the fact that there are not sufficient transport staff on the system to defend those who use it. They will find it remarkable that a Government who put above all their commitment to the road system are now beginning to perceive, albeit vaguely, the need for providing through the railway and through more integrated planning of bus and other services a transport system that will enable people to travel safely and in comfort.

I have met many railwaymen who have been subjected to assault. They know exactly what happens. I have met 60-year-olds nearing retirement who have been beaten up for a £1 ticket. They would be singularly unimpresed by the level of this debate. I have met people in their early 30s who in attempting to save a woman from assault were beaten up so badly that they were off work for 18 months and have still not regained their previous posts.

Safety for people on the Underground and the railways is not a matter for superficial and supposedly clever propaganda in the House of Commons. It is a day-to-day and night-to-night worry for women who find it a nightmare to try to get from their place of work to their homes in safety.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government are further encouraging the difficult circumstances that she has described? Last night they gave their backing to a Bill which imposes penalties on fare dodgers. Those penalties will have to be collected by railwaymen and railwaywomen and the British Rail board has declared an undertaking to get rid of staff and replace them with automatic ticket machines. Therefore, women

who go home late at night will find not a friendly railway person to guide them but a ticket machine which probably will have been vandalised.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Secretary of State and those who support him who refuse to connect the provision of money with the provision of staff must face the fact that the reiteration of the argument that there has been no financial restraint will fall badly upon the ears of those who use the public transport system. One gets the distinct impression that very few Conservative Members use public transport. Therefore, they do not see what happens.

Some years ago, the guards in the Liverpool area told me that they were being continually assaulted and required assistance. For a short time they were escorted by British Transport police. However, as soon as they moved from one section to another, the British Transport police left the train and the same guards were assaulted again. That is the day-to-day reality of public transport. It is directly connected with money.

When I spoke to a former senior representative of London Transport about the provision of safety on London Underground, he said, "Where is the money to come from?" The Government will not provide it, so it has to come from the passengers. The money will not be forthcoming in the present circumstances. If one constantly harps on about the need to cut staff because they are expensive, the result is empty stations and women hurrying through darkened corridors wondering whether they will get mugged. If one constantly cuts back on proper staffing and takes any contract from any cheapjack firm, one will get people whose commitment to the system is minimal and who will do the minimum required of them. If one consistently says that the only thing to be considered is an ability to balance the books, the result will be what we have in London today—a dirty, dangerous and unattractive public transport system. The women of this country pay the price for that attitude every time they use the public transport system. The staff pay for it in increasing numbers of assaults and, in the final analysis, the public pays for it.

The Secretary of State asked why it was that he had not heard from the Labour party about its policy. The simple answer is that every member of the travelling public could write a public transport policy for him tomorrow. It would ask for decent investment and for a level of comfort that does not mean that on the trains between Crewe and Carlisle there is sometimes 200 per cent. overcrowding with people standing in the corridors and the guards being unable to walk from one end of the train to the other. They will tell the Secretary of State that investment is needed, not just in more concrete roads, but in the provision of proper rolling stock, properly guarded stations and decent, clean and properly serviced public facilities. The public will say to the Secretary of State, "Whatever your statistics, try travelling on some of the public transport that most of the people of this country have to use every day of their lives." Even the Secretary of State might then begin to take a less rosy view.

5.52 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Even in a debate as short as this, I must begin by recording the profound concern in my constituency about the proposals put forward by the Government's consultants for the redevelopment of the A27 in my constituency. Far from meeting the Government's policy of taking traffic away from towns, the proposals would effectively cut the town of Worthing in half and that is why one sees Worthing covered in notices saying:

"A bypass not a through pass."

The matter is still being considered by Ministers and I hope that they will consider it in the light not only of that report, but of the report commissioned by the local council and the enormous petition they have received and that they will ensure that Worthing has a bypass that avoids the town completely.

I want to take up a point made in the Opposition motion and the Government amendment about the deep concern that every hon. Member feels about the recent rail and air tragedies. I repeat the comment that I made in an earlier intervention about the unnecessary anguish caused to vast numbers of people who are not affected by the disasters, but who are concerned because they think that relatives or friends may have been. We must improve the arrangements for telephone communication in those circumstances. I hope that it will be possible to establish a single telephone number to be used when a major disaster takes place which everyone knows is for information, just as we use 999. I hope that that can be done, but even if it cannot the emergency numbers must have a queuing system in which a recording tells people that they are in a queue and that if they hang on they will eventually receive an answer. There is, of course, tremendous strain on resources at such times, but at present people have to keep ringing and they receive the engaged tone over and over again. That covers far more people than those involved in any particular accident because people do not know whether their friends and relatives are involved. On humanitarian grounds, we should put in the extra resources that are needed.

The Opposition motion—which is more a book than a motion—is an own goal because, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pointed out, in reality there has been a massive increase in the resources devoted to all aspects of transport. I want to congratulate him—perhaps I should not, as a former Treasury Minister—on the way in which he has fought his Department's battle with the Treasury, which has been reflected in the substantial increase in infrastructure expenditure and real resources. That is a success.

As the debate is brief, I want to produce a shopping list rather than anything else. My first point concerns sea transport. I began my commercial life in the shipping industry, where I was for about seven years. In the docks at that time the inter-union rivalry was so tremendous that the troops finally had to be sent in to deal with the immediate problems. In that context, we have seen the port of London shrivel while others grow, for a simple reason—the national dock labour scheme. I find it extraordinary that, after 10 years of Conservative Government, we have not dealt with that problem. I know that the matter is partly one for the Department of Employment rather than for my right hon. Friend, but the time has come when we must consider whether it is a satisfactory arrangement. I say that it is not a satisfactory arrangement for the future development of our ports in relation to our European competitors.

I shall say a brief word about rail. The central London rail study has made imaginative proposals for improving the rail network and that is an exciting prospect. My right

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hon. Friend envisages a timetable with a Bill in November 1989. That excites the imagination and will lead to an improvement if we take the opportunity.

I want to make some specific suggestions on road transport. It is noticeable that the Opposition have made little mention of buses and the extraordinary change as a result of which the ratepayers' subsidy has been reduced, to the great benefit of my constituents, while there has been an increase in consumer choice and competition. However, I am concerned about the situation in London. We are suffering from a hangover from some of the Greater London council's so-called road improvement programmes. One needs only to look at the extraordinary situation on the other side of Westminster bridge. The boroughs are not doing an adequate job in this respect, so I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider seriously taking road transport in London back under the control of his Department, where it used to be. One example I want to give is that of coaches parking on Westminster bridge, especially continental coaches from which passengers are discharged into the middle of the road. Yesterday morning and this morning there was a string of coaches with the drivers on the wrong side discharging passengers into the middle of the road. There will be a serious accident, but Westminster council seems to be doing nothing about it.

If one considers bus lanes in, for example, the constituency of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), one realises that the traffic flow, including buses, is seriously slowed down by bus lanes. If one waits until 10 am to drive in, it is equally apparent that even then bus lanes are restricting traffic to one lane, partly because cars are parked in the bus lanes and partly because people no longer drive in bus lanes after 10 am because the lanes are painted red or have lines. The bus lanes should be reviewed.

Motor cyclists are another serious matter. The White Paper, which is greatly to be welcomed in many respects, refers to the appalling loss of life for motor cyclists. They account for about 14 per cent. of road deaths and 20 per cent. of serious accidents, although motor cycles form only 2 per cent. of traffic. Weaving in and out of moving traffic is a serious offence in New York and the police enforce it. We should consider making it an offence as well. I also do not understand why, when there are such stringent regulations for other commercial drivers, we allow courier motor-cycle companies to employ learner drivers who have passed no test whatever. I ask my right hon. Friend whether he would be prepared to accept and support a private Member's Bill designed to deal with that problem.

I want to talk now about the M25 and all that that entails. I use it four or five times a week going to and from my constituency. Whenever there is an accident or bad weather and there is a massive traffic jam, drivers are locked into it. At appropriate points on the M25 there should be gates that the police can open with traffic signals, so that if there is a tailback for five or six miles before the next exit drivers would have the option of turning round, going back off the motorway and taking some other route. The same applies to warning notices because it is all too easy to come on to the M25 and find a 10-mile traffic jam straight ahead. If there had been a notice about 100 yards further back, one would not have gone on to the M25 and would have avoided the traffic jam, with corresponding reductions in the congestion faced by everyone else.

I approve of my right hon. Friend's announcement about cameras. Obviously there are technical problems that we must all consider carefully, but I hope that cameras will be used to deal with speeding on motorways because we all know perfectly well that there is virtually no speed limit enforcement at the moment. I hope that cameras will also deal with the problem of tail-gating, which is undoubtedly terrifying for many people, especially when it involves heavy lorries. As I understand it, there are proposals for governors on coaches which are also a serious motorway hazard. When will coach governors be introduced and enforced?

I wish to make only two other points as I am anxious to leave time for other hon. Members to speak in this short debate. My right hon. Friend should consider carefully, with the Home Office, the problem of car theft. Cars are often stolen for so-called joyrides, which is dangerous because there is no insurance. Car theft, based on the idea of taking the car without the owner's permission, is a totally absurd offence with totally absurd penalties. One could steal a car worth between £10,000 and £20,000 and attract a penalty of the kind that might reasonably be expected if one had picked a pocket for, say, a £5 note.

Finally, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will stick to his proposals in the White Paper for not extending clamping. I do not believe that clamping has been helpful in central London, but whether or not that is so I am clear that it would not be helpful in a broader context.

I am against Privy Councillors making long speeches and hope that mine has not been too long. I ask my right hon. Friend to support my suggestions.

6.1 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): When serious accidents such as those mentioned in the motion and the amendment occur it is a matter of form in this House to express sympathy to the victims and to extend congratulations to the members of the rescue services. However, I doubt whether any of us know how traumatic it is for the victims of such accidents who survive and for the relatives of those who do not. Nor, I suspect, do we really know what young policemen and policewomen or young soldiers have to face in the aftermath of such major disasters. I entertain great doubt whether I could do what they have to do in the course of their duty. I suspect that when we express sympathy or extend our congratulations we do so as much out of a sense of relief as from any other motive.

If I may be forgiven the expression, the Opposition motion has an "omnibus" quality about it. It is guilty of a certain imprecision in language. However, it raises sharply an issue that the Government amendment complacently ignores. In such a debate, some things cannot be challenged. Congestion in London is now a national issue. No doubt all of us could give illustrations of that from our experiences. It took, for example, seven minutes for the nearest fire engine to reach King's Cross Underground station—a distance of 1,400 yards, at a speed of approximately 7 mph. When students sat on two bridges

near the House of Commons before Christmas the traffic in central London took between three and four hours to return to normal.

If any hon. Members who go to Heathrow ever travel west on the M4 between 6am and 7am, they will enjoy a relatively easy passage, but they will see the stagnant east-bound lanes, of private or seemingly private cars containing drivers but no passengers, nose to tail for many miles. That is hardly surprising because 2·1 million vehicles cross the old Greater London council boundary every day and 1·5 million vehicles come within 1·8 miles of Aldwych. It is easy to say that all the drivers on the M4 should be on public transport, but what consequences would that have? There would be more overloaded trains and more overloading on the Underground.

Those of us who use Heathrow regularly are ashamed of the first impression that many foreign travellers to Britain must get. The facilities on the Underground from Heathrow to central London are grossly inadequate, with no proper provision for luggage. The trains are frequently unclean and unpleasant and in the rush hour it is often difficult to get a seat when travelling from central London.

Anecdotal evidence is always to be found in such debates, and on Saturday, in a state of modified rapture, I came back from Twickenham to Waterloo and then attempted to travel from Waterloo to Heathrow by tube. To do so, I sought to go down one of the three escalators leading from the forecourt to the tube system, but only one was operating. The other two had clearly been out of operation for some considerable time, with little explanation and the inevitable congestion. One finds that kind of breakdown far too often in the system. It inevitably results in inconvenience and congestion. It has been estimated that the cost of road congestion in London now amounts to about £1·5 billion per annum and about £10 billion for the United Kingdom as a whole.

It seems clear that the forecasts of growth, upon which investment has been made, have rarely been accurate. One cannot believe that the present level of congestion would arise as a result of a planned or forecast expansion. It is also the case that the lead-in time to the substantial improvements that are required is unnecessarily long. The problem is that commuters do not sit quietly at home waiting for the improvements to be effected. I suspect that most commuters would have little interest in the statistical to-ing and fro-ing that has characterised the debate. They have an interest only in being comfortable, safe and efficiently conveyed to their place of work.

We are now paying for years and years of neglect. We still rely on a system which, so far as the railways are concerned, has more than a hint of Victorian values about it. The scale of the problem that we face, especially in the south-east, requires massive investment, plus a recognition of the necessary interdependence between different modes of travel. I fail to see how that can be achieved without central direction and public-led investment.

There must also be a recognition that improvements must meet changing environmental aspirations. The public expect and demand it and are right to do so. It necessarily follows that environmentally sympathetic improvements of the transport system will be more expensive. We cannot expect to preserve the environment on the cheap. However offensive that may be to other elements of the Government's philosophy, they must accept that the maintenance of the environment will require central direction and in important and significant cases possibly central decision-making also.

Public transport need not all be publicly owned, but the overall pattern of public transport must be established with the public interest in mind. The Government have a duty to establish that pattern. I regret that so far in the debate there has been precious little evidence that they have done so or that they are willing to do so. For that reason, my hon. Friends and I will support the Opposition motion.

6.8 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I rise simply to ask the question which I wanted to ask earlier this afternoon and which can be incorporated in this wide debate on transport. I am becoming a little concerned that the police are being given ever-increasing powers. Motorists are normally law-abiding citizens and have no intention of getting 12 penalty points.

The police are harassed because of the amount of legislation that has been passed during the last few years. I feel that some of the points made by my right hon. Friend could mean that once again my constituents, who use the Winchester bypass, the M3 and the M25—which appears to be in complete disrepair—will be feeling harassed. There have been 5,000 deaths caused, for example, by drink-driving, disrepair of motorways or by a basic fault in the car's structure. My right hon. Friend must, however, from time to time pat motorists on the back for the reduction in road casualties, which I am sure would go down well.

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has made an important point. I strongly sympathise with him. The point of the White Paper is to provide the most severe penalties for those who drive badly. However, those who commit trivial offences—as any hon. Member could—will be treated more leniently than in the past. They will receive more warnings.

The reduction in road accidents over the past few years reflects great credit on drivers. I shall continue to make that clear. I am sorry if I have not made that point clear enough this afternoon.

Mr. Hill: There has been a lack of good propaganda for the police. A television film was made about the M4. In a recent court case in Winchester, policemen, along with private investigators, were found guilty of using the police national computer to find out information mainly about motorists. That is something which cannot be allowed to continue. The police national computer must be readily available, especially to police patrolling motorways, but there must be a safeguard to ensure that those who earn money from such information cannot gain access to it.

My right hon. Friend has lived with the problem of the M3 for many years, but let us hope that it will not go on much longer. Will it go through St. Catherine's Hill, around St. Catherine's Hill on the existing Winchester bypass or where? Such a city as Southampton, growing in leaps and bounds, needs that information.

On a completely different subject, there was a debate in the plenary session of the Council of Europe last week on aviation security. I believe that there must be an overall European overview on aviation security, but that it should be carried even further. When my right hon. Friend

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receives the completed resolution and a copy of the report of the debate—in which I spoke—he will notice that it goes far beyond Europe. After the Lockerbie incident, we could point to security in Frankfurt and in London, but, of course, planes come in from the far east, Canada and the United States of America. An international body must set down the guidelines for aviation security. There must be a points system for airports. All airports are not safe. I believe that we all agree that my right hon. Friend was right to refuse to issue a licence to an employer at London airport who had not taken the necessary precautions to find out the background of his employees. That happens, however, in practically every airport throughout the world. Generally, the back doors of airports are not guarded. There is no end to aviation security. I suppose that we members of the Council of Europe must be brave as we travel throughout the world.

The sooner that my right hon. Friend can create a good image of the police, of the motorists and certainly of his Department, the better. It is not just a matter of money.

We should think seriously about the provision of toll motorways. My right hon. Friend has probably already thought about them. There is no reason why there should not be toll motorways alongside existing motorways. Those of us who use the M3 would be delighted if, by paying a toll, we could drive to London that bit quicker. My right hon. Friend would be well advised to drive from Calais to Strasbourg on the French toll motorway so that he can appreciate the efficiency of that system.

6.15 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I listened with considerable astonishment to the Secretary of State's contribution to the debate and I read with equal incredulity the terms of the amendment to the Opposition motion. Both were essays in complacency which sits completely at odds with the daily experience of my constituents. The majority of my constituents use London Transport in some form or another virtually every day of their lives. Their day by day experience is of increasing congestion, of dirty stations, of overcrowded trains and buses, and fares that are rising at considerably greater rates than the rate of inflation. They are concerned about the safety of the transport system which they use. My constituents' worry and anger about the system that they must use are completely unreflected, and unanswered, by the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Adley: I was wondering why the hon. Member's incredulity was shared by only one other Labour Back Bencher sitting behind him on this Opposition Supply day.

Mr. Smith: I knew that I was wise to give way to the hon. Gentleman, because it enables me to point out that time is extremely short in this debate. Many of my hon. Friends were present during the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). Many of my hon. Friends representing London constituencies—those who were here and those who were unable to be present—have mentioned similar concerns to my own.

Many recent London Transport decisions have made matters worse. One example is the continual drive by London Transport to introduce an even greater proportion of one-person operated buses on the London bus routes, which will cause greater congestion and will provide a worse service for the travelling public. Another example is the way in which London Transport has introduced ticket barriers in London Underground stations. Passengers are worried about the safety of those barriers. It is difficult, too, for people carrying heavy bags or wheeling prams to pass through them. Those are issues which London Transport clearly has not considered. On top of those changes, which make travelling worse for my constituents, there have been dramatic fare increases in the past months. Those, of course, are to be supplemented by increases in the rate levy which my constituents must pay on top of those increased fares.

We have small elements of relief in this overall gloomy picture. I am pleased to say that at long last the Government have agreed to provide the funds for the badly needed improvement work at the Angel tube station. That is welcome. However, it is sad that it took years of campaigning, lobbying and requesting for that decision to be made.

Some hopeful signs are also emerging from the central London rail study. I hope that the proposed new line through the Angel and Essex road and out to Hackney will come to fruition. It will be of great benefit to my constituents. However, I hope that Ministers will begin to rethink some of the comments that they have been making about that study which imply that the overall cost of new investment in new tube and rail lines will have to be met largely by passengers. The proper source for such investment in the basic infrastructure of our capital city is the Government rather than dramatically increased fares.

Our transport system, especially that in London, has three basic requirements. The first is improved capital investment. The Government make much of their relatively recent awakening to the benefits of capital investment in public transport. I suppose that we must be glad of some of the progress that they have made. But they have not gone anywhere near far enough. We have only to look at the nature of London's Underground system to see that clearly.

The Government say that they are putting millions into the upgrading of the Central line. That is welcome, but what about the poor old Northern line? In many ways that is an even worse system than the Central line. Anyone who travels daily on the Northern line is becoming increasingly frustrated by the difficulties that that line poses. The new rolling stock, the new stations and the new work that is needed to improve London's Underground system is very much overdue, and the Government are not going far enough or fast enough in the investment that needs to be made.

Secondly, in addition to more capital investment we need more investment in the revenue running of the system. Year by year since the Government took over responsibility from the GLC for the support of London Regional Transport they have reduced the system's revenue subsidy. That inevitably means higher fares, fewer staff and a worse and less attractive system. That is not the direction in which we should be going.

Thirdly, we need a number of measures to discourage private vehicles from coming into central London. We shall have to look at that in the House in the course of the next few years. At the moment, London is simply clogging up and we cannot allow that to continue unabated.

In addition to all the problems that I have mentioned, my constituents are now facing British Rail's proposals for King's Cross, for which legislation is shortly to come before the House. I shall not say much about that now because doubtless we shall have the opportunity to debate it at much greater length in due course. But suffice it for me to say that at the moment King's Cross is one of the most congested and overcrowded parts of the entire London traffic system, both above and below ground. If British Rail's proposals go through, King's Cross simply will not be able to cope. British Rail has not seriously considered that and the problems that that entails. It has not looked at a proper strategic over-view of London and the nation's transport system.

Some of my constituents died in the King's Cross fire. Some of the emergency services that responded to that disaster came from my constituency. Many, indeed most, of my constituents use London's transport services day by day, week by week. They know at first hand the problems that face them on that transport system. It is about time that the Government woke up to what is happening, abandoned their complacency and started investing in the measures that are needed to stop our capital city from clogging up. I must sound a warning for the Government. It may already be almost too late for them to start acting properly.

6.25 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) spent so much of his speech being negative. For example, he attacked my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) for not being here although he is involved in a Committee.

However, it is right that we should address the problems of congestion and safety. Congestion is becoming a major issue among the public. The Government have no need to take lessons from the Opposition on the roads programme. In the coming financial year there will be 50 per cent. more road construction than before 1979 when it was decimated by the need to go to the IMF.

No Department of Transport forecast of traffic growth anticipated the exceptional rate of increase now taking place, reflecting the economic achievements of recent years. At one point in the past year the increase was four times the high growth forecast used by the Department in planning the road programme. The figures confirm what regular motorway users already know. The roads are carrying traffic far in excess of their design capacity and some motorway sections carry well over 50 per cent. more vehicles per day than the number for which they were planned.

Those who have urged the Government to take careful note of the economic return to be gained from road construction and the economic and competitive disadvantages of failing to provide an adequate road network are now coming to be seen to be fully justified in their views. We are all slowly grasping the point that capital expenditure which produces an immediate and continuing return in terms of reduced congestion and greater industrial efficiency must be considered differently from other spending which does not provide such returns. It is that greater industrial efficiency which generates economic growth without which hospials, schools and other social benefits that we all want cannot come about.

The planning process is cumbersome. Far too many roads and other transport infrastructure schemes which were badly needed have been delayed much longer than necessary. Any practical means of ensuring that the right roads and schemes are built in the right places more quickly than would otherwise be the case are to be welcomed. We look forward to the document that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to publish before long setting out proposals for greater private sector involvement in public sector transport schemes. There are some successful examples. It is encouraging to see a number of cities and regions coming forward with light rail proposals financed as investment projects. In the London Docklands and a number of estuarial crossings there is great scope for bringing forward much-needed infrastructure.

However, we should be cautious about the idea that many major new strategic roads can be financed on a similar basis. There are problems to be considered before we rush headlong towards a regime incorporating roads financed on the basis of tolls. For example, it has been suggested that some bypasses could be built by private firms which would be allowed to charge tolls. Unfortunately, it is not as simple as that. In order to achieve the maximum environmental benefit, bypasses must attract most of the traffic which previously clogged up the streets of the towns or villages concerned. Anyone who has driven along a relatively deserted Italian autostrada—this may be a response to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill)—while heavy trucks flood along the parallel all-purpose road to save the toll of a few thousand lire will appreciate that the market mechanism does not necessarily produce the most environmentally advantageous outcome. A large proportion of the roads currently being built are bypasses and environmental factors figure high in the justification for their construction.

On strategic routes, some theoretical projects are badly needed to ease congestion, while others are good candidates for toll roads. Unfortunately, the two features do not generally coincide. Take, for example, the proposed east coast motorway that some county councils and other bodies would like to see built to link the M11 with the Humber bridge, and relieve traffic on the existing M1 and A1 roads. It could be a candidate for tolls because the number of entry and exit points could be relatively few. That is because of the general absence of major conurbations along the route. That very fact would be almost bound to lead a potential investor to realise that there would be no hope of achieving an economic return, except possibly in the very long term. Furthermore, it would make economic nonsense to build such a route at very great expense, and then to deter traffic from using it by imposing tolls that did not apply to other routes, including the A1 and M1, for which we can rule them out.

Private finance can play its part in relation to some important and often costly local schemes, such as the new Dartford bridge over the Thames and the second Severn crossing, and new roads to open up derelict areas for development. But we should not get the idea that it can be a magic alternative to major construction by the Government, for which the economic case remains strong.

[Mr. Gary Waller]

Let me say briefly a word about railway overcrowding. In some places overcrowding has become a major problem, and not just in the south-east. On Network SouthEast, standards have been set by the Government for levels of overcrowding, and the Government have approved action to achieve them, including a record level of investment. On Network SouthEast, the target load factor would require that on some trains no more than 10 per cent. of passengers should be required to stand, and on others no more than a quarter.

It is time that similar targets were set for provincial services, as several of these provide a service for commuters that is similar to that of Network SouthEast. Indeed, in some cases, the trains go underground in the city centre. It is time to set British Rail targets to reduce congestion on some of its provincial services, not only because people are concerned about safety, but because if passengers have nowhere to sit on trains they are likely to have recourse to overcrowded roads, or not travel at all.

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene in his very thoughtful and interesting speech.

Would my hon. Friend agree with me that, while the Government are entitled to claim credit for the capital investment in the railways, it really does seem strange that at the same time the Government are cutting the public service obligation grant, so that we are getting new lines and trains in some places, and overcrowded and dirty trains on the lines that are the heaviest used?

Mr. Waller: It is significant that the Government have not turned down any application by British Rail for a project that is economically desirable. Indeed, my hon. Friend raises some detailed points, to which it would take me a long time to respond.

There are also several localities in the provinces for which passenger transport executives also have responsibility, and where overcrowding is becoming a serious problem. In my own area, on the Airedale and Wharfedale lines in west Yorkshire, rail overcrowding has become chronic during peak periods.

If I may return briefly to roads, I wish to deal with the safety aspect about which an announcement was made earlier today. Most people rely on the roads for their transport needs. Sadly, the casualty figures reflect that fact. Road traffic accidents attract relatively little publicity compared with the major disasters, but it is right that we should do everything in our power to reduce the toll of carnage. The Government's response to the North report should be studied with care, and we look forward to the implementation of those proposals that are effective. I say "effective", because that is the only basis on which they should be judged. It is often the undramatic improvements, such as relatively cheap local traffic management and engineering schemes, which have the most significant effects. This criterion should be applied to any changes that are made to deal with, for instance, the menace of drink-driving.

The most effective measures have been taken by brewers, and others, in consultation with my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, to persuade motorists to take non-alcoholic drinks. Much debate centres on random breath testing, but that ignores the fact that the police already have the power to carry out spot checks and to take specimens of breath if there is any reason to believe that a motorist might have been drinking. There is a case, of course, for tidying up the law so that it is more readily understood. However, random checks would require more police manpower to do a less effective job, and we should resist calls to take action that might not work so well.

Opposition policies, so far as we can detect them, have remained basically unchanged over the past 20 years. Central transport planning, which was not just a failure but which was so hopeless a concept that it was never really put into effect, is still something they promote. Most transport problems that have been discussed in this debate arise from success. It is increasingly recognised that our transport policies can play a substantial part in contributing to and developing that success.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is coming forward all the time with new ideas, and he will certainly have my support.

6.35 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Whatever may be one's views on the subject that the House is debating this afternoon, and whatever side one takes in the exchanges we have heard so far, I hope that one thing that will unite the House is the acceptance that there is, rightly or wrongly, widespread dissatisfaction with transport services among the travelling public. I hope that I start on a non-controversial note by saying just that.

I listened carefully to the Secretary of State's speech. In the early part of his speech, he dealt with the air disasters at Lockerbie and Kegworth. We shall await the report of the air accident investigation branch into the Kegworth accident. After the Lockerbie tragedy, the House ought to be able to establish unanimity about airline safety.

Criticism has come from Conservative Members during this debate that all that they hear from Opposition Members is a non-stop barrage of criticism about Government policy. That is the penalty of being in government; indeed, it is what any Opposition is for. Certainly there are differences of opinion and emphasis on transport policy between the two major parties, but on airline safety I hope that we can achieve unanimity.

All of us would agree that airline passengers have a right to expect effective protection from terrorism anywhere in the world. I hope we would all agree that airport security must be upgraded to include tighter controls on carry-on baggage checks, and on transfer bags, with proper passenger screening, baggage reconciliation procedures, properly trained security staff and further research and development into plastic explosive detection.

I should have thought that agreed international standards for all of these matters, with airport spot checks by staff who are appointed by the international Civil Aviation Authority, would meet with general approval in the House. We welcome the fact that the right hon. Gentleman has initiated discussions with other Governments with a view to achieving some of these things.

However, the sensible recommendations of the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport in 1986, including a proposal to restore the security levy, ought to be looked at again. After all, a levy on passengers travelling on all international flights worldwide would raise a large aviation security fund. I know that the right

hon. Gentleman has some ideological objections to doing that in Britain, but I wonder whether he believes that the recommendations on the matter by the International Federation of Airline Passengers are worth pursuing.

Over the past six years, there have been at least seven fatal civilian aircraft bomb incidents, involving the deaths of more than 850 passengers and crew. It is pointless for the Minister to say repeatedly that British airport security is the best in the world, which it palpably is not. The Government must recognise that international terrorism recognises no boundaries and that all air travellers are at risk, regardless of which airline they choose to fly with, and whatever their airport of departure and arrival.

Decisions are also long overdue about the future of British airports. Here, the sense of unanimity that I attempted to bring to the beginning of my speech might fail. I do not believe that the Government can go on pretending that market forces will cure congestion, or ease fears about aviation safety.

It is time for the Department to come clean with people living in southern England, and to tell them that the massive increase in air traffic will inevitably mean a fifth terminal at Heathrow and greater capacity at Gatwick and Stansted, with all the air traffic control and environmental implications that that entails. The Department itself must take advantage of spare capacity in other regions, diverting continental and international flights to regional airports. The Secretary of State's belated decision on greater involvement in Euro-control is welcome, but it is a pity that it takes a summer of chaos at British airports to overcome traditional British chauvinism.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Before my hon. Friend moves on from the subject of air disasters, I wish to make one point concerning the plane crash on the M1. I accept the Secretary of State's observation that much consideration and discussion must follow the publication of the inquiry's report, but certain things ought to be done immediately as lessons begin to be learned. There is, for example, the question of the plane attempting to land at East Midlands airport and whether it would have been more appropriate to attempt a landing elsewhere. There is also the question whether a plane should be expected to land immediately and at the nearest available airport when one engine fails. The nearest available airport does not need to be an international airport, given the length of runway required.

Mr. Snape: Such questions should be answered by the inquiry, though they have properly exercised the interests of many hon. and right hon. Members.

I turn to the right hon. Gentleman's comments concerning the Clapham junction rail disaster and the Hidden inquiry. Without wishing to prejudice its findings, and using only information already in the public domain, may I say that it appears that there is a problem in respect of rail investment levels, reflected in some of the circumstances of the Clapham junction tragedy. Half of the trains travelling through what is the busiest rail junction in the world, proceeding along the old London and South Western line, are served by a signal box that is 50 years old. There is nothing inherently unsafe about that, but in an ideal world Clapham junction "A" signal box, serving the line on which the disaster occurred, would have long since been swept away and replaced—as it is now being replaced—by a signalling control centre covering far greater track mileage than that served by the existing signal box.

In the south of England in particular, there is a problem of staff shortages. I ask the House to accept that I make that point not on behalf of the National Union of Railwaymen—although, like my father, I am a member of that union—but because there are problems of recruiting and retaining skilled signal and telegraph staff in southern England, resulting from the low wages that have traditionally been paid and the rail industry's dependence, in the south and elsewhere, on overtime payments and on weekend and Sunday rate premiums.

There is, in these days of macho management—partly inspired by the attitude of the present Government—an additional factor for consideration. There are financial penalties on signal and telegraph staff working at Clapham junction and elsewhere, who, if they take time off because of sickness exceeding more than a few days, are liable not to be rostered for any overtime. As a result, staff are tempted to work, and do so, on occasions when they probably should not. Given their responsibilities, that cannot be conducive to a healthy working atmosphere or to passenger safety.

As to response to the Fennell inquiry, we shall study the Government's recommendations, of which there are a considerable number. We do not believe that a debate on the London Regional Transport levy is an adequate substitute for one on Fennell, covering the whole question of the effects of congestion on safety in the London Underground system. The right hon. Gentleman could not resist the temptation to pick out the particular sentence that he did from the Fennell report:

"There was no pressure on management to compromise safety."

Those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who read the report were surprised that that sentence was included, particularly as evidence concerning staffing was never heard by the inquiry, as it was ruled out by Mr. Fennell. We await a debate—in Government time, it is to be hoped—on Fennell's recommendations. It is a subject to which we shall certainly return.

As if making a ritual incantation, the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends acknowledge that problems of congestion and safety exist, but say that they are the products of economic growth. They talk about investment levels for road and rail, using statistics that are selective even for this House. The Secretary of State's Private Parliamentary Secretary, as is his duty, laughs. However, when one examines the figures submitted by the Department of Transport to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and finds it stated that investment levels are now at their highest in the history of rail, that is palpably untrue.

Mr. Channon *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Snape: The Secretary of State suggests that he did not say such a thing. Perhaps the most impartial referee to whom we can turn in resolving this vexed question is John Wells. I should not think that he is the same John Wells who was formerly a Conservative Member of Parliament. I refer to Mr. John Wells of the faculty of economics at Cambridge university. In a letter published in the *Financial Times* on 16 December, he wrote, on the subject of railway investment:

[Mr. Snape]

"The Secretary of State for Transport's claim that investment in the railways is at an 'all-time high' is simply not correct,—except in current price terms, which is not of any interest. The graph shows that, following the period 1981-84, in which for four consecutive years, the lowest-ever levels of investment since the Second World War were recorded, there has indeed been a strong recovery in railway investment in recent years."

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Snape: Before the rattles appear and the banners are waved on the Conservative Benches, may I inform the House that Mr. Wells went on to write:

"Nevertheless, railway investment in 1987, (the latest year for which data are available) was considerably below that for the period 1975-79, as well as for 1965-66."

As to the problems posed by success, the Government's own figures for the rate of economic growth in the years since 1979 show that they have by only a single percentage point managed to exceed the rate of economic growth sustained by the last Labour Government in the 1970s. Conservative Back Benchers should not be too impressed by Government propaganda, clever though it may be. The greatest economic growth in this country in recent years —and I had better whisper this softly—occurred under the Administration led by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Conservative Members dare not mention that. Not even the Secretary of State's PPS, who is now doing his duty, is allowed to laugh at that, but it is the reality.

The Secretary of State announced welcome proposals for railway investment, and mentioned two schemes that have been given his approval. One of them is the Cambridge to King's Lynn scheme, which is welcome but surprising. *[Interruption.]* I wish that the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), would stop waving his pocket watch around. I am sure it is not a present for long service, although, if it is, perhaps somebody is telling him something.

Bearing in mind that the service from Ely to King's Lynn is only every two hours, it is surprising that that criterion can be accepted for an investment proposal, while Manchester-Blackpool's can be rejected.

The investment proposal that the Government have not mentioned and have not yet approved is one that has been knocking around since last August—to alleviate the overcrowding north of the Thames on the AC electrified lines. It has been submitted and resubmitted and was last resubmitted, I understand, at the beginning of January. It is a £40 million proposal for electricial multiple units on the AC electrified lines.

In any event, for the Government to say that the investment proposals are invariably approved is to ignore the fact that they have been sanitised—to use the in word —until they meet the 7 per cent. return on investment criterion. And the Government put up not a penny; they merely allow British Rail to spend its own cash once they have approved the proposal. This is different, of course, from the way in which they treat proposals generated internally for the road network. Far from welcoming railway investment proposals, the right hon. Gentleman's Department normally tells British Rail to take them away and tickle them up until they meet those established and, in our view, preposterous investment criteria. They welcome investment proposals in the same way as Dracula welcomed daylight. "It is inevitable, but do not rush it", ought to be the Department's motto.

There is widespread dissatisfaction with standards right across the transport network. It has taken a somewhat truncated debate today to draw the Government's attention to those problems.

The Select Committee on Transport is meeting at the present time, otherwise my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) would have been present in the Chamber and would have hoped to participate in the debate.

Today, as at other times, the Secretary of State shows complacency about what his Department is doing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) reminded us, the reality for millions of people, particularly millions of women, is imprisonment in their homes or fear every time they use the public transport system. That fear ought to take the debate away from the public school, point-scoring standard to which it all too often descends when the right hon. Gentleman speaks. The right hon. Gentleman has palpably failed to improve the nation's transport lifeline, and I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to demonstrate that failure by voting for the Opposition motion.

6.52 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): In the few minutes that remain, I will begin where the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) began and confirm that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has indeed taken the lead in calling on the body which exists specifically to bring aviation countries together, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, which is to hold a special ministerial meeting in Montreal next week. At that meeting there will be a discussion on recent sabotage attempts, including Lockerbie. My right hon. Friend will be in attendance and will put forward proposals for improving aviation security world wide. I am sure that that will be welcomed by hon. Members.

I had a feeling that during this debate we would be discussing investment under this Government, so I thought that it would be useful to examine the investment approved by my right hon. Friend in the very brief period that I have been in the Department.

On the railways, we have had 200 EMU vehicles for north of the Thames and Thameslink, 158 Sprinter express vehicles for the provincial services, another 77 vehicles for the Marylebone line as well as the King's Lynn electrification—all in just six months.

Across the board, a £720 million modernisation of the Central line on London Underground has been approved, the Angel station reconstruction costing £40 million has been approved, we have given our consent to the £266 million programme of safety measures being implemented by London Underground and in the past week or so we have approved the purchase of a further 10 vehicles for the Docklands light railway.

For London Buses, we have approved investment of more than £12 million.

One very important point which has not, I believe, been mentioned in the debate is that the disabled have been well catered for during this period. The funding that we have approved for Dial-a-Ride in London is £7·27 million for 1989-90—an increase of £1 million on the previous year

and 70 per cent. higher than when the GLC had charge of these matters. I was extremely proud to be able to announce recently that all taxis licensed in London after 1 February 1989 will have to be wheelchair accessible.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) said, quite apart from all those projects there are very promising light rail projects throughout the country.

I must say to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that this is not some sort of statistical to and fro, as he described it. We are talking about railways, rolling stock, improved comfort and better services, and these can be provided only by the investment that the Government have been making.

The level of London Regional Transport's investment planned for the coming year is a 94 per cent. increase on the investment in 1983 when it was still under the control of the GLC. Taking the Underground alone, the level of investment planned for the coming year represents a doubling in real terms of the 1984-85 figure. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) should certainly bear that in mind.

I must say to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that we certainly recognise that crime is of great concern and all the rolling stock that has been approved and to which I have just alluded will help to provide better, more secure conditions for people to travel in. The hon. Member will also be aware of the increases in police numbers on London Underground that we have announced.

I am disappointed that we have not heard more from the Opposition about the central London rail study or our booklet "Transport in London", which were published on the same day. I understand their reticence in talking about these things—they are silent because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in his foreword, nails the lie that the Government have no clear policy for transport in London. The study sets out a £1·5 billion programme to upgrade existing lines. That could mean new services, increased station capacity and more trains. It also identifies a case for new railway lines for London—a further £2 billion of investment for the capital. Worst of all for the Opposition, the study was a joint effort by the Department, British Rail and London Underground. There is very little in all that for the Opposition to make political capital.

With regard to safety and recent tragic events, the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) raised about the means of informing next of kin is under discussion by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has made some trenchant comments on a number of recent tragic disasters and his manner in doing so has sometimes caused raised eyebrows on this side of the House and even on his own side. If he is entirely sincere in pursuing the subject, I find it extraordinary that in drafting the motion for today's debate he mentioned each of the tragedies which are etched on all our minds but omitted any reference to road deaths. Terrible as those tragedies have been, in terms of numbers killed and lives shattered road accidents are a still more horrendous matter. While at King's Cross 31 died, at Clapham 35, at Lockerbie 270 and at Kegworth 47, the number killed on our roads in the year ended September 1988 was 5,010 —a point that my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley made very well. I must tell my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing that governors will be fitted to new coaches from 1 April 1989 and to other coaches in the two years thereafter.

The figure of 5,010 was a good one because, if fatalities had risen since 1986 in line with the 10 per cent. increase in road traffic in that period, we could have expected the number to be 910 higher. The reduction has come about largely due to the hard work of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic in setting the objective of reducing casualties by one third by the year 2000, by the stiffer tests for motor cyclists, by the mandatory speed limits at motorway road works and through the battle against drinking and driving. Some of these measures bring no popularity to the Government, but each week 18 people are not killed who without the improvements since 1986 would have been killed. Those people cannot be identified or featured by the press, but the improvement is no less real for that. The more visible and vocal the Opposition support for road safety measures and campaigns, the more we shall believe in their sincerity in addressing all transport safety questions.

I am sure that the House will have seen the response by London Regional Transport and London Underground to the recommendations in the Fennell report. The report was published yesterday, and copies have been placed in the Library. I commend that response to all hon. Members. Nearly all Fennell's recommendations have been accepted. I consider it a serious and responsible response to the King's Cross tragedy, which accepts that matters need to be put right. Many of us have observed the physical measures being taken, such as the stripping out of wood on escalators, but an equally significant amount is being done which cannot be seen. I have in mind the new safety management systems that have been put in place, as well as improved training procedures.

The Government are determined to ensure that the new safety culture continues. To that end, we shall go on receiving regular progress reports and monitoring the progress made by London Regional Transport.

The Opposition are good at complaining about the ills of our transport system—I give them due credit for that —but when it comes to remedies, all they have to offer are the same old ineffective medicines as before. For congestion they prescribe large doses of central planning, sometimes mixed with free travel—as suggested by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) last night. Their cure for safety problems is to turn a blind eye to inefficiency and to dole out ever larger subsidies. The arguments advanced in support of this approach are specious and the motives behind it transparent.

The most that the Opposition can claim is that as our transport problems are the result of economic growth under a Labour Government there would have been no growth and thus no problems, but that logic will not commend itself to the House. The remedies proposed by the Opposition are quack remedies. They were inappropriate and ineffective 10 years ago, and age has improved neither their attraction nor their charm.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 210, Noes 305.

Division No. 79] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*

Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House expresses its deep concern at the transport tragedies of the last two years of the 'Herald of Free Enterprise', King's Cross, Clapham, Lockerbie, the M1 air disaster and the daily toll of deaths and injuries on our roads, and extends its sympathy to all those affected; applauds the Government's determination that safety and security must remain paramount, and welcomes the urgent steps it has taken to that end; congratulates the Government for bringing about an economic revival which has resulted in record levels of investment in roads and railways, and for recognising that the only way to provide customers with an efficient and safe public transport system is to set demanding objectives for quality of service and performance; welcomes the Government's record of approving every investment scheme put to it by British Rail and London Regional Transport, and its radical proposals to extend the public transport system in London; congratulates the Government for having recognised the limitations of central planning; and calls on the Opposition to acknowledge the legacy of neglect and under-investment which this Government inherited.

Science and Scientific Research

7.16 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the Government's failures properly to support Britiain's science base, to secure adequate time in the science curriculum and to overcome the crisis in the supply of science teachers, to stem the loss of so many of our ablest scientists by giving teachers in higher education adequate status, pay and research resources, to increase or even to sustain planned levels of expenditure on the science budget after 1989, and to provide the organisation and funding needed to tackle the vital problems of the global environment, the quality of life, and the technological competitiveness of British industry.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Straw: Science is central to the quality of life in Britain and to our survival as a leading industrial nation. But we spend less of our national income on science, as other countries spend more. We have fewer scientists and engineers. We value and honour them less than do other countries. The consequences are stark.

The sharpest decline of all in our ability to compete with other nations has occurred in our overseas trade in science-based goods. In 1979, we ran a surplus on such trade of over £3 billion. By 1987, it had turned into a deficit of £2 billion. Last year—in one year—the deficit had trebled to over £6·5 billion.

The distinguished American economist Robert Solow won the 1987 Nobel prize for his work on the essential link between science and technology and the growth of the economic and social welfare of a nation. His thesis has sadly and dramatically been proved by the British Government's neglect of the science base and by the dramatic relative decline in our share of world trade and in our international competitiveness.

The superficial stance of the Government is that of self-congratulation and complacency, well illustrated by their amendment today, but the reality is shown by the Secretary of State's failure to publish a long-promised policy statement on a strategy for British science and by the Government's refusal for more than three and half years to provide any Government time in the House of Commons to debate science policy.

The last Government debate on science, in June 1985, predated by over a year the Secretary of State's incarnation as Secretary of State for Education and Science. Today's debate on science, like last year's, has been provided by the Opposition out of its scarce Supply time. But the announcement of this debate brought one modest success, even before its start. It forced the Secretary of State to make up his mind about the allocations to the research councils under the science budget which were announced three months ago in the Chancellor's statement.

In a panic, the Secretary of State would have nothing to say. He rushed out a letter to Sir David Phillips, chairman of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, last Thursday, a parliamentary question was planted yesterday and a press conference was called this morning to give the news that the pain would not be quite as bad as it had been in previous years.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): If the hon. Gentleman's claim is that I announced the science allocations as a result of the pressure of the debate this evening—that is the charge, I believe—let me answer it. Last year, I announced the allocations on 13 February and the previous year I announced them on 9 February, so it is quite normal that this year I should announce them on 7 February. The fact that the hon. Gentleman uses that as an argument to attack the Government shows that his criticism of the Government's scientific policy is pettifogging, puerile and pedantic.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State is damned by what he did not say. He stood up to deny our charge but failed to do so—he simply gave a series of dates. He called his press conference this morning because we called the debate and he was forced into making his announcement today. The coincidence is too acute for even the Secretary of State to deny. That is by no means the gravamen of our charges; it is merely one of them. It is an illustration that the Government are ashamed of their own record, as is shown by the fact that they have refused to debate it for about four years.

Those of us who chart the Secretary of State's progress know that, although he might be an elegant user of language, he murders statistics when it suits him. He has claimed that there has been a substantial increase in resources for the science budget. He said that it was 26 per cent. more in real terms than in 1979-80, and 10 per cent. more than in 1988-89.

There has, we accept, and as we welcomed at the time, been an increase over previous plans for next year's science budget. Without it there would, in the words of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils last May, have been:

"very substantial reductions in the volume of scientific activity funded by the research councils".

At the time, the board said that it viewed the "relative decline"—its words—of British science with "considerable concern", and called for an injection of a minimum of almost £380 million over three years.

Even with some double-counting and juggling, the most that the Secretary of State can identify is £300 million over three years. Next year, because of prior earmarking, only £75 million will be available to the science base compared with the minimum of £97 million sought by the ABRC.

In the following years, the picture is more dismal. No wonder that the Secretary of State has been trying to hide away from debate.

The Daily Telegraph, of all papers, on the day after the public expenditure White Paper was announced, together with another press notice from the Secretary of State claiming an increase in the science budget, reported that

"cuts in the science budget"

were disclosed in the plans for the Department of Education and Science. If the Secretary of State could not even convince his friends in *The Daly Telegraph*, it is not surprising that he has wholly failed to convince the scientific community.

The point emphasised by the ABRC in its latest pronouncement is that the Secretary of State's figures imply a 3 per cent. reduction in real terms, after allowing for inflation. As the ABRC states in a document published today, those figures

"imply a significant reduction in the volume of science which the Councils can support".

Those are the figures that the Secretary of State was bragging about this morning.

In its report published today, the ABRC expresses its gratitude to the Secretary of State, and I do not blame it. One of the worst aspects of the Government's parsimonious record on science is the way in which the scientific community has been browbeaten into a belief that funding will—in the fashionable jargon—have to exist at a "steady state", in which the horizons and expectations of the science community have been lowered.

Set against last year's promise of real decline, this year's budget has come as a disproportionate relief.

In its May 1988 document, the ABRC reported that the United Kingdom's share of world scientific output and influence was declining. It said that this

"was largely because UK output".

of scientific endeavour, as measured by data on publications and citations,

"had remained fairly constant at a time when the world total has increased significantly."

The Secretary of State's advisory board said:

"Some countries—notably United States of America, France and West Germany—have increased scientific output and then maintained their world share whilst Japan has markedly improved on its low share."

At best, this latest budget and announcements will simply maintain the slow, relative decline in Britain's science base. The science budget is only one part of overall Government investment in research. Last February the *British Medical Journal* reported that

"as a percentage of gross domestic product, Britain already spends less than all other countries belonging to the OECD, and is spending less as other countries spend more."

The Government are typically self-congratulatory about their record over the past 10 years, but it is a poor record compared with that of other countries.

The Government have failed to understand that if we want to keep up with other countries, let alone beat them, we must put an increasing share of gross domestic product —of national income—into science, not a static or declining share. The figures show that, taking increases in national income spent on research in 16 countries since 1978, Britain's increase is twelfth. Its increase is only half that of France and one quarter that of Japan. No wonder that an ever-growing percentage of equipment used in British science laboratories is made abroad—usually in Japan.

The wild claims of the Secretary of State contrast with the figures issued by the Cabinet Office which show that total research expenditure by civil Departments, excluding the research councils, is down from £1,004 million in the early 1980s to £933 million in 1989-90, at 1985-86 prices. They show that total civil research spending is down from £2,217 million to £2,158 million. Separate analyses from the Cabinet Office show that between 1986-87 and 1990-91 there would be a 6 per cent. decline in Government investment in civil research and development, while our gross domestic product was expected to grow by 8 per cent. The author of the BMJ article concluded that

"objective indicators show that British basic science is in decline",

and that

"most scientists whom he met considered the main cause of the decline to be the decline in government funding for research".

In early March, the Government will host an international conference on the global environment. A further speech from the Prime Minister about how green she is is promised. We welcomed the sudden conversion of the Prime Minister to matters environmental and her stated support for basic science after years of neglect under this Government. However, like many outside organisations we are healthily sceptical about the reality of the Government's commitment to the environment, especially when it is set against the £30 million cut in the Agricultural and Food Research Council's budget, the 120 jobs shortly to be cut in the Natural Environment Research Council's projects, and the switch in research resources from Wales to the south of England.

Many involved with research into the global environment, in which there has been some improvement in investment, are sceptical about the Government's record. For example, the United Kingdom stratospheric ozone review group, in its second report, argued that Britain has failed to take advantage of the lead given by the British Antarctic Survey's discovery in 1985 of a hole in the ozone layer. It said:

"the promotion and proper resourcing of fundamental research in this area of major environmental concern has been quite inadequate."

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) will deal in more detail with research into the global environment. I shall describe the state of the paleoecology research unit at University College, London, which my hon. Friend and I visited earlier today. Its condition neatly encapsulates the imbalance and lack of strategy behind Government science policy.

The work of the unit is goal-driven, applied research about acid rain, covering the history, cause, rate and extent of lake acidification in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia. For this, the unit's officials make plain that they have been "very well funded" by the Department of the Environment, the Royal Society and the NERC, with total support in excess of £1 million.

However, in parallel with the increase in applied research funding, the unit says:

"the pure research base required to develop basic techniques for the future has all but disappeared . . . There has been a continued cutting away of infrastructure, especially of technical staff."

It is exceptionally difficult to keep highly motivated and highly skilled research staff together when such staff have such incredible insecurity. Only one person—the director of the unit, Dr. Rick Batterbee—has security of tenure. It goes on to say that

"the availability of such staff is the only means of servicing applied research problems."

The unit goes on to say that

"it is utterly demoralising to be faced year after year with internal cuts and savings targets."

Most serious of all, no one in this unit is now engaged on curiosity-led pure research to develop new techniques for the applied research of the future. *[Interruption.]* I think that the Secretary of State is muttering that the purpose of this unit is to do applied research. Yes, but it could not be doing applied research today unless the same people had done pure research yesterday, and it now has nobody to do the pure research into new techniques for measuring, for example, acidification in lakes by which we may find some solution to the problem of acid rain for the future.

Moreover, the income generated by contracts, by applied research, is now having to be used to subsidise teaching and other basic running costs of the institution. This undermining of the basis of pure science research arises partly from the increased calls on the science budget, the switch towards applied reseach—the switch, for example, to research into the global environment and into

[Mr. Straw]

AIDS, which has to be paid for out of the science budget —and from the fact that relative price inflation is higher in high-tech areas than in the general economy. But it arises also from the squeeze in the core funding of universities —something that the Secretary of State never takes into account when he congratulates himself on the general increase in funding in the science budget, through the squeeze on the dual funding system, which is supposed to support the laboratories, equipment, technicians and core academic staff of our science base.

This year's public expenditure White Paper announced, in paragraph 42, that the Government now intend to pursue in, the university sector,

"a separation between funding for teaching and funding for research".

The Government have also announced some inter-disciplinary research centres and has encouraged the University Grants Committee to pursue subject-based reviews such as the Edwards review on physics and the Stone report on chemistry, with the consequence that some universities may end up with neither chemistry nor physics departments.

Two years ago the ABRC published recommendations for a strategy for science, which gave one view—its view —about the future course of science policy, including the controversial recommendations for the categorisation of universities into research, teaching, and research and teaching institutions. A response from the Government —their own policy for science—was promised by the Secretary of State last year. That is what he told us in the debate on 29 February. Even as late as November he was telling his Cabinet colleagues that the document would be published at the end of last year. Now the public expenditure White Paper tells us that it is not expected to be published at least until the summer.

I ask the Secretary of State to give the reason for this delay. Is it, as I understand it, because of a serious conflict between the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State over the direction of science policy?

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): He has not won that one yet.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend says that he has not won one yet. The conflicts between him and the Prime Minister and her policy unit are notorious.

If that is not the reason for the delay, what accounts for the extraordinary limbo in which science strategy now finds itself? Why has the Secretary of State broken the undertaking that he gave to this House last year to publish a policy for science during the course of 1988?

The Secretary of State must not delude himself about the state of our universities. When the head of a well-funded research unit like the one at University College London spoke of a situation being utterly demoralising he spoke for the whole of the university community. Many good academics are simply voting with their feet, as are many recruits. There is a brain drain. Of course we accept that that is difficult to quantify, but the study published by the Royal Society and the Fellowship of Science and Engineering Policy Studies Unit in 1987 on the migration of scientists and engineers to and from the United Kingdom said that, although quantitatively there were similar flows across the Atlantic, qualitatively the picture was very different. The net loss of talent was regarded as having an adverse effect on British research, particularly in universities.

If the Secretary of State requires more evidence, let me quote from the *New York Times*, which on 22 November published a major article entitled

"British Brain Drain Enriches U.S. Colleges".

It said:

"In the last five years perhaps 200 British professors, driven by hard times in the British higher education system and enticed by irresistible financial and scholarly opportunities in the United States, have weathered the pain of moving themselves and their families across an ocean and settling in a strange terrain.

The British brain drain began early this decade but has become a hemorrhage in the last five years, and many of the emigrants blame the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Government for the exodus."

The author goes on to say:

"They are part of a migration that may be the largest single influx into this country from a single source since Jewish professors were forced to leave Germany and Austria in the 1930's."

The article quotes David Cannadine, a Cambridge historian, who went to Columbia university in September. *[Interruption.]* The Under-Secretary seeks to trivialise the brain drain by saying that that man had an American wife.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): He has an American wife.

Mr. Straw: The Under-Secretary seeks to trivialise the brain drain by saying that he has an American wife. Yes, he does have an American wife, and since the Under-Secretary of State raises that matter I should say that for five years Mr. Cannadine carried on at the University of Cambridge trying to maintain his scholarship and his interest at that university, and he will say, as will many others, that he has been forced to leave because of lack of opportunity in this country. What the Under-Secretary needs to do is not just to make cheap remarks like that but to look to the reality of the brain drain and a serious shift of people of quality across the Atlantic.

If the hon. Gentleman does not believe that, let him look at the figures for vacancies for professorial posts. Recent studies, including one by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, reported that 36 per cent. of key professorial posts were vacant. Moreover, there are many anecdotes from heads of institutions to suggest that, whilst in the end they accept what is offered, the quality of many people appointed to senior posts is significantly lower than they would have wished.

All that is confirmed by the Secretary of State's own adviser, Sir David Phillips, who said that Great Britain contributes more scientists and engineers to the United States' technical work force than almost all other European countries put together, and by Sir George Porter, who, in his lecture last year, said:

"We are particularly well-endowed with such bright young people in this country and their loss is the saddest and most deplorable result of the philosophy of the present time"

of this Government. We recall that only eight months ago Sir George Porter said:

"The most tangible evidence of third-word science is the early preparation and export of outstanding scientists and of the production of scientific works."

Sir George added:

"We in this country seem well prepared to join the third world of science."

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the most important incentives to remain in Britain is a low tax rate comparable to that of other countries? If he seeks to redress the brain drain that he describes, will he support further reductions in tax in Britain?

Mr. Straw: Most British academics are so poorly paid that they do not get into the higher tax brackets. Moreover, what has happened to the brain deain in this decade is proof, if ever it were needed, that relative tax rates have nothing to do with the flight from British universities to the United States. As the tax rates have gone up, the flight from this country has increased. *[Interruption.]* If there is any correlation, it is the reverse.

Central to the problem of recruiting and retaining the best is the issue not of tax rates but of university pay. On simple grounds of national self-interest, let alone the clearest grounds of justice, university teachers have an overwhelming case. Every other group of university employees and every other public sector group has had a pay rise in 1988-89 but not university academics. The consequence is that their pay lags 20 per cent. behind their comparators.

The *Financial Times* reported today, however, that the Government were likely to reject the claim from the Association of University Teachers and the call from the union and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for further funding. Will the Government let the claim fester, or will they take action to settle it? If the Government's record on funding academic science is so wonderful, why are our science-based universities unable to find the minimum funds to pay the increase which they accept is necessary?

Without a supply of well qualified science students, this country will slip into that third world of science of which Sir George Porter spoke so eloquently. Once again the Secretary of State's attitude to science in the curriculum and to the supply of science teachers is complacent neglect. Of course, we know what he will say. What matters is what he does or has not done. He has rejected the advice of his own expert science working party. He has downgraded science in the national curriculum. He has created a two-tiered science curriculum which, for those following single science, will snuff out the chance of a scientific-based education and training beyond 16. By rejecting the broadening of A levels, as recommended by his committee under Professor Higginson, he has snuffed out the chance of many more students taking science at a higher level.

The Association for Science Education was correct in saying that the Secretary of State's proposals for two-tier science would cut off significant numbers of students from science-related jobs and undermine our competitiveness even further.

Worse, the Secretary of State is downgrading science in schools for the least acceptable reason: that there are growing shortages of teachers. He is unwilling to take effective measures, such as paying teachers more, to deal with the shortages.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): On the requirement of finding teachers in these disciplines, will the hon. Gentleman add that regional pay negotiations should be paramount?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman should read the recommendations of the interim advisory committee last year which, in discussing the problems of subject shortages, ruled that out.

The wastage of teachers is chilling. Three out of 10 people who qualify fail to enter teaching in the following year; four in 10 who enter teaching leave within five years. Even on the Secretary of State's wildly optimistic assessment of teacher shortages, by 1995 there will be a 5 per cent. shortfall of mathematics teachers, a 14 per cent. shortfall of physics teachers and an 18 per cent. shortfall of chemistry teachers. The Secretary of State knows that the shortages exist. That is why he has insulated his favoured city technology colleges by allowing their teachers to be paid more than they would get elsewhere in the local authority sector, but he has prevented any general increase in teachers' pay beyond the rate of inflation by the cash limit which he has imposed upon the recommendations of the interim advisory committee.

We have to add to the teacher shortages, which will deny many children a decent education, and to the underfunding of academic pay the prospect of student loans. They will plainly deter students from following the rigour and uncertainty of an academic career in favour of the richer rewards of the City or accountancy.

As a highly developed nation we should have the wit to allow the pursuit of science for its own sake because knowledge and education are good and because so many scientific advances with direct application today have been derived from scientists being permitted the space and time to follow a hunch. DNA, electricity, X-rays, penicillin, nuclear energy, radio and television, electronics, photography, sound recording, quantum mechanics, transistors, super conductors and lasers were all discovered unexpectedly, sometimes by accident, by scientists engaged in pure research.

It is on the foundation of pure research and of basic science that applied research development has to be built. At the turn of the year the deputy chief executive of British Aerospace said that there has to be a major decline in research and development to stop the decline in medium and low technology business; the *Financial Times* has complained of a declining science base; the head of venture research in BP has proclaimed that in today's world stagnation in science investment can only lead to oblivion. Einstein wrote in 1936:

> "Intellectual decline brought on by a shallow materalism is a far greater menace to the survival of a society than numerous external foes who threaten its existence with violence."

There is no materialism more shallow than that of the Governmment or the Secretary of State. The Government's science policy, in so far as they have one, is for stagnation. We do not need stagnation; we need imagination. We do not need shallow materialism; we need vision. Above all, we need a comprehension that we will have a decent future tomorrow only if we invest in it today.

7.44 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"applauds the steps taken by the Government to sustain and improve still further the strength and quality of science in the United Kingdom, noting in particular: the inclusion of science as part of the new national curriculum, measures to

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

improve the supply of science teachers in schools, recent evidence that eminent scientists are returning to this country, the 26 per cent. real terms increase in the science budget since 1979, and the allocation of extra funds for research to tackle problems of the global environment, to improve the quality of life and to underpin the technological competitiveness of British industry."

It is a supreme irony that the Opposition should have chosen to debate the support for science and scientific research on the very day, planned some time ago, when I have announced the allocation of an extra £300 million to the research councils and other bodies. In the two years in which I have been responsible for this part of the expenditure of my Department I have always announced the allocation in the first fortnight of February. Today happens to be in the first fortnight of February. To begin to mount his attack upon our policy on that basis set the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) off on the wrong foot straight away. When I interrupted him, his arguments did not improve. They remained pettifogging, pedantic and puerile.

What I announced bears repeating. The science budget in 1989-90 will be £115 million, or 16 per cent. higher than it is this year. Since the Government came into office, they have increased the science budget by over 26 per cent. in real terms. These are very substantial sums of money. It is this record that the Opposition are attacking. When they were last in office, between 1975-76 and 1979-80, they did not increase the science budget in real terms by a single penny. Yet we have had the attack which the hon. Member for Blackburn has launched on us.

As hon. Members know, I depend upon the Advisory Board for the Research Councils for advice on the size, composition and allocation of the resources announced today. The ABRC is chaired by Sir David Phillips, to whom the hon. Gentleman referred. He is an eminent scientist in his own right in cell research and, like the whole board, is well known for taking an independent view. Sir David reported the board's view to me in the following terms:

"We were delighted by the substantial increases in the Government's plans for the Science Budget and greatly encouraged by what you had to say about the importance to the nation of maintaining excellence in basic and strategic science."

He also said:

"This year's PES settlement provides an excellent foundation for the development of UK science."

Others too have commented favourably. Even Professor Noble of Save British Science expressed his agreement with the board's view that the extra money would do much to raise morale in the scientific community.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): If the commitment is so profound, will the Secretary of State explain why, for the following two years, there is a real reduction in the budget in the Government's expenditure figures produced only weeks ago?

Mr. Baker: I expected that question because I got it at the press conference this morning. The simple answer is that I was asked to increase, as I have done, the actual science budget by some £350 million over the next three years. I have increased the base. I will receive further advice on the requirements for the next two years. I will receive additional advice from the ABRC and others. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that various proposals will be put to me and that I shall put them to my colleagues. He must wait to see in a year's time how well I fare. I assure him that the commitment of the Government is absolute and complete. This is a tremendous increase in real terms in the amount of money.

That leads me to another point. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is falling into the mistake which the Opposition Front Bench always makes. The Opposition are preoccupied with input. Their reaction is that we only get good science by putting in more and more money. They are considering the input all the time. I have said already that we recognie that we have to have a substantial investment in the scientific base for laboratories, equipment and the retention of good research. I shall come to the brain drain later.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): On the subject of inputs, has my right hon. Friend noticed that on this Opposition Supply day, on a subject on which the Opposition presumably place a great deal of importance, there are no more than eight Labour Back Benchers present in the Chamber plus one Liberal, and they are almost outnumbered by those on the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr. Baker: It shows their fleeting and transitory interest in this matter.

I would like to deal not just with the inputs but with what all this money is buying, because I have to justify this expenditure against competing expenditure claims from other Departments. I remind the House of some of the outstanding scientific achievements over the last few years. The Science and Engineering Research Council, in its work in astronomy, leads the world. Its superb new telescopes—a millimetre wave telescope in Hawaii and an optical telescope in La Palma—are now probing deeper and deeper into space. United Kingdom particle physicists, supported by SERC, contributed to the discovery of the W and Z bosons in 1983, which established the unification of two of the fundamental forces of nature. This is absolutely world-lead science into particle physics and into physics itself, which is often called the queen of sciences.

Then there is nuclear magnetic resonance, and the House will know of the success we have had in this area and of the outstanding work that has been done in our laboratories. The Oxford enzyme group has developed high field spectrometers in collaboration with Oxford Instruments, and Oxford Instruments has been able to capture a large proportion of the world markets for high field magnets required for commercial NMR machines.

When I visited Nottingham university a few weeks ago I was told that Nottingham and Aberdeen universities both get £1 million a year from their royalties on earnings as a result of NMR research. Our scientists at Cambridge —this is probably one of the most significant breakthroughs—have over the past five years done pioneering work on protein engineering, resulting in the successful design of novel proteins. I am advised that they have enormous potential implications for new forms of therapy as well as for non-medical applications.

Can I say how this extra money is going to be spent? The first requirement I see for this fund is that there should be concentration on basic and strategic science. Near market research should be funded more and more by the private sector. My concern is with the science base, with

the excellence of science which produces that sort of breakthrough, world-lead science. To talk in terms of British science being in the second division is absolutely absurd; in area after area it is not.

To reinforce the science base I have allocated a further £49 million to the new interdisciplinary research centres over the next three years. This will increase the number of IRCs to 17, covering areas of science such as high temperature super-conductivity, animal genome research and surface science.

Mr. Straw: It was Sir George Porter, the president of the Royal Society, who said that British science was slipping into the third world. Is the Secretary of State describing Sir George Porter's claim as absurd?

Mr. Baker: I said that there was a danger of that happening. I actually think that there is little danger of this happening because of the excellence one sees in British science. When I visit other countries—and I will come back to the brain drain in a moment—the attraction of research units in this country is very considerable and is pulling back a lot of people from other countries. I will come back to that later.

Can I stress the importance of the initial "I" of "IRC". What is striking about research now is that when I go round medical laboratories I find not only doctors doing research; I find a whole range of disciplines: geneticists, molecular biologists, physicists, research chemists and psychologists. Much of today's research only hangs together because of its interdisciplinary nature.

It is also necessary to exploit in full the many new and existing scientific opportunities to which the ABRC has drawn attention. I am providing over £85 million over three years to key directed programmes for research recommended by the board. They include, for example, the search for the constituent elements of the human genome. This is the genetic chain which will unravel the genetic mysteries of life. Secondly, they include a major international programme to study the influence of the oceans on world climate. These programmes touch all our lives in one way or another.

I have been especially concerned to increase the funding of basic curiosity-driven research. Such work is absolutely fundamental, because when investing in scientific research we cannot know with any certainty whether it will be successful. We have to provide a background: a sufficient number of laboratories, institutions and teams of people to draw upon. However, no one can ever be sure which group will make the breakthrough. Therefore, in the money I have announced today, I am glad to say that we have restarted the Royal Society's small grants scheme, which will help in funding individual small projects, and we are funding a 25 per cent. increase in the Royal Society's research fellowship schemes, which support some of our outstanding and particularly young scientists, people in their late 20s and early 30s. In addition, we are increasing the number of research studentships which the three research councils, AFRC, MRC and SERC, can award.

The Government is earmarking new money—and the hon. Gentleman pushed this aside—for major national programmes, such as research to deal with the scourge of AIDS. This is additional money. I have also earmarked money to support the particle physics work at CERN in Switzerland.

The allocation allows for the reorganisation of the research council institutes themselves. They have been pressing these plans for some time, and I have allocated £37 million over the next three years.

I would now like to come to the global environment and research on oceans and climate. The funds which I have allocated today represent a very substantial increase indeed in global environment research. Britain is making an outstanding contribution to this. We have a unit called the British Antarctic Survey, which is in the forefront of world science. It was this group of scientists, operating from the Antarctic bases, which identified the hole in the ozone layer in 1985-86. As a result of this, we have decided to build upon this work. The House will know that last year I invested in the new ship, the "James Clark Ross." This year there will be a new gravel airstrip and a larger aircraft to take the scientists out to the ice floes of Antarctica. Britain is making a significant world contribution. We should all recognise, as I am sure Labour Members do, how outstanding this work is.

I have said that I am providing extra funds for the survey this year, but the range of global environmental research goes beyond Antarctica. It covers truly global matters: atmospheric circulation, the movement of the oceans around the world, the water cycle, the chemical fluxes. All of these different matters are covered. It also covers more local and regional phenomena such as acid rain, deforestation, pollution of regional seas and soil infertility and erosion.

I emphasise the international nature of this. One cannot do this sort of research alone. This country is involved in one group after another. First, there is the universities global atmospheric project, which is developing global climate models. I apologise to the House for these long, technical titles, but they do actually describe the work rather well. Next, there is the biochemical ocean flux study. This study is examining the transfer of carbon from the atmosphere, the excessive amount of carbon in the atmosphere which is causing the greenhouse effect. It is transferred through the surface of the sea into the various organisms, which put on body weight and then die and drop to the seabed. This is a process of transferring carbon from the atmosphere to the seabed. We simply do not know enough about this process. I have explained it in very broad terms. I have to explain it in terms that even Opposition Members will understand. This is a major study of course, involving, other countries.

Then there is the world ocean circulation experiment. Again, that is connected with the world climate research programme. Then there is the ocean drilling project, which NERC is involved in. All of these are major international projects.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The weak point of the Minister's argument is the connection between the matters to which he is referring and actual technological application. Most of the nuclear magnetic resonance machinery in our hospitals is imported from America. Will the Secretary of State assure the House that at least the order for the ship which he is proposing to commission for the British Antarctic Survey will be placed in a British shipyard?

Mr. Baker: That is for the NERC to decide. I understand that it is assessing bids for that order at the moment. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would not put

[Mr. Baker]

down the British scientific instruments industry, as quite a lot of NMR magnets are made in Britain. Perhaps he should talk about those a bit more instead of trying to say that equipment is always imported. We have a strong scientific instrument industry, although inevitably there is a considerable amount of international research.

The hon. Member for Blackburn made great play of the brain drain. He said that there is a substantial flow of bright, intelligent scientists away from Britain. The Royal Society report last year found it difficult to show that there was very much of a brain drain. Indeed, the *Financial Times*, which follows such matters very closely, called it a brain trickle.

Only last week, the chairman of the University Grants Committee, Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, who has been conducting a large survey on earth sciences, said that in earth sciences alone he has been notified that 13 senior ex-patriots—seven of professorial rank—are coming back to Britain this year. The chairman of the Scientific Engineering Research Council, Professor Mitchell, sent me a list of some 16 senior research scientists—11 of whom are professors—who are coming back to Britain this year. Therefore, some quality scientists are coming back. One would expect that because the base is interesting and there is an attractive climate for scientific research in Britain.

It is not just a question of British scientists coming back to Britain; many overseas scientists wish to work here. Only this morning I was at a presentation of awards ceremony and I met a young American petroleum scientist who is working at Heriot Watt university. He explained to us why he was here. He had been offered a job by Texas university but he refused and chose Heriot Watt on the strength of the scientific base of that very good university and its particular strength in petroleum sciences. Therefore, the picture is much rounder than the impression given by the hon. Member for Blackburn. There is a flow both ways. What I find so attractive about the reports from the research councils is the fact that people of quality are now coming back. That is very important.

I shall now reply to some of the other points raised by the hon. Member for Blackburn. He asked me to reply to the ABRC document. His article in *The Times* yesterday summarised his speech rather well. Indeed, it was rather better than his speech. It gave me an idea of what he was going to say and it was an interesting article. I wonder whether as a result of writing an article in *The Times* the hon. Gentleman will resign or leave the Opposition Front Bench. Last week, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was sacked within 24 hours of working for Mr. Rupert Murdoch's televison station. But apparently members of the Shadow Cabinet do not have to leave if they write for Mr. Murdoch's newspaper. That is an example of the inconsistency in the behaviour and practices of the Opposition.

In answer to some of the hon. Gentleman's specific points about the way forward, I have already dealt with several of the matters that the ABRC's strategic advice document asked me to deal with last year. It asked for greater funds and we have provided that this year in the £300 million that I announced today. It also asked for greater selectivity in research so that it could concentrate money on some of the better units. It recommended dividing the universities into R, T and X categories. I rejected that in a speech I made in Oxford last October, but we wish to achieve greater selectivity by different means. It also asked us to concentrate and improve the management of our research councils. We are doing that and they will receive £37 million in this settlement.

Later this year I envisage bringing out a paper reporting on all those developments. It will also deal with matters that are still under discussion, the proposal to divide research and teaching in universities so that we know how much is being spent on research and how much is being spent on teaching, not only in sciences but throughout the universities. It will also deal with proposals about the future organisation of the research councils, which raise very important matters indeed. The past few years have seen considerable changes in the organisation of science and we should be considering again the organisation within Government and the organisation of the research councils.

Mr. Straw: Since the Secretary of State promised that the policy document would be produced last year, and would be available by last November at the latest, what accounts for the delay of eight or nine months?

Mr. Baker: Several of the matters with which I have already dealt. The hon. Gentleman could not have been listening to me. Part and parcel of the delay are the extra funding, the selectivity of R, T and X, the organisation of the research councils, the separation of research and teaching in universities and one outstanding matter—how much money should be transferred from the UGC to the research councils, and current proposals about the reorganisation of the research councils. Those important matters need to be considered.

In conclusion, since 1979 there has been a substantial rise in real resources of 26 per cent. in the basic science budget. As I said, that compares with no increase whatsoever when the Labour party was in power. There was absolutely no increase in real terms between 1976 and 1980.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Baker: There was an increase in the very first year until the IMF came knocking on the door and the economic policies—

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman should look at the figures from 1976 when the IMF said that there should be no more spending. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to say that there was an increase in real terms, I say to him, look what you did to the universities when you were in office. You cut the spending in the universities—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Secretary of State must not hold me responsible for such things.

Mr. Baker: You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had no hand in such villainy and destruction. It was them. They did it. They cut the spending on the universities by 18 per cent. in real terms. Where do all the scientists work? They work in the universities. The Opposition cut university spending by 18 per cent. and we have increased it by 17 per cent. in real terms. The reason is that we run the economy successfully

and we can afford it. They ran the economy hopelessly and as a result spending on everything, including good things, was cut.

It was said earlier that people are not attracted by tax rates and that people will not come back. Many people will be coming back to a Britain with a standard rate of tax of 25p in the pound and a top rate of tax of 40p in the pound. When the Opposition left office the top rate of tax was 98p in the pound. Their present policies would take them back to it. As Conservative Members will recognise, the success which we are celebrating tonight of the increase in the science budget is based on the economic success of the country and the increased profitability of British industry which has allowed us to expand and develop the scientific base in our country. That is why the House should reject this footling motion.

8.8 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): One could comment on any specific element of the motion, but I wish to concentrate on the need for organisation and funding to tackle the vital problems of the global environment. The Government's failure in this respect is highlighted by their attack on environmental research in Wales. The Secretary of State's tributes to the success of scientists and research workers are well deserved, but they come ill from the representative of a Government who have failed to support that work. At present we are experiencing the asset-stripping of environmental research in Wales. That is bad for Wales, bad for the United Kingdom and bad for the international community. It gives the lie to any suggestion that the Government have any real interest in scientific research or in the environment.

In Wales we deplore the Government's neglect. I will give three illustrations of our worries. Two of them are important in an international context as well as in Wales. Research Vessel Services at Barry and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology research station at Bangor have shared the experience of seeing their share of any research council money decline during the years of Conservative government. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I have failed to get sensible answers from Ministers, especially about the situation at Barry, or any answer at all from the Prime Minister. Written answers today show something of the budgetary decline that we are experiencing. In 1979 Bangor took 0·69 per cent. of the budget. By last year it was 0·54 per cent. and the Minister is not sure how much it will be this year. In the case of Barry, it is 0·44 per cent. of the budget. By 1988 it was down to 5·88 per cent. and in 1989-90 it will be 5·31 per cent.

The employment of staff in those vital establishments has also shown a dramatic fall. In 1979, there were 44 full-time staff at Bangor, but that was reduced to 34 in 1988 and in 1989 there are only 26 staff. In the case of Research Vessel Services at Barry, in 1981 there were 206 staff and in 1988 the number had been reduced to 165. No significant change is expected in 1989, but it can expect some significant change as a result of the announcement made today that the services are to be closed down.

The implications for Welsh universities are dramatic. Taken together, they represent the destruction of two viable and internationally recognised centres of environmental research at a cost to Wales of reduced academic capabilities and job losses in areas of high unemployment. The university of Wales is already in a desperate financial state which is being paid for with cuts in course options, job losses and amalgamations. The establishment of the new unit at Bangor must be seen in the context of the botanical and zoological departments at that university "amalgamating" into a smaller department of biology, and the long-term plans to begin the amalgamation of departments at Bangor and Aberystwyth along the lines of the reorganisation at Cardiff. Those plans can only have the same effect of reducing student places and course options and will have effects on the scientific activities and the ethos and environment around those towns.

The head of the new biology department at the university college of North Wales complained that environmental research in Wales has now been put back to the position that it occupied in the 1950s. Is that not truly deplorable? It is now already a year since the staff of the research station at Bangor were informed that the Natural Environment Research Council was closing the station and setting up a small unit.

The situation at Bangor has unfortunate parallels with the situation in other parts of the country, such as the treatment of staff at the Institute of Marine Biology at Aberdeen. The Natural Environment Research Council decided to move the group to the Scottish marine station at Oban and prepared accommodation there costing £100,000. Months passed, but no decision was made to move the staff and in October the remaining nine staff at Aberdeen were made redundant.

At Bangor, no agreement has been signed with the university college of North Wales and there is little communication between management and staff, although promises were made. Building costs are estimated at £90,000 and will possibly reach £130,000, although the Natural Environment Research Council has only £30,000 available. The staff are becoming concerned that, because of the delays, NERC will repeat what it has done at Aberdeen and make all the staff redundant. The future —far from being a new start—is bleak for the staff and, more importantly, for environmental research.

The situation at Bangor has to be linked with that developing in Barry, where the Research Vessel Services base is also threatened with closure. Today that threat became actuality. The base was opened in 1972 with just 15 staff. The Secretary of State seems amused at that news. The announcement was made in a way typical of the Government, who announce only what they want the public to hear and when they want the public to hear it. The press heard about the future of RVS Barry at 11 am, but the staff were not told until 3 pm. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West and I are still waiting for a reply from the Prime Minister and others on these matters and, no doubt, we shall wait a long time for a satisfactory one. The decision must be changed because it is irrational and wrong.

The base employs almost 200 staff and on the vessel whose research voyages it supports there is a range of disciplines such as navigation, communications, data-logging, processing, biology, geology, geophysics and physical oceanography. Its clients include 14 British and two American universities, eight institutes and Government Departments and three American institutes. Over the years, it has developed a coherent package of ocean-going and shore-based research skills personnel and equipment, and the staff are proud of that achievement.

[Mr. Alun Michael]

Yet the Secretary of State wants to close it down. There are strategic considerations too. The vessels leaving Barry have immediate access to open water, which is not the case at Southampton, where the Government apparently wish to relocate the base. According to a written answer that I received today, the cost of creating the relevant new facility at Southampton is about £21 million over four years, at 1988-89 prices. The savings offset are assumed —only assumed—to reach £11 million. That is a waste of at least £10 million which could be given to the essential work of environmental research. I appeal to the Secretary of State and to Ministers to leave the RVS at Barry in south Wales where it is doing a good job.

Earlier, the Secretary of State claimed credit on behalf of the Government for the Antarctic survey, but he failed to mention the money being double-counted because it is in the NERC budget and ring-fenced by the Government, so it is hardly disposable income available for use in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State confirmed to me yesterday that the total cost of a major and vital refit for the RRS Discovery is about £10 million at current prices. He added:

"It will be for the NERC to determine its priorities, both in 1989 and later years, in the light of available resources." —[*Official Report*, 6 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. *464*.]

The Government are responsible for resources and the Government are responsible for the pattern of work and it is misleading and irresponsible to suggest that an outside body or quango rather than the Government is taking the decision. It is cowardice on the part of the Government not to accept responsibility for their decisions. Asked how many jobs would be shed at the NERC establishment in 1989, the Minister said that 160 posts, the majority in marine sciences, are to be shed in the financial year to March 1989. Thirty-eight staff will be made compulsorily redundant, the remainder having been shed through voluntary redundancy. The Minister said that he understands that further posts will be lost in the next financial year, although it is hoped to limit those to 60; the locations of the posts concerned are not yet known. What an admission of failure that is.

My third example is the need for research and action in respect of low-level radiation and safe means of disposal of radioactive waste. That research should be acted upon for the protection of the public. The Secretary of State for Wales, who is neither present nor represented this evening, has unaccountably decided to allow low-level radioactive waste from a local firm to be dumped on a council tip in my constituency. Previously such waste had to be taken to British Nuclear Fuels' disposal site at Drigg because safety processes were considered important. Now, without apparent justification or argument, the Secretary of State for Wales has changed his mind. I should make it clear that the firm concerned is well respected and responsible and has gone out of its way to give access to information to local authorities and other interested parties. My criticism is reserved entirely for the Secretary of State for Wales, who appears to be acting irresponsibly. He is irresponsible in ignoring the views of the local authority, which deplores his decision. The authority's reservations are based not on high-flown theory but on simple practicalities and common sense. It fears that the many scavengers who gain unauthorised entry to the refuse site—including children —may be affected and that the parameters for low-level radioactive waste disposal could be exceeded in tissue handled by children. It believes that special disposal procedures should be adopted and fears that the health risk to employees could lead to a serious situation arising if the work force refused to handle the waste. It also points out the need to provide adequate monitoring of every load arriving at the tip. Is the Welsh Office prepared to meet the cost as we expect and believe that it should?

Those are just three examples. One could also draw attention to early-day motion 271 and the information given by a former US submarine commander about discharges of radioactive coolant into British waters. Questions asked have received no proper answers and there seems to be no intention on the part of the Government to undertake proper research or to tell people the truth about these matters.

What a year we have already seen in 1989. 1988 was bad enough. We saw a year of mounting concern over the international effects of a series of shocking incidents of pollution and bad waste disposal. Now in 1989 we appear to be set for an even worse picture. We are about to see an expansion of the disposal of toxic waste at ReChem in Torfaen. The plant has long caused immense local opposition, passionately voiced by my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) and other Welsh Members of Parliament. We are now in a year when the Water Bill threatens our environment, health and water supply. It is a disastrous Bill, inadequately supported either with words or resources. We are also in a year in which the carriage of radioactive material in aeroplanes has caused outrage.

Why will the Government not accept their responsibilities to ensure that environmental research is well funded, effective, well directed and acted upon? This Government are afraid of research, afraid of the facts, afraid of exposure and afraid to admit that they do not care about the environment locally, nationally or globally. They are willing to accept praise for the success of our scientists, but not willing to give them the support, encouragement and resources that they need. The Government do not care about those who work to protect our environment or, ultimately, about the interests of the British public.

8.20 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): The governance of great countries such as this is always and inevitably an immensely complex and difficult task. No one who has been in the House for any length of time would expect the Government to admit anything other than that at times they make errors of judgment or mistakes and that at times they do things that are not in the national interest. That is what this House is here to check and what we are about.

However, when I listen to speeches such as the one that we have just heard from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)—which was interesting in its way—my reaction is that neither he nor many of his colleagues ever seems to allow that over a broad area of Government activity the Government may possibly get it right some of the time, in some places, on some issues— [HON. MEMBERS: "And wrong."] Yes and wrong, but the general tenor of many speeches is that the Government never do anything right at any time. The House is diminished by speeches that never make any allowance for reality.

In the whole sphere of Government, if there is any one area in which it is possible to make serious, responsible and measured criticisms of Government—such criticisms go way back through successive Governments as far as science is concerned and have been made ever since I have been in the House—without antagonising Conservative Members by sweeping condemnations of everything that the Government do, it is in science. Therefore, I very much regret that the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth and others who speak like him never seem to acquire the minimum degree of responsibility that would so enhance our debates and make them relevant to the profound issues that we should be addressing.

I very much agree with the views of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about Professor Sir George Porter, who is an old friend of mine. I have great respect for him as a scientist—and who would not? He is president of the Royal Society and stands on a pinnacle of science, recognised not only in this country, but throughout the world. The magnificent structure of British science upon which so much world science has been built remains profoundly and basically in pretty good shape. Of course, it can be improved and could always have more resources. However, I should be astonished if in 10, 15 or 20 years' time an hon. Member were to say that in the past two decades we have had no Nobel prizes, that there have been no new fellows of the Royal Society and that no outstanding new British science has appeared on the horizon to lift the plateau upon which so much world science is built above its present level. I do not believe that such an argument is credible. For that reason, I fully support my right hon. Friend and disagree with the analysis, even if it was conditional, of Sir George Porter.

It seems that sometimes the Opposition are more interested in the circulation of dogma than in the circulation of Carbon.

My purpose this evening is limited. I wish to consider the scope of the analysis of science policy, permitted by the expenditure White Paper—all 19 volumes of it—which I have been looking at this afternoon. I want to ask whether the analysis of science and research in that expenditure White Paper is balanced and whether we in Parliament have the necessary material to facilitate an analysis of the nation's science policy and priorities. I suggest that it is an area for improvement.

I warmly welcome the increased funding in real terms which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a few months ago and which was emphasised this evening by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. Naturally, I share the Opposition's hope that that will continue and that it will not be cut. If the success of the economy is based on science, the success of our science is, in the long run, based on the success of the economy. There is a symbiosis between the two that the House must never neglect.

The Opposition's motion seems fatally flawed by its excessive use of the ill-defined word "adequate". What is "adequate"? We talk about adequate this, adequate that and adequate the other. The late President Kennedy once summed up the argument beautifully when he said that enough is a function of what else is important. It is that consideration of priorities which neither the Opposition motion nor, in frankness and fairness, the Government amendment addresses. Both are deficient and both fail to suggest—

Mr. Straw: What we mean by "adequate" is the test that the hon. Gentleman used this time last year in a debate on British science, when he quoted the conclusions of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, that the then expenditure plans

"'do not provide the means to move our nation's scientific capability towards the 21st century'.".—[*Official Report*, 29 February 1988; Vol. 128, c. 740.]

The ABRC was right then and, in my judgment, it is right now.

Sir Ian Lloyd: That may be so, but I should like to see a more precise definition of "adequate" over a much broader range of considerations. We should be able to make judgments between, for example, defence and civil research; nuclear and non-nuclear research; fundamental science and the application of science; pure chemistry and biology; fibreoptics and semi-conductors; metrology or measurement and other claims on the scientific budget; space science and terrestrial science; big astronomy and fundamental particle physics; and between agricultural DNA and human DNA. As I understand it, we cannot make such judgments now in the House of Commons.

However, can it be done? If we look at the analysis of expenditure in the latest White Paper—all 19 volumes of it—we find an interesting set of figures. Only five Departments of State are together responsible for a total of £5,178 million out of a total expenditure on research and development in the United Kingdom of £5,500 million. I repeat that five Departments are responsible for 90 per cent. of our R and D.

Let us look at how that is presented in the national expenditure analysis. The biggest is, of course, the Ministry of Defence, which spends £2,545 million. The analysis of defence expenditure in the White Paper is summarised by one line of text. There is no analysis between the R and D carried out in each of the three services which, I imagine, could have been done without disclosing secrets to the enemy, which is obviously the primary and overriding consideration in defence research. However, let us leave the question of defence because it may have special considerations.

I move now to the Department of Education and Science. It is second on the list, with a total expenditure in this area of £1,739 million. Out of the total volume, it has two pages. The Department of Trade and industry is down at £510 million. It has three pages of rather mixed analysis. I am glad to be able to say that I give the Department of Energy a clean bill of health because its £219 million on R and D enjoys a full, considered and vigorous 12-page analysis. That is an example which other Departments should be more willing to follow. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food spends £165 million, and its research and development is analysed in two paragraphs.

I put those facts before the House, because, as I said earlier, there are responsible and realistic grounds on which we can criticise the way in which we provide Parliament with information as a basis on which we can conduct these debates.

Nowhere is any attempt made to consider, describe or discuss the major departmental priorities except for energy. I believe, however, that there are a number of broader issues with which the House should deal. In a fascinating paper which was recently published in the

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

Economic and Social Research Council Newsletter 56 of January 1986, a Dr. Kenneth Prewitt of the Rockefeller Foundation said this about democracy and science:

"The question stems from a concern that the institutions of democracy may not be robust enough to contend with the range of issues being brought to the political agenda by the rapidly accelerating development of 20th century science and technology."

He went on to say:

"There is a high degree of concern, certainly in the United States"—

I believe that there is a high degree of concern here, too

"that citizens not be disenfranchised because of their scientific illiteracy in the face of a really enormously growing technical agenda".

I shall continue quoting from this paper because I believe it to be of importance and Dr. Prewitt's analysis is so outstanding. The paper said:

"Science brings truth to bear on the exercise of power. . . . When science is doing its task, sovereignty is constrained to act within the boundaries set by demonstrable facts and probable outcomes. Science puts partial but significant restraints on the exercise of power; it constrains the arbitrary decision of either the high officials or of mass opinions; it weakens the hold of ideology on opinions by demonstrating the complexity of issues, the stubbornness of the factual constraints on their solution."

I do not believe that I could have put that better myself.

That brings me to the statement in the White Paper on the response to the first report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, published in July 1987. Mention is made in the White Paper of the welcome development of a science and techology assessment office within the Cabinet Office at No. 10. The White Paper says:

"The Assessment Office will build up a picture of the relative contribution of the different R & D expenditures to the United Kingdom economy and will contribute advice on these matters, to the new, strengthened central structure."

Recently I put a series of questions to the Prime Minister asking what technology assessments had in fact been carried out by the new unit at No. 10. I received an answer telling me to refer to this document, because there I would see what it was all about. In fact, the unit has carried out no such assessment itself, but, apparently, has fulfilled its general responsibility of encouraging the other Departments of State to carry out such assessments.

Paragraph 12 of the White Paper reads:

"The Select Committee recommend that approximately one per cent. of all Government R & D expenditure should be devoted to evaluation . . . The Assessment Office will discuss with all bodies involved in the public funding of R & D the need for adequate resources"—

there is that lovely word "adequate" again—

"to be devoted to the various stages of the assessment process".

That raises a number of simple questions which I should like to leave with my right hon. Friend. One per cent. of the nation's research and development expenditure is 1 per cent. of £5,500 million, which gives the respectable sum of £55 million.

What are the technical assessments which have been carried out by the new unit at No. 10 as a result of the direct stimulus of other Government Departments? Has it been done and, if so, where? Secondly, how much has been spent directly as a result of this initiative and as a result of the statement made in the White Paper? Thirdly, have any results been published, especially in those areas outside defence where, as I understand the situation, there is no reason why such results should not be published? The entire purpose of technology assessment is to enable this House and the nation to make their judgment in such an area. I suggest that at present we are almost incapable of doing that.

I have given my right hon. Friend enough questions to answer, but I ask him finally when we should expect to reach the target figure of £55 million.

8.35 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I shall encourage the hon. Member for Havant (Sir Ian Lloyd) a little by first acknowledging that this year the Government have substantially increased the amount of money given to science. It would be foolish to do otherwise. Therefore, when looking at both the Labour motion and the amendment, one has to conclude that there is truth in both. The Labour motion is largely valid and points out the deficiencies in the Government's programme and position, but the Government's claims are also partly true, although I believe that the message from the House must be that they should not be complacent.

Like the hon. Member for Havant, before coming to a debate such as this, I go first to the general handbook provided in the House—the Government's Expenditure Plans. Interestingly, if one compares the breakdown given last month of the science budget expenditure in real terms, projected backwards and forwards—starting from a base point in this year's paper of 1982-83—one sees that, if one takes that as 100, the projection is that in the coming year for the first time since then there will be a substantial increase. We know that that was the import of the Chancellor's announcement in November. Indeed, it was reinforced by the detailed breakdown of figures this year and the Secretary of State's announcement this morning. However, we have seen that the pattern is consistently one that suggests that if we are not careful the increase will be what the Chancellor would call a blip rather than a fundamental change in direction.

As I put to the Secretary of State in my intervention, beyond the forthcoming financial year there is a tailing off in real terms—a decrease—of investment projected in the Government spending plan. I couple that expression of fact—on the basis of the Government's evidence—with a concern which stems from looking at the relative importance that we as a country still give to investment in science. Again, I follow the area of comment of the hon. Member for Havant. If one looks at what are now 21 volumes of the Government's Expenditure Plans, in the slim volume 12 which is the education and science volume, there are only a few paragraphs on science—paragraphs 57 to 70. That is the sum total of analyses of what is, in effect, the necessary base to sustain the whole of our country's economic, manufacturing, competitive, productive and future technological activity. The relatively little importance given to science is reflected in the way in which it is expressed, solely in the context of inputs of finance, in the presentation of the Government's economic programme.

That is not a politician's comment without justification. Until the announcement of the increase for the forthcoming year to £824 million—£94 million up on this year—that was the general tenor of the commentary by all eminent scientists in this country. We are spending far too little in the important places.

One could quote presidents of all the august and learned bodies, societies and associations. I shall quote one

who has not been mentioned so far—Sir Walter Bodmer, last year's president of the British Association. In the last paragraph of his presidential address in September last year he said:

"My frustration, shared I believe by most scientists, is that now when science is better placed than ever before to contribute to a better future, we are having to struggle increasingly hard to prevent a damaging decline in the government support for fundamental science and to encourage industry to increase its support in scientific research and development."

Only this morning I received an invitation from Manpower 2000, a project of the southern science and technology forum at Southampton university, to speak at a conference in April which says:

"It is no exaggeration to say that the resurgence of industry and the doubtful benefits to be gained from privatisation and modernisation of UK's basic services are wholly at risk because of the potential shortage of technically literate people needed to manage and operate them. This shortage will not be due so much to the Demographic Gap . . . as to the wholesale movement of young people away from engineering, science and maths to other less demanding disciplines."

I want briefly to refer to what seems to be the fundamental problem. I am concerned, as the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was rightly concerned, that nearly 10 years after the Government took office there is still no strategy for science in Britain. That is an extraordinary state of affairs. Even when encouraged to produce a strategy as they were in 1987 by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, and even having promised to do so, they still have not done so. I hope that the Minister will come clean and tell the House that the Government still do not have a strategy rather than making excuses. We should have had a strategy long ago. The Government are responsible for such matters and I hope that they will now produce a proper scientific strategy without further delay.

It is not only that promise which has been broken. I was looking through the *Hansard* of the other place for the day when the statement on the Health Service review was made last week. There was much criticism by peers of the fact that in that review a response was promised to the Griffiths report on community care and to the report of the Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology on priorities in medical research. I do not know whether hon. Members have yet looked at the part of the White Paper entitled "Working for Patients" which deals with that matter. There are two bland paragraphs on pages 37 and 38 on training and research. Responses were promised, but they have not been delivered. In spite of much encouragement from hon. Members and with the best expert evidence on all specific areas of science and research, we have still had an inadequate response. The Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology produced its third report of the parliamentary Session 1987-88 on priorities in medical research, making several recommendations, but that report has not yet been responded to or adequately implemented.

The same Select Committee in its first report in this parliamentary Session, 1988-89, on agricultural and food research said:

"the need for a firm commitment to agricultural and food research cannot be too strongly emphasised."

On basic research the report said:

"Scientific advances will depend on basic studies—in agriculture and food it will be essential to improve understanding of the basic biological processes underlying production . . . Basic research is a scientific investment and such an asset should be protected and used productively."

On levels of funding the Committee concluded:

"The Committee share the concern of witnesses at the effects in Government funding for agricultural research in recent years."

Later, and typically, the report says:

"Another, particularly topical, example of 'public good' research which Government must fund is that on salmonella."

If anything is now likely to receive funding, I suppose that that is. The report then says:

"The Committee do not share the Government's belief that research, once discontinued, can be easily re-started."

There have been many encouragements for the Government to act, but in reality their performance has been poor.

I shall not go at length into global environmental matters, although that is one of my interests, as the House knows, but it is sad to record that when I asked a parliamentary question in the summer about the amount of money spent on environmental protection research across the sectors the answer showed that there had been a decrease from £22·4 million at 1987-88 prices in 1985-86 to £21·3 million at the same prices in 1987-88. If we are to be taken seriously in caring for the global environment, we must demonstrate our commitment.

The substantive point about where research investment should be placed has been made. It has to be in basic research because that is the fount of all scientific progress. At the moment we are in a state of profound national scientific crisis. There is insufficient money for basic research. Nor are sufficient people being brought into science at school or university as students or teachers. Moreover, education is continually losing scientists to the private sector, whether at home or abroad. Some go abroad and some do not.

University salaries are now down to three quarters of what they were 10 years ago in real terms and we shall lose good people from our universities. Chairs are unfilled. They are being filled not by professors but by lecturers acting up in subjects that are not their speciality. There are not enough lecturers because there are not enough postgraduate students. There are not enough postgraduate students because there is more money to be gained from training in industry than from postgraduate work at university. We do not keep overseas students because they go back to their own countries with their knowledge. Britain has done less basic research for the past 10 years than ever before.

All the time the Science and Engineering Research Council directorate, for example, will not accept projects without industrial backing. But industry is not interested in results 10 years hence. Industry wants what is of interest to it in the short term. We pay for industrial development in universities which should be done by industry when we should be paying for research. What is now done may be "near market place" research—I think that that is the phrase—and it may be more strategic, but it is at the expense of basic research. The trend is clear. The figures show that in 1978-79 the division between strategic and basic research was 42 per cent. to 56 per cent. That position has now reversed and the figures are 55 per cent. to 46 per cent. That is a worrying trend which should be reversed.

Other countries do not fall into that trap. For example, Japan has a pre-competitive research element in its universities. When the ideas are far enough developed, the Government back out and industry takes over along with the competitive market. We also apply performance

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

indicators that are invalid. For example, the number of papers that a department produces, including the number of pages in a paper, is not necessarily a measure of a meritorious project. The number of chapters in a book or the number of lectures given are no evidence of the best form of research.

We also fail to fund our national research if we think money is available from the EEC. The trouble is that that is often not forthcoming and, if it is, it takes a long time to work through the bureaucracy. I say that as a pro-European, not as a critic in general terms of the Community. Therefore, the money is not forthcoming from either source.

The Government should respond with increasing urgency to the lack of funding for basic resources in universities. Industry is becoming increasingly fed up with being asked for cash, and the neglect of basic research means that only those areas in which industry is most interested are funded.

I shall give three examples before concluding. We have pretended in the past that we could do well by funding basic research sufficiently to the stage where industry could take it up. Yet the head of the Ariane space programme research group resigned after two or three years because the Government would not put in money to complete the programme. The airbus is another example of the Government blowing hot and cold so that we have lost credibility with our partners.

Perhaps the best example is the APT—the advanced passenger train, which the House will remember as the tilting train. It would increase speeds in the north and was expected to increase revenue by drawing people away from motorways, and even from airlines. Indeed, in France the equivalent train has done just that. British Rail was pushed by the Government far too hard and too quickly to produce results. The train broke down during a very premature test drive with Ministers and public relations officials on board and the Government then pulled out, although British Rail said that only another £10 million was required to finish the project as the problem was only superficial. Now one of the trains has gone to the train museum in Crewe and the rest have been scrapped.

What has happened since? Our suppliers from Sweden, ASEA, are building the trains in Sweden and the first one will be ready for delivery in the autumn. They are expected to sell well. We are likely to buy our own idea from the Swedes because we never got far enough to sell, patent or use it ourselves. Far too often we judge what we should do by what is necessary to please the City and accountants rather than going to the fundamentals of what science and research need.

I welcome the increase announced by the Government although it is worrying that there will not be the same commitment in the second and third years. But, first, science and research needs planning, and planning needs a continuity of funding. The increase needs to be sustained rather than being made available for only this year.

Secondly it is no good just funding research councils when we do not also fund our universities to the same extent.

Thirdly, and most important of all, the Government still do not appreciate, and certainly do not show that they appreciate, the skills gap, which is the most unappreciated economic crisis of all, and the lack of scientists, engineers and technologists for the future.

We know about the demography of the future, but because of underpayment of university lecturers and insufficient funding of staff in schools, and the Government's compromise that only 12 per cent. rather than 20 per cent. of the national curriculum can relate to science, these people are not likely to be available. If we do not invest in the people, we shall not have the science or research. The Government must not be complacent. They have begun to put some money into science, but very much more is needed.

8.53 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): In supporting the amendment, I want to concentrate on science in schools. Before I do that, I shall refer to an article in *The Times Educational Supplement* which quoted Sir Herman Bondi reminding the writer that the rise of the German dye industry to world prominence and the great strides subsequently made in organic chemistry occurred when there was no chemistry teaching in German schools and very little in German universities. That extreme example shows that much of the most valuable research is through application in industry meeting the demands of the market, driven by the demands of those who need to put it to work commercially in the private sector.

The Japanese electronics industry, the German petrochemical industry and the United States aerospace industry are good examples of that principle. That is why the Government are correct to increase the science research budget by 15 per cent. since 1979, and again today, and to increase total science spending by 11 per cent. since 1979 to £1·4 billion this year, yet encourage rationalisation of scientific departments in universities, to ensure that research is better targeted and to concentrate resources more effectively. It also encourages collaborative research through, for instance, the Link initiative. I understand that the Government are spending £210 million on that initiative over five years, and it should elicit from industry a pound-for-pound response of another £210 million. The project has enabled some universities to rely for as much as 30 to 40 per cent. of their income on the funds they gain from collaborative projects with industry.

It is absolutely right for the Government to say that when profit levels show a 7 to 11 per cent. return on capital for industry, and investment is up 16 per cent. as it was last year, and profitability levels are the best for 20 years, it is correct for United Kingdom private industry to fund more of its own basic research. At present, as a proportion of GNP, United Kingdom private research is only 1 per cent., or 60 per cent. less than in Germany, and a third less than in the United States and 80 per cent. less than in Japan. Incidentally, the Japanese Government's civil research and development funding is lower as a proportion of GNP than it is in the United Kingdom. That gives an indication of the strides needed from an increasingly profitable private sector in this country to improve its basic research spending.

I want to concentrate now on science in schools. Although there have been significant improvements recently in the standards achieved in science by schoolchildren, nevertheless over the long term there is a

problem which is deep-seated and even cultural. That was highlighted in a recent survey carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. The study shows that Britain's children at age 10 came 12th out of 15 countries in their scientific knowledge. In other words, at the age of 10, only a ninth of British children know what makes the moon shine—that light is reflected off the sun.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): The hon. Gentleman can have two brownie points for that.

Mr. Coombs: I am sorry, it is the other way round; the sun's light is reflected off the moon. That shows the extent of my scientific knowledge.

The survey shows that 70 per cent. of Swedish children knew that fact at age 10. At the age of 14, the British children surveyed came 11th out of 17 countries, yet by the age of 17 British children were second out of 30 countries.

The survey shows that our sixth formers are as good as those anywhere. The major problem is that only 20 per cent. of our young people go through to sixth forms, while the proportion doing so in Japan is 63 per cent. and it is 90 per cent in the United States. That is why the Government are absolutely right to concentrate their attention in framing the national curriculum on increasing the participation of children in science to the age of 16, so that they will continue with it until the age of 18,—albeit that at present about 300,000 children annually take biology GCSE, 210,000 take chemistry, and 244,000 take physics. Grades are criterion rather than norm-referenced, and the numbers of those notified as achieving A, B and C in those subjects are as high as for others. It is vital that we ensure that 100 per cent. of children up to age 16 continue with science.

It is also right of the Government to insist that balanced science forms an important part of the scientific curriculum. I am happy that, although 20 per cent. of the curriculum is allocated to children wishing to take two subjects, 12·5 per cent. of it will be accounted for by less able children following an integrated science curriculum. That type of course is more likely to be attractive and relevant to pupils of lower attainment, whom we need to attract to maintain their scientific education. Also, an integrated curriculum is, in educational terms, more rigorous. As evidence of that, I quote Professor Paul Black, chairman of the Government's assessment group, who was educational consultant to the Nuffield Chelsea Curriculum Trust:

"One of the deficiencies of the separate sciences was that pupils learned one concept of energy in physics and another in biology, and a different language again in technology. Teachers did not get their act together and left the pupils to sort it out."

That is professional criticism of the separate, three-subject science curriculum, and it is why the Nuffield co-ordinated scheme offers one of the leading integrated science curricula, trying to persuade more people to maintain their scientific education—at least to GCSE O level and, it is to be hoped, to A level. If more of them can achieve A levels, there will be a larger field of potential science teachers for the future.

The Government are right to ensure that more is done in respect of primary science. I am pleased that, over the next three years, the Government will spend £25 million extra on extra advisory teachers for primary education. It is equally vital to improve schools' industry links. One of the problems in encouraging people to take an interest in science, and to go on to engineering, is the culture gap between schools and industry. Schemes such as UVI, Trident, SATRO, and enterprise projects, all of which have been pioneered by the Government, can improve relationships between schools and industry, and thereby enhance the climate in which business and science is taught in schools, and improve their popularity.

It will be difficult to improve science standards in schools unless the problem of teacher shortages is addressed. At present, there is a shortage of 2,000 physics teachers, and about 70 per cent. of local education authorities recently notified shortages of mathematics teachers. It is not a problem that is experienced only in the United Kingdom, and it did not happen overnight. It is the result of policies stretching over the last 20 or 30 years, including the anti-industry, anti-science culture I mentioned. The Government are right to attack it with initiatives such as the teachers' career unit, which visits universities encouraging people to take up science teaching, the £1,300 per annum tax-free bursaries given to probationary science teachers, and by encouraging girls to enter science. At present, only 16 per cent. of physics graduates are women. There is encouragement also for an increase in the number of licensed teachers, which ought to attract more older scientists—who may feel that their industrial careers are at an end, but whose expertise can be applied to teaching science in schools.

The problem will not be tackled at a fundamental level, and the situation in which 34 per cent. of physics teachers who have a teaching qualification decline to enter the teaching profession will not be resolved unless we improve the archaic method of paying our teachers that this country has historically enforced. It takes the form of an insistence that teachers on the same grade should all be paid the same, wherever they may work in the country —outside London, whatever may be the shortage of their skills, whatever subject they happen to teach, and irrespective of how many unskilled people teach subjects in which they are not qualified, and of how much staff turnover there is in particular subjects. We notice, for instance, that there is a 50 per cent. staff turnover in London among computer teachers. Irrespective of all those labour market factors, teachers are paid the same in each grade, wherever they are and whatever their skill.

The 1988 legislation dealing with teachers' pay and conditions introduced a wider scale of five merit points to reward good teachers and teachers with skills in short supply. Local financial management will give schools more flexibility with which to operate that. Nevertheless, they will still be weighed down by the archaic dead weight of the incremental system, which means that even in the first year fully 70 per cent. of the money going to incentive posts must be based on the old incremental system. Only £257 million of the £7 billion annual teachers' bill can be spent on incentives which could go towards attracting people with skills in short supply, while £2,000 million goes to rewarding mere longevity, more length of service, irrespective of grade, skill or ability.

If, either from schools or centrally, we can get even a part of that incremental bill, that £2 billion a year, pushed through into incentive payments to those who have skills of which there is a shortage, who are high-fliers, who are particularly talented, we shall be going some way towards being able to pay the increased salaries in respect of the local labour markets for those science subject shortages

[Mr. Coombs]

that we see today. If we do that, we ought to be able to go some way towards increasing the number of science teachers in schools without increasing unduly the burden on ratepayers and taxpayers of the teachers' pay bill. That step alone would do more than any other to improve standards of scientific education in this country.

9.6 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I hope that the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) will, after the speech he has just made, proceed instantly to his nearest university and deliver his homily on the importance of monetary rewards in stimulating effort. I hope that he will particularly seek out scientists working on short-term contracts and deliver to them his thoughts on the labour market structure and monetary rewards in encouraging endeavour.

The Secretary of State came into this debate tonight woofing like an old, wet dog off the lead, excited by the money he had to put in front of us, but his case has been entirely shot down by his hon. Friends. The hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) very rightly pointed out that, lost in the public expenditure White Paper, in other chapters than the chapter to which the Secretary of State drew our attention, is the fact that there are cuts in research expenditure. He drew to our attention in particular the significance of the withdrawal of the Government from so-called near market research expenditure, which, of course, has financed the apparent gains that the Secretary of State had to offer tonight.

The hon. Member for Wyre Forest gave the game away even more comprehensively when he drew to our attention the very low level of research expenditure in this country when it is not associated with defence and with Government spending. He very rightly pointed out, and I hope what he had to say was taken to heart by those on the Government Front Bench, that industry fails to support science in this country through its own expenditure. There are one or two industries—the pharmaceutical industry stands out—which make an honourable effort in that respect. The others do not. We live in a scientific disaster world for British science.

Again, the hon. Member for Wyre Forest pointed out the failure of science in our schools, the declining numbers of people who are even applying to do A-level physics and chemistry, and the linkage between that and the labour market because of the world outside the school that children can perceive.

The Secretary of State paints a picture, honest and genuine enough in its own way, of a handful of world-class research teams still based in Britain. But the base on which those teams stand is crumbling. The Secretary of State only emphasises what has been true in Britain for many years and unfortunately is still true: that while we may be successful at invention, we are poor at innovation and disastrous at spreading that innovation through our industries.

The fact is that top management in British industry is the least well-educated, the least well-trained and the least scientifically sophisticated in the world. The problem in British science is the lack of connection between the world-class research teams and what really happens to the future of our industries.

It is significant that, apart from the brief appearance of another Minister, the work of tonight's debate has been left to the education team. As we all know, science is a jumble of responsibilities throughout Government. But the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has been pondering whether he can bring himself to require companies to certify the level of research and development spending in their accounts, perhaps as a way of stimulating greater interest in the science base on the part of industry.

In the debates on the Companies Bill in the other place the noble Lord has been promising to consider that, but we are still waiting. How happy we would be tonight if a Minister could tell us, "Yes, the Government will require companies to declare their research and development spending in their accounts." Then we would be sure of a science-based commitment that was not merely based on a handful of research teams, but would be a product of industry as a whole.

How nice it would be if the Secretary of State for the Environment—given all the expenditure for which he is responsible—would come and talk to us occasionally about his commitments to research, in the subjects that have been mentioned and in others. He could make an enormous contribution to turning such cities as mine—the city of Newcastle—into science cities by binding together urban development corporations, bringing in higher education institutions and linking hospitals to the process. He is in a position to take such initiatives, but we hear nothing of them: we simply hear from the Secretary of State the story that he is protecting, on their reservations, that handful of at-risk animals, top-level British scientists.

All that that tells us is that the Government have stopped asking the wrong questions. They have still to tell us that they have found the right answers.

9.12 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I always enjoy following the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), because at one stage we found ourselves at college together. I have to say, however, that I disagree with many of his conclusions—and with the somewhat doom-laden atmosphere that his speech produced.

It seems to me, both from what the hon. Gentleman said and from the Opposition motion, that the Opposition barometer is stuck permanently at "stormy". The motion contains a number of important misconceptions which I should like to clear up at the outset. The first, essential misconception is that the process of Government spending on any particular item is in some way divorced from the general course and strength of the economy. It would be the easiest thing in the world to bump up the proportion of gross national product spent on science, overseas aid or anything else by the simple device of ensuring that the growth of the rest of GNP was zero.

The second, related misconception is to divorce spending in the public sector from what is available and will come forward from the private sector. Here I perhaps agreed with the hon. Gentleman: I too would like to see a surge forward in private sector expenditure. A long period of low profits is now changing into a period of rather higher profits, and I hope that that will be accomplished, not necessarily through compulsion, but through a readiness on the part of private firms to declare their research and development spending. There is in this

country a prevailing sin by which we measure the quality of output as a function of the state-financed input into any activity.

I feel that I must, though it is unusual to do so, refer to my curriculum vitae. I admit frankly that I have no science O-level. That is a function of the past and it would be less likely to happen now. I have been attempting to claw my position back from that state of affairs for a number of years, in practical application as a farmer; by participating as a council member in a private sector agricultural research trust for over 20 years and as its chairman for five years; and recently, and with diffidence in view of my past record, as a newly nominated member of the Agricultural and Food Research Council.

That story of myself developed strongly my support for the national curriculum requirement that everyone shall study science until school leaving age. That will create the broad base of scientific interest and, I hope, sympathy on which the higher points of the pyramid may rest.

As for Higginson and A-levels, there will have to be changes in this area. Not enough is made of the practical problems involved in changing timetables to accommodate a variety of subjects. I am equally conscious of the importance of some academic rigour and depth, and I would favour the retention of one or two traditional A-levels, with subjects being gone into in detail. But there must be some generality and a broader spread than the sort of education that many of us may have enjoyed in the past.

I shall now concentrate my remarks on science as such, with particular reference to the Agricultural and Food Research Council and what I have seen of that. Several hon. Members have referred to the need to improve the information and decision-making structure. It is, for example, difficult to say what the AFRC is spending, from where it is getting its money and the areas to which it is going. We are aware that it has DES and MAFF money and that it is in receipt of outside funds, but when Scotland is added along with other bits and pieces and adjustments are made for various financial years, it is difficult to come up with a single figure. We need a matrix—where from and where going to—to improve the quality of decision-making.

I am not ashamed of drawing an analogy with the National Health Service. We can proclaim that we have higher real spending on the science budget. We must, equally, face infinite demand; one cannot have too much science. We also have all the strains and stresses of the necessary management inputs, with the reorganisation and rationalisation of the vehicles for delivering that science which are now taking place.

That is happening nowhere more clearly than in agriculture, where the historic legacy has been over 25 establishments within the remit of the AFRC, now rationalised down to eight main institutes with two or three centres. This has meant a reduction in staff of 25 per cent. since 1983, a third of those by compulsory redundancy. There has also been—I would defend this—some shift towards activity within the university sector rather than within state institutes.

All this has meant many changes and much apprehension and concern among personnel. We need to complete this process as soon as we decently can. There is, and must be, scope for a number of centres of world excellence within the AFRC, although there is not scope for one in every one of its sites. Let us continue the process and also remember, as the debate has shown, the obligation of Government to ensure that there are adequate salaries and pay structures to safeguard the personnel who work for us on the sites.

It is difficult to divide up the spectrum—from blue-skies research, through innovation and invention, to research and development. The second order but equally important world of supportive science must in future be collaborative.

My attitude towards the Health Service would be that, provided we did not prejudice ethical standards and maintained the central core of funding, the more outside funding we could add, the better. I have the same attitude to science. That was the context in which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food carried out its celebrated, if not notorious, Barnes review and the promotion of near market funding. I am sure that the concept of the review is excellent. However, I have some concern about the speed with which it has been carried out because it has meant a rapid phasing—which is different from the central science point that I was making earlier. I am also concerned about the large cuts in funding, although I appreciate that they are not within the direct purview of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I am sure that there are already encouraging signs that the industry will pick itself up and come to terms with the final conclusions of the review but I must emphasise the importance of collaborative activities. I have some indirect experience of the funding of the university of Essex, which enjoys a high level of self-financing.

Through my work in the trust that I mentioned, I also have some direct experience of the work of Sheffield university's commercial and industrial development bureau, which has worked tremendously hard to draw in the benefits of intellectual property. For example, it has introduced my foundation to the prescription for a commercial confidentiality agreement.

The commercial sector makes a major contribution. Agricultural food companies are already putting in about £100 million a year—and that should be more. There is more scope for outside trust funding, to which I have referred, and for collaboration with Europe. I welcome what AFRC is doing about that. Management savings can also be made from, for example, the co-location of institutes at Swindon. It is clearly useful if managements can work together, particularly in biological sciences.

The Government must keep faith by maintaining the tax-funded core of the science budget and an adequate level of remuneration for workers. Equally, the science sector and the research councils have an obligation to obtain the best possible results from their budgets and to explore all sensible increases in outside funding. The Government have set forward a basis for a balanced contract for operating effectively in the science sector. I shall support the Government amendment.

9.24 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): In the few minutes remaining, I shall tell the House about the strong objections felt in south Wales about paragraph 20 of the report of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, which has been accepted by the Secretary of State and which refers to this morning's announcement of the

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

closure of the Research Vessel Services base at Barry and its removal to Southampton. That totally contradicts paragraph 34 of the report.

Paragraph 20 refers to the Natural Environment Research Council placing a high priority on its plans to relocate the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences from Wormley in Surrey and its Research Vessel Services base from Barry to a single site co-located with the oceanography department of Southampton university. That will cost £17·2 million over three years, though I understand that the full figure for the commitment is twice that—some £35 million over five years—when the costs of relocating the civil servants involved are thrown in with the capital costs. So this is a £35 million, five-year commitment that the Secretary of State has entered into today.

If we turn to paragraph 34 we see a reference to the NERC's proposals for additional funds to support the biogeochemical ocean flux study. That caused the Secretary of State some verbal difficulty earlier tonight, though I am sure that all he was trying to do was indicate to everybody that 50 per cent. is the pass mark in the national curriculum from here on in. Paragraph 34 says:

"NERC's proposals for additional funds for the biogeochemical ocean flux study and its North sea programme are warmly endorsed by the board on scientific grounds. Their importance has been highlighted by recent Government concern about the greenhouse effect and marine pollution."

Therefore, what I am making tonight is not a constituency point. This institution is, in fact, just outside my constituency, though many of my constituents work at RVS Barry, and they are quite apoplectic with rage today about the nature of the decision that has been imposed on them. It is not a constituency point, and it is not particularly a Welsh point; it is a British point, a point about the whole structure of this document. Is this document putting raw science first, or is it putting bricks and mortar first?

In this decision, whatever the Secretary of State may have said about wanting to put more money into the scientists doing the science, what he has actually done is to commit himself to a colossal programme of capital expenditure which will give him bricks and mortar but will starve the raw science half of the oceanography effort and will not enable Britain to play its full part in research into the greenhouse effect and the ozone layer, in which the Prime Minister has invested a great deal of her prestige, and the Secretary of State a great deal of his. He is spending £35 million. That is very generous, but the money is being spent on the wrong things.

If the Secretary of State had listened to the scientists who work in the field and not merely to the wheelers and dealers on the ABRC, who have gone past the live science field and are into negotiations in the corridors of power, he would have been told that the important thing is to refit HMS Discovery. That would cost some £10 million. That should have been the priority because the condition of HMS Discovery is dreadful. It is the flagship, the mainstay, of British oceanographic research, yet in the national newspapers, before a gag was put on them during the past month leading up to the announcement today, its superstructure was described as "rotting", and its hydraulics as hopelessly out of date. If the hydraulics of a deep-sea oceanography vessel are out of date, it cannot use its winches properly to do deep water sampling.

Being British scientists, they will muddle through. We have this "sealing wax and string" tradition. They will make an effort to hold their heads high when they are working on these new and wonderful collaborative ventures, about which the Secretary of State has talked tonight. They will hold Britain's head high as best they can, but the Secretary of State is not giving them the tools to do the job.

The boat is the important thing. If he were to spend £10 million on the boat and halved the money he is allocating to new laboratories and the relocation of civil servants who do not want to be relocated, for supposed benefits of co-location with a university department of oceanography —a very shadowy concept of more efficient management of science—he would be spending the nation's money in a far more practical way, a way he probably approves of himself except that he has had the wool pulled over his eyes by the operators in the ABRC and the NERC.

There is the question of exactly what the Secretary of State's own powers of interaction are. What kind of Secretary of State do we want to manage our science? Do we want a hands-on Secretary of State who will look at the decisions that are proposed to him by the advisory boards and say, "Is there something wrong with this? Why are we spending money on a new laboratory? Are we sure we have got the priorities right?" Can he really defend his hands-off attitude, saying, "Oh, well, it looks all right. There will be some nice new laboratories to open in a couple of years. I can still say we are taking part, and wrap the question of the greenhouse effect and the ozone layer in a nice red, white and blue ribbon and say that Britain is in the lead, that it discovered the ozone layer, and that we are spending money in the Antarctic as well"?

When it comes to the choice of priorities, the right hon. Gentleman has failed to exercise his decision-making power and to make the judgment of priorities which is the job of the Secretary of State. He is paid by the taxpayers to decide what we should spend money on. There is a reasonable increase in his budget, but he has failed to examine that budget to see whether the right expenditure is being made on raw science rather than on bricks and mortar. By his failure he has shown a dereliction of duty and that he is not fit to run the scientific budget.

9.30 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): My hon. Friends the Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) have brought out specifically some of the fundamental errors of Britain's science and industrial policy. The combination of research facilities, universities and industrial applications will provide the new jobs for the future and create economic growth, but those facilities are being drained from Wales, from the north and from Scotland by moves such as that of the Research Vessel Services base from Barry which has been announced today. The advisory committees on which the Secretary of State relies take the academically easy course by concentrating the services at Southampton, but that is not the total picture that the Government should consider.

The hon. Members for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) made the important point

about science in schools which justified this as a necessary debate. It has been a useful debate. If the Government are so confident about their science policy, I hope that in future they will find time for a debate on it.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) stressed the necessity for university science and of producing the scientists in the first place. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) dispelled the complacency that the Secretary of State brought into the debate and took out to dinner with him in the middle, as indeed he took out most of the Government Back Benchers who rallied to hear his speech but were unable to stay the course through dinner, leaving my hon. Friends in a majority for most of the debate.

To please the Secretary of State, I shall try to deal mainly with the important issues of outputs rather than inputs, and with organisation and management rather than just expenditure. To please the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) I shall acknowledge a real achievement by the Government. First, however, I ask the Secretary of State to ensure that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State elaborates on the point that he made about the reorganisation of the research councils and the unfinished business in a science policy statement. These are important issues and we should know more about the state of play on them.

The Government, and the Prime Minister in particular in her Royal Society speech, have acknowledged that we face a potentially serious problem in global warming and the greenhouse effect. But the problem has caught them on the wrong foot and they do not seem to know how to tackle it. The additional costs of the research are not great. Indeed, they are tiny by comparison with the cost of what would otherwise be ill-informed policies. Ministers have reduced the scientific establishment to a state in which it needs the courage of an Oliver Twist to ask for more, and with the same fear of the consequences if it does. Through ignorance and prejudice, the Government are in danger of creating problems in the environment as big as those they seek to remedy.

The greenhouse effect is a new kind of scientific problem. Weather forecasters are used to having a check on their forecasts within a day, a week or a month. Astronomers and particle physicists who cannot experiment on the universe can make predictions which can be checked by further observations and experiments. Doctors' patients either recover or they do not. Engineers design structures which either stand up or fall down. In every case there is a feedback which checks the theories and designs of the scientists. But with the global environment the feedback may come too late, in 50 or 100 years' time, long after irreparable damage may have been done. We may only get one chance to get the answers sufficiently right.

At the same time as science faces these problems, scientific research and analysis has been organised to tackle systems of unprecedented complexity. These methods are those which have been used to identify the problem of global warming and will need to be developed to still higher orders of complexity to solve them. The carbon cycle in the oceans and atmosphere controls the greenhouse effect and keeps temperatures on earth tolerable to life in all its forms. Research into just the physical aspects of the carbon cycle requires new combinations of chemistry, atmospheric physics, fluid dynamics, solar physics, marine biology, ecology, agricultural sciences, remote satellite and direct observation, ocean survey and computer science, which all have to be brought together.

To assess their interaction, all these effects have to be brought together in computer models of the general circulation in the atmosphere and oceans. There are at present five such general circulation models in the world —four in the United States, in three different, fiercely competing federal agencies, and a university, and one in our own Met Office, which is of course under the Ministry of Defence. While the modellers meet, compare notes and agree comparative exercises, the models are each run by the handful of scientists in the teams which construct them. The smallest team is in the British Met Office—one and a half men are running our only model of the global environment, there is no exchange of models, no independent testing or comparison, no access by outside researchers and no work on new computer developments such as massively parallel computers, which will transform the approach that can be taken.

It is outrageous, but that is the research on which the future of the globe depends. It is managed by a number of researchers who would fit into a small interview room in the House of Commons. Their latest estimates of the effects of doubling carbon dioxide on global mean surface air temperature vary from 5·2° C by the Met Office to 2·8° C by Schlesinger in the university of Oregon, but the estimates change dramatically as new factors, such as cloud cover at different altitudes, are brought into the equations. The effects forecast in particular regions are, of course, still more variable, with at present differences of forecasts between the models of 4° in summer and 10° in winter, as they forecast prospects in parts of Siberia and China. As yet, none of the models is treating land use or agricultural yields, let alone economic and industrial activity generally.

Weather forecasters are used to attaching error margins to their forecasts; they are not used to calculating the policy adjustments needed to modify rather uncertain weather and climate changes, particularly as those policy adjustments must work with long and uncertain lags through economic, social and political behaviour. If it comes to seeking effective international agreements to limit such sensitive questions as fossil fuel burn by conservation and to deal with such difficult issues as nuclear power, many countries will not even be able to tell the direction in which their interests lie. It may be difficult to persuade the Soviet Union and China to undertake policies which will save Leningrad, Shanghai, London, Calcutta, and the estuaries of Bangladesh and China from being flooded by melted ice from the polar caps if they felt that the new climate quite transformed the possibilities of growing wheat in the more northern latitudes of Siberia and Mongolia.

Earlier precedents in the politics of modelling global problems—the Club of Rome's "Limits to Growth" study and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis study, "Energy in a Finite World"—are not encouraging. Very serious criticisms were made by the scientific community and were fully justified, using precisely the methods of technology assessment that the hon. Member for Havant emphasised. It is essential to make the scientific basis—the theoretical, empirical, and statistical basis—of the work on global modelling and global research generally as sound, open, transparent and

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

accessible as possible to different interests, sciences and methodologies. They should be open to independent as well as competitive checking.

Our scientists, including Joe Forman of the British Antarctic Survey, Richard Wayne on the photochemistry of ozone and John Mitchell in the Meteorological Office, have done an outstanding job, but the organisation and resources available are inadequate. The work has no coherence. It is divided between different Departments and there is no follow through to policy. With the leadership that our working scientists have given us, a centre should be set up to test, compare and make generally available the key global general circulation models and their extensions to cover other aspects of the global environment such as land use, agricultural, economic and industrial activity which will now proliferate. The United Nations environmental programme might well be the appropriate body to invite competitive proposals which should be judged by the highest peer group standards relevant to undertaking such vital work.

Within the United Kingdom, the Natural Environment Research Council covers the Arctic, the Antarctic and the oceans. The Science and Engineering Research Council covers most of the atmosphere and satellites and the Ministry of Defence looks after the Met Office while in the Departments responsible for action and research the Department of the Environment looks over its spectacles at all this puzzling scientific stuff and the Department of Education and Science cannot even teach children science in schools. To put together and manage a coherent research programme in the United Kingdom, and United Kingdom participation in essential international programmes, a joint research council directorate should be set up on the global environment, with control of the substantial funds needed for urgent, sustained, well-integrated applied strategic research.

The additional costs of the research are tiny by comparison with the avoidable costs of errors in what otherwise would be necessarily ill-informed policies. The Science and Engineering, Natural Environment, Agricultural and Food and Economic and Social Research Councils should all be involved. The present organisation of research into the global environment, with individual scientists and teams, who have done invaluable work in identifying the problem, and who have sensible plans for continuing it in the manner appropriate to background research, is a quite inappropriate organisation for the goal-directed research of global importance which is now needed.

The nature of the problem and the research required is such that the research must be managed at one remove from Government—in the research councils and not from within the Ministry of Defence, as the Met Office is managed, and not within the Department of Education and Science or the Department of the Environment. The research must be seen as objective at home and abroad. By all means let industry and the defence budget contribute, but they must not manage or direct.

At the same time, as recent experience has shown, individual research councils and the individual scientists and teams that they support must be adequately supported because from their discoveries important results may emerge in new and unexpected directions.

Many problems that will arise from climatic change are extremely relevant in the world today. Desertification, arid agriculture and the flooding of low-lying land are not just problems of the future, but problems to which the research councils are and should be addressing effort where such problems occur in the world today. We not only meet a vital current need by tackling them, but we learn invaluable lessons for the bigger problems that may arise in the future.

Unless a research programme of the highest calibre is undertaken into the global environment, there will not exist the evidence or consent on which political agreement can be reached within this country and with other countries on the major policy initiatives that may be required to pass on to our children a global environment that they can enjoy. The Government must set up a programme without delay. The inadequacy of the Government's management of research into the global environment reflects their lack of understanding and competence in science policy generally. For that reason, we urge the House to vote for our motion tonight.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): As with our previous debate on science at this time last year, this has been an interesting and—from Conservative Members—a sober discussion that has helped to illuminate the issues. That it has done so is, alas, no tribute to the Opposition because, more than anything else, this debate has revealed the intellectual poverty of the Labour party. We are all accustomed to the airy persiflage and fourth-form humour of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

For all the undoubted sincerity and worthiness of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), I am afraid that it is clear that his thinking has, once again, failed to rise to the level of his subject. His policy for the funding of science is simply to add £100 million or so to whatever figure the Government provide and his policy for the organisation and management of the science base is simply to parrot the panaceas of the latest scientific pressure group—or pressure group among his colleagues —which catches his attention.

In reply to the hon. Member for Blackburn, may I say that it is not enough for him, yet again, to traverse the barren ground of international comparisons of Government financial inputs into science. We had that debate last year. I remind him that it was the central issue of that debate and was firmly settled in favour of the Government's modest self-assessment that, as I put it last year, "our financial inputs, as a percentage of GDP, are broadly in line with those of our competitors". The hon. Gentleman was on new ground when he talked about spending on higher education as distinct from spending on the science base. He is on even more unprofitable ground there from his point of view. The percentage of GDP spent by the Government on higher education in Britain is at the top of the European league and is second only to that of the Netherlands.

To grasp the strategy that the Government have been pursuing in science, it is necessary to recall the position from which we started in 1979. In science and technology, that position was marked by three striking features. First, British academic science was excellent and remains so, as my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd)

clearly and convincingly pointed out. With every respect to my esteemed friend Sir George Porter, the fact is that our national contribution to the world's basic science was, and remains, second only to that of the United States; and it is marked by a range of strengths in depth that is remarkable for a country of our size and economic weight.

The second feature of the science scene in 1979 was that, in acute contrast with our strength in basic science, British science-based industry, like British industry in general, was in a bad way. Profitability was the lowest in the western world and management and work force alike were demoralised, pessimistic and intensively focused on short-term crisis management. That was the environment in which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) pointed out, investment by British industry in research and development was steadily falling behind that of the countries with which we compete.

A third feature of the scene, and one of the key contributory causes of that weakness in British industry, was that British science was separated by an invisible wall of culture and attitudes from British industry. At the same time, within the world of British science, a similar invisible wall of culture and attitudes ran along the striking vertical divisions between the research councils and Government Departments; between the research councils, the Government and the universities; and between and within the research councils and even within the Government's own machinery for directing science policy.

The first of those features of the scene in 1979—the excellence of British basic science—was a consequence of the historical dominance of Britain's position in science, built up by generations of British scientists since the 17th century. However, the second and third features—the weakness of British industry and the institutionalised divisions between industry and science and within the scientific world—were part of the sad harvest of 30 years of Labour-dominated thinking about the role of the state and the way in which it should be organised.

The Government's strategy for science has flowed logically from our analysis of the position that confronted us at the beginning of the decade. The overwhelming aim has been to restore the profitability and confidence of British industry so that among other things it is in a position, both intellectually and financially, to expand its commitment to research and development.

A key element in that drive has been the reduction in the burden of taxation and consequently of public expenditure. Science and higher education have shared in the rigorous scrutiny of priorities and programmes which has gone on across the whole gamut of public expenditure under this Government. That rigorous scrutiny has accompanied a 26 per cent. increase in real terms in Government spending on science between 1979 and 1989, compared with the level funding under the Labour Government—supported by the Liberals—between 1975 and 1979. I assure the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that our support for science will continue on this trend which is rather better than that achieved by the Government whom his party supported in the 1970s.

Our strategy for encouraging industry is paying off. In the course of this decade, the profitability of British industry has been restored to the point at which it ranks among the highest in the world. I must advise the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, who made a powerful and effective speech, that among the results of that has been a strong rise in industry's investment in its in-house research and development. The most recent figures relate to 1986 and 1987 and show that between those years industry's investment in intra-mural research and development rose by 3 per cent., while in the chemical industry, for example, research spending rose by no less than 20 per cent.

That growth is not yet fast enough or large enough, but it represents a great improvement, which the Government are determined to speed by reducing their commitment to the support of near-market research as industry's capacity to fund its own research continues to grow. At this point I should like to say how much I welcome the emphasis placed by my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on the need for industry—and especially agriculture, which he knows so well—to respond to that challenge.

Mr. Straw: If British science-based industry is doing so well, why have we swung from a £3 billion surplus on science-based trade to a £6 billion deficit? If things are so good, why are they so bad?

Mr. Jackson: There are various ways in which one could measure the effectiveness of industry. The fact is that the profits and productivity of British industry have soared. The question of the balance of payments is a different one and it involves all sorts of other considerations, for example, of oil, exchange rates, and financial flows which are quite distinct.

Rebuilding industry's commitment to research and development is the first limb of the Government's strategy for science. The second limb has been to dismantle the strong vertical divisons of culture and attitude that have marked relations between Government, industry and science, and the organisation of science itself in Britain. Here again, our strategy has been marked by an encouraging if still insufficient measure of success. On the crucial interface between industry and academic science, there has been a striking shift of attitude on both sides of the divide, which is reflected in the increased earnings by universities from research contracts with industry. They have risen from £27 million in 1982 to £78 million in 1987—a rise of 129 per cent.

At the same time, the past 10 years have seen a powerful development of the machinery for co-ordinating our national scientific effort. My hon. Friends the Members for Havant and for Daventry were right to emphasise the importance of this. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Havant that the basis of our entire approach is to strengthen the machinery for evaluation and for priority-setting in Government science policy. That is the thinking which lies behind the range of recent developments—the strengthening of the Cabinet Office in the heart of Government, with its "Annual Review of Government funded Research and Development", the creation of new machinery for collective ministerial consideration of science and technology matters, the creation of ACOST—the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology—and the strengthening of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, the internal reorganisation and restructuring within the research council of which my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry spoke, the creation of the interdisciplinary research centres and the

[Mr. Jackson]

growing focus on improving research management in the universities. All of those developments are helping to address some of the weaknesses in the way in which we have organised science in Britain compared with the way in which science is organised in other countries.

It is in that context that I shall briefly deal with what the hon. Member for Motherwell, South said about the co-ordination of environmental research. Research related to the environment touches many different areas of science and many different areas of practical activity affecting all the research councils and almost every Government Department. It is certainly important to keep policies and priorities in this area, as elsewhere, under constant review, because the deployment of resources simply cannot be frozen in a fixed pattern, whether financially or geographically. That, briefly, is the answer to the complaints of the hon. Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth and for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) about the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in Bangor and the removal of Research Vessel Services from Barry.

With regard to what the hon. Member for Motherwell, South said, there is certainly a case for stronger measures of co-ordination, but at the same time there is a danger of detaching environmental research from cognate research in associated areas and detaching it from the diversified contexts in which environmental research is necessarily conducted. Those questions are being addressed by ACOST and by the ABRC and we await their advice.

Part of the common ground in this debate—and there is common ground—is that basic science is important. I think especially of the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Havant. The Government recognise the fundamental importance of basic science. It is our concern that lies behind the 16 per cent. increase in science funding which the Government have just announced for this year.

Our strategy can be summed up in four brief points. We are promoting a closer relationship between academic science and industry. We are promoting the growth of industry's commitment to research and development. We are promoting a more coherent approach to the management and the purposeful direction of the science base. We are continuing and strengthening the Government support for basic science.

Those policies are part of a successful strategy for continuing excellence in British science and for the revival of British industry. All of us in this House recognise that those two matters are linked. The point has been effectively made by a number of hon. Members. It is on that basis that I commend the Government's amendment to the House.

9.59 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I would like to take up a matter that was completely unanswered by the Secretary of State, which is the problem that will be created in the future because of the reduced number of scientists entering the teaching profession. The Department of Education and Science, in its submission to the Select Committee on Education, said that there would be a shortfall of 1,000 physicists by 1995. However, there has been a report, entitled "Securing our Future", sponsored by the Headmasters' Conference, the Secondary Heads Association and the Engineering Council, which estimated that there would be a shortfall of 2,000 physicists by 1995 and an optimistic shortfall of more than 4,000 mathematicians and, using a pessimistic figure, a shortfall of more than 12,000. It is a pity that the Minister did not deal with that issue.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 279.

Division No. 80] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Dunnachie, Jimmy
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Allen, Graham	Eadie, Alexander
Alton, David	Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Anderson, Donald	Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Fatchett, Derek
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Faulds, Andrew
Ashton, Joe	Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Fisher, Mark
Barron, Kevin	Flannery, Martin
Battle, John	Flynn, Paul
Beckett, Margaret	Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Beith, A. J.	Foster, Derek
Bell, Stuart	Foulkes, George
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Fraser, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Fyfe, Maria
Bermingham, Gerald	Galbraith, Sam
Blair, Tony	Galloway, George
Blunkett, David	Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Boateng, Paul	George, Bruce
Boyes, Roland	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Bradley, Keith	Godman, Dr Norman A.
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Golding, Mrs Llin
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Gould, Bryan
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*	Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*	Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Buchan, Norman	Grocott, Bruce
Buckley, George J.	Hardy, Peter
Caborn, Richard	Harman, Ms Harriet
Callaghan, Jim	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Haynes, Frank
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Campbell-Savours, D.N.	Heffer, Eric S.
Canavan, Dennis	Henderson, Doug
Cartwright, John	Hinchliffe, David
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*	Holland, Stuart
Clay, Bob	Home Robertson, John
Clelland, David	Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Cohen, Harry	Howells, Geraint
Coleman, Donald	Hoyle, Doug
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*	Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Corbett, Robin	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy	Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Cousins, Jim	Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Cox, Tom	Illsley, Eric
Crowther, Stan	Ingram, Adam
Cryer, Bob	Janner, Greville
Cummings, John	Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Cunningham, Dr John	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Darling, Alistair	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Lambie, David
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*	Lamond, James
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Leadbitter, Ted
Dewar, Donald	Leighton, Ron
Dixon, Don	Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Dobson, Frank	Litherland, Robert
Doran, Frank	Livsey, Richard
Douglas, Dick	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Duffy, A. E. P.	Lofthouse, Geoffrey

Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Du ant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*

Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 270, Noes 206.

Division No. 81] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William *(St'm)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David

Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Maclean and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Robert Wareing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House applauds the steps taken by the Government to sustain and improve still further the strength and quality of science in the United Kingdom, noting in particular: the inclusion of science as part of the new national curriculum, measures to improve the supply of science teachers in schools, recent evidence that eminent scientists are returning to this country, the 26 per cent. real terms increase in the science budget since 1979, and the allocation of extra funds for research to tackle problems of the global environment, to improve the quality of life and to underpin the technological competitiveness of British industry.

Social Services (Designation of Functions)

Mr. Speaker: Order. We now come to draft Local Authority Social Services (Designation of Functions) Order 1989. Mr. Freeman.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible for the instruments appearing on the Order Paper to be taken separately? The regulations applying to housing are, in my view, different and should be discussed differently from the two instruments applying to the social services.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not heard any suggestion that they should be taken together, and I referred to only one order. It may be for the convenience of the House, however, to discuss the following two together, but that is for later on.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would like the two instruments relating to the social services to be debated separately. Several of my hon. Friends and I feel that different matters apply to both and that they should be debated in some detail separately, especially in terms of the way in which they affect local authority resources.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I said that that would be the case, and certainly I mentioned only one order.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move,

That the draft Local Authority Social Services (Designation of Functions) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.

Following your ruling, Mr. Speaker, it may be for the convenience of the House if the two instruments—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think it is the wish of the House that they be taken separately.

Mr. Freeman: I thought that you wished both social services matters to be taken together, Mr. Speaker, but I stand corrected.

I shall not detain the House long over the first order. The Local Authority Social Services (Designation of Functions) Order, which applies only to England and Wales, is to designate under the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 as social service functions those functions of local social services authorities under the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 and under the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. The effect of this is that the powers and duties specified stand referred to the social services committee to which those functions may be delegated and the social services department may deal with that work. That is what has always been envisaged.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I understand that children about whom a statement has been prepared and who have been under the supervision of the education department until they have completed their schooling will then be handed over to the social services department. What is the logic behind and the justification for that? It seems unfortunate that after parents have built up a good understanding with people in the education department, which prepared the statement on the young people in question, the children should be handed over to the social services department merely because they can no longer continue in full-time education. The new department must then establish contact with the family.

Mr. Freeman: The first order relates specifically to the functions of social services departments in local authorities. The second order deals in much greater substance with access to personal files and other matters that the hon. Gentleman may want to raise. This order merely designates the functions currently performed by social services authorities under the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. It is a necessary procedural measure, and I commend it to the House.

10.32 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): We shall not oppose the instruments because we believe that they tidy up some parts of the legislation and show the House the Government's thinking.

The Minister omitted to mention the Government's intention to allocate to the social services departments their responsibility for implementing the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. I had understood that that was to be done from information made available in the Library——

Mr. Freeman: I can confirm that.

Mr. Clarke: I display no conceit when I say that we regard that as the most important part of the regulations. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who introduced the Access to Personal Files Bill in 1987—we shall discuss it in greater detail when we come to the second instrument—has made a considerable contribution to our deliberations on these matters. We welcome the Minister's clarification that access is also recognised under the disabled persons legislation, but it is important to distinguish between the Government's intention to include access to information under that legislation and their inability so far to introduce orders on the sections with which this instrument specifically deals.

Many of us were heartened by the Minister's response to an Adjournment debate on 1 February, when he indicated great interest in one of the sections covered by the order. I refer to section 7, which deals with discharge from long-stay psychiatric hospitals. The Minister said then:

"My hon. Friend will be aware of the importance of that Act in strengthening and extending legal provisions for disabled people and re-inforcing their rights in society. That, of course, includes mentally ill people. Section 7 will require health and local authorities to assess the needs of people discharged from hospital after treatment for a mental disorder of six months or more, and officials from the Department are currently involved in a series of meetings with representatives of both health and local authorities, identifying the processes, procedures and costs that will make up the requirements under this important section of the Act."

I was gladdened, as I think we all were, when the Minister added:

"I am taking a personal interest in those discussions, and I can assure my hon. Friend that we treat the matter seriously."—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 407.]

If that is the case, I think it will be welcome, but I have to express considerable disappointment that the Government have taken so much time in getting this far. In view of the

Minister's personal interest, which we welcome, we look forward to a great deal more progress on the section than we have seen so far.

This morning, on one of the radio phone-in programmes that we hear in London from time to time, the Secretary of State was asked by a doctor a question that is relevant to our debate. The doctor asked about elderly people with disabilities being discharged into the community. He said that it sounded as though there would be faster discharges. Where were these patients going, he asked. The Secretary of State replied that we had to wait for the Griffiths report, which he said would be dealt with "shortly". "Shortly" is not a word that he has so far used in this House, and I think it is important that we should seize this opportunity in dealing with the order to ask the Minister, especially when we are concentrating on the role of local government—the role that people see for local authorities—precisely what is to happen to the Griffiths report and to its recommendation about the enhanced role of local government.

The order brings within the scope of functions to be discharged through a local authority's social services committee those functions contained in sections 1 to 5 and in sections 7 and 8 of the 1986 Act, except those appropriate to a local education authority.

I should like to refer briefly to each of those sections and to ask what is the Minister's thinking in terms of these instruments. Section 1 deals with the appointment of authorised representatives of disabled people, and section 2 with the rights of authorised representatives of disabled people. I think that that Act was seen and that those who supported it recognised it as a major breakthrough in terms of advocacy and representation. It is a pity that we have to wait for the full implementation of the Act, but we see, for example, in cities like Sheffield, that good practice already exists. Advocacy is there, and representation is there; it is taking place.

It seems to me that if, rightly in the context of the access to information Act, we make more people aware precisely of that information we will in many ways be building up people's hopes. It would be a great disappointment to many people if we simply provided the information and did not do anything effective about making sure that the representation and advocacy provisions and the other sections were implemented fully.

Section 3, as the Minister will recall—it is mentioned in the instruments before the House—deals with local authorities' assessment of the needs of disabled people, and section 4 with the duty to consider the needs of disabled people. I need hardly remind the House that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) introduced the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Bill of 1970 it was accepted then and subsequently by every Secretary of State that assessments, once established, should be acted upon. I think the same would be true of this order. I invite the Minister's endorsement of that.

Section 5 deals with disabled people leaving special education. We know that the section was welcome, as the order will be, to organisations like Mencap and the 19-plus groups in many parts of the country, as well as to parents who have to cope with the serious problems for young people leaving special education who wonder what their future will be. It is important that not only do we have information available for parents, representatives and the disabled persons but that the assessments are carried out according to the sections of the Act which are being implemented.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The Minister did not answer my question about section 5 when I intervened earlier. Can my hon. Friend explain the mechanism? As I understand section 5, it set out a framework for what happens when a person completes his education. I understand that the person will no longer be the responsibility of the education department but will be taken over by the social services department. If the parents of a young person have built up a good relationship with the education department, will the case have to be transferred to the social services department, or can the education department continue to carry out the necessary functions? The order refers to

"Sections 1 to 5, 7 and 8 except insofar as they assign functions to a local authority".

Can my hon. Friend help me?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the difficulties. There is a grey area about the transfer of responsibility from the education authority to social services. This has meant that when children experiencing special education leave school at the age of 19, no plans have been made for their future. This is why there are so many 19-plus groups. Often no assessments have been made and social services departments do not accept responsibility for the future of the children. When the section is implemented, we hope that parents will be consulted about the future of their children and that the whole process will be much tidier than it is today, with tragic consequences in many cases.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Can my hon. Friend tell me whether there was proper consultation with the organisations for the disabled, such as the Derbyshire Council for the Disabled, before the order was introduced? I wonder whether groups which specialise in assisting the disabled much more than happened 10 to 15 years ago have been consulted or whether they should be consulted. These are questions which should be answered.

Mr. Clarke: It is a fundamental question. The title of the Act is the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act. So the main thrust of the Act was to involve disabled persons or their representatives in decisions affecting them which are taken by the House and by local authorities. So when my hon. Friend asks whether I agree that there has been adequate consultation, I have to reply that I do not think so. Indeed, at a later point I wanted specifically to ask the Minister what consultation has taken place, and I think it would be helpful if we heard not only about consultation as between the various Government Departments and the local authority associations, but with the kind of organisations of and for disabled people which my hon. Friend mentioned.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend confirmed that the recently published Local Government and Housing Bill will include a section in relation to curtailing the rights of local authorities to co-opt on to various council committees. If it is confirmed that that is the Government's intention, many social services committees, including my own local authority's, who provide special places by co-option of disabled representatives will have to exclude them from consideration in voting in meetings of the social services committees.

Mr. Clarke: Again, I think my hon. Friend makes an excellent point, and I wonder whether, when the Minister or the Government consulted the local authority association which speaks for my hon. Friend's authority, that point was put to it. Certainly I think that we will be hearing a great deal more about it.

I was about to deal with section 7. On this point, especially when the Minister, I know, is discussing the whole issue of resources with the organisations involved, I think it is important that we should reaffirm the need, especially when informaton has been made available to people but not necessarily followed by either assessment or services, for adequate bridging funding to be made available and that that is again seen in the context of the Griffiths report, and indeed of the fairly overwhelming criticisms of discharge from hospital, not matched by either assessment or arrangements for people who are leaving hospital, criticisms which were made very strongly and profoundly by the Audit Office report and accepted unreservedly by Griffiths.

Therefore, we want to avoid the sort of issue which organisations like MIND remind us of time after time, such as the "revolving door" syndrome. We know that many people move out of hospital and then back again, perhaps into another hospital or into a local authority home, without any real assessment being made of their needs, and indeed of their place in society. So, in making the information available in the way the order would do, we want to ensure that those who wish to face the problem of proper assessments for people leaving hospital avoid the kind of problems we have seen and are properly resourced, because otherwise, as Sir Roy Griffiths has clearly indicated, the problem will continue and will be as unacceptable in the future as it has been in the past.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): One of the concerns about this order is that it is not much good designating local authorities if they do not carry out the functions my hon. Friend is talking about. Would he perhaps refer to the primary legislation which gave the power to introduce this order to see whether there is a means of making local authorities carry out their duties?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to call for monitoring, and my view, especially when we talk about consultation, is that there are no better people to monitor precisely what is going on than disabled people, their carers and the representatives themselves.

Section 8 deals with the duty of local authorities to take into account the abilities of the carer. In many ways in our society today, we exploit the good will and commitment of millions of carers, mainly women, in many parts of the country. Were they not as committed as they are, in many cases 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it would cost the Treasury millions of pounds to fill the gap. Therefore, I think we ought to hear a great deal more from the Government about the role of the carer, because if local authorities cannot take on board the carers' needs in relation to the disabled people that they are looking after, the whole relationship can break down as between the two people and, instead of avoiding extra cost, two people—the carer and the disabled person—are hospitalised, and institutionalised, and costing more money. Also, that is, socially quite unwise and unacceptable.

The order also brings the function in section 1 of the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 into the duties to be discharged through a local authority's social services committee. The Minister made it quite clear that that is where the responsibilities lie.

I extend a cautious welcome to the order. We shall not oppose it, but we believe that scrutiny is important. As my hon. Friends have made clear in their interventions, the role of the consumer is absolutely essential, information should be provided and there should be adequate consultation at every stage. We are dealing with the rights and needs of millions of people in Britain, and hon. Members should recognise those rights and needs and make it clear that we associate urgency with those objectives.

10.50 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Prolonging tonight's debate beyond the normal procedure provides an opportunity for those of us who are involved in local authorities, social services and the voluntary sector. I am involved in the care of the mentally disabled and the mentally ill.

Although we shall not divide the House, it is clear that the Government seek to give an impression that they are extending the ability of disabled people and other client groups needing the assistance of the social services to gain access to a whole new range of resources and facilities. However, the day-to-day running of social services departments reveals that their budgets are continually under stress to provide resources for their current obligations. In many local authorities, particularly in areas of urban deprivation, the staffing of social services departments is in crisis. In many instances, people involved in social services are continually hounded when crises occur and difficulties arise because departments are unable to provide an adequate service for their disabled clients and to carers in the community.

Therefore, it is important for the Minister to recognise that it is not simply a matter of setting down in an order the duties and responsibilities of local authorities, but that resources must be provided to enable those commitments to be carried out. Unless those resources are provided there will not be one additional facility for carers, one additional place for the mentally disabled, one additional hostel for the mentally ill, or one additional aid or adaptation, training place or employment place for the mentally disabled, nor will there be any additional resources for special educational needs for disabled persons when they reach the age of 19. The order will be absolutely meaningless if it is not coupled with a commitment to provide additional resources for local authorities to carry out their obligations.

Assessing the needs of disabled people without acting on that assessment is one of the greatest disincentives to carers in the community. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House through advice centres or through local authorities encounter cases of stress in which carers can no longer meet their obligations and reach the end of their tether because of the lack of respite care or additional assistance to help them to meet what they consider to be their family obligations.

I will give some personal examples of the problems that have arisen, are arising and will continue to arise unless the Minister provides the resources to go with the order. For the mentally ill, one of the great problems, as my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)

said, is that at the end of their treatment, whether it is 28 days of treatment or a three six months stay in a National Health Service hospital, they are immediately back in the community, sometimes with an adequate assessment and sometimes not. Often there is no assessment. They find themselves back in the stressful situation that brought about their mental collapse in the first place. They often go back to a hard-to-let local authority housing estate with no heating or cooling facilities and without resources to maintain themselves. They quickly find themselves back in a stressful position, and then back in hospital for a short or longer stay.

Care in the community for the mentally ill requires that in the assessment period of leaving the hospital and going back into the community there must be resources for hostel care and for day care. One great boon to people in my area is the local authority's commitment, along with the Grosvenor housing association, to build a number of core and cluster arrangements. Mentally ill people are thus not simply passed out of one hospital and back into the community and a stress situation. They come into the community either through the day care facilities or through the hostels, where the assessment of their needs can continue to be monitored and where assistance is given with jobs and other treatment that they require to ensure that they remain outside the hospital once their need has been assessed. They can then be brought back into the community.

It is a tragedy that many, especially those who suffer from schizophrenia, find themselves in hospital one day and the next day are given a bus pass and ticket back to the community from which they came and where there are few or no resources for the social services to cope with the problem. In many instances, the first stop is the magistrates court or Greater Manchester police, neither of which want or should be expected to cope with the problems caused by the inability of local authorities to provide for the needs of the mentally ill. On some occasions, magistrates send mentally ill people to prison for short or long periods simply because no resources are provided to treat mental illness or stress during a period of mental illness. Many people whose only crime is to suffer from mental illness are incarcerated in prisons as a result of the Government's failure to provide local authorities with the resources to care for the mentally ill.

That failure on the part of the Government is a scandal. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the former Under-Secretary of State, met me last autumn to discuss the crisis in the north-west region in terms of facilities for the care in the community of the mentally disabled. We have two of the largest mental institutions in Europe at Brockhall and at Calderstones outside Blackburn. Over the next 10 years, there is to be a process of bringing back into the community many mentally disabled people from throughout the north-west. Local authorities such as Wigan, Manchester, Oldham, Bolton, Preston and Blackburn have produced plans and resources to bring back into the community over 10 years either individuals or groups and to allow hundreds of people who have been unnecessarily maintained for 20 or 30 years in those large institutions to leave them. Yet that programme is in a state of collapse in the north-west because of the Government's inability to fund it properly, both in terms of the criteria for funding for the young mentally disabled and the criteria for dealing with the elderly or people who have a physical and mental handicap. In Wigan, the local authority is prepared to take about a dozen people from Brockhall and Calderstones hospitals over the next three years, but the programme has ground to a halt because of the inability to obtain assurances about the long-term funding of the programme.

What about the position of vaccine-damaged children? They are a product of society and the responsibility of all those of us who are committed to the principle of mass vaccination. In committing ourselves to that principle, we must bear in mind that even with today's improved vaccines a small proportion of children are at risk and will end up permanently brain damaged. Indeed, in most instances vaccine-damaged children are not just brain-damaged but due to the nature of the damage suffer physical as well as mental deprivation.

Many of the children who were vaccine damaged in the 1960s and 1970s are now reaching their teens and young adulthood. A young vaccine-damaged lad in my constituency is coming out of a special education establishment this week at the age of 19. Because of lack of resources and the inability and failure of the North Western regional health authority to provide additional care, the family will have to keep that lad at home seven days a week because no facilities are provided for him. The local authority is still prepared to try to assess and to give some day-centre care, but that is totally inadequate in relation to the order. The order places a requirement on the local authority to assess disabled persons leaving special education, but having carried out that assessment and stated the requirement of that young vaccine-damaged lad to have regular five days a week day-centre care the local authority does not have the resources to provide that care, purely and simply because of the Government's lack of commitment to providing the necessary resources for local authorities.

The order also places on local authorities an obligation to assess the needs of disabled persons. In radical authorities which deal with social services departments, much of that assessment will relate to training and employment opportunities. Thank God the days when people with mental and physical handicaps were shunned and pushed aside are over.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: As I understand it, these are affirmative orders introduced by the Government after the passage of the relevant Act, and the whole argument for doing this by affirmative order was that the Government were not prepared to implement the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 until the resources were available. I assume that by bringing the order forward at this time, although the Minister did not say so, the Government are making some commitment to providing those resources now.

Mr. McCartney: The Minister may wish to intervene to reply to that, and I hope that he will do so in the affirmative. My current experience and knowledge of constituents cases and the assessments that are taking place suggests that is not the case, but I shall be glad if the Minister can prove me wrong. I should be even more glad if he would give a commitment that once an assessment is carried out under the order local authorities will be given the resources to carry out the requirements of the assessment.

I assume that one of the areas of assessment of the needs of disabled persons—again, the Minister may

[Mr. McCartney]

intervene to say whether my assumption is right—will be the assessment of the ability of mentally or physically disabled persons to undertake training and employment. Local authorities with a commitment to ensuring that mentally and physically disabled persons are given an opportunity to play a full role in society and are not simply placed on one side in day-care facilities already assess them for training and employment.

My local authority has such a training and assessment centre—the Fourways training assessment centre. The Department of Health has used that centre's facilities for training its staff in techniques for assessing mentally and physically disabled persons. Given that there is a care in the community policy and that the Government have given local authorities such as my own the commitment to provide facilities in the community for those discharged from hospital, it seems to follow that part of that discharge assessment should be an assessment for training and employment purposes. That being so, let us suppose that my local authority is left in the next financial year with about two dozen assessments of people coming out of hospital, and that those assessments show that some form of training must be provided—a small proportion of those persons have prospects of employment—where do the Government stand in terms of providing resources for my local authority to carry out its commitment? From the Minister's rather short statement, it appeared that no such resources would be forthcoming, so the assessments will lie in a social worker's desk not acted upon, and the disabled persons and their carers will be in the same position as they are now—scrubbing about for a meagre share of the local authority's resources.

What about respite for the carers? Section 8 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 provides that a local authority should take into account the abilities of the carer. My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West made an impassioned and, in my experience, a genuine plea for carers. There are more than 9 million people looking after people with all forms of physical and mental disabilities —an aunt, an uncle, a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister, a father, a mother or a husband. They are nursing someone either on a short-term basis or on the basis of long-term care in the community. That nursing can be sustained only if the local authority can provide resources to ensure that the carer is protected and assisted.

Many of the cases on which local authorities must take emergency action are those where carers cannot cope any more, because of the pressures and the nature of the disability of the individual concerned or because there has been insufficient care taken about their needs—which could be the facilities provided in the home for the disabled person or additional assistance. For example, a local authority, when considering the needs of a carer, may say that the assistance of a home help is required for a period. The Government have indicated that there will be a few resources for those carers. When the system breaks down, the local authority must provide emergency services at great and additional cost to ensure that the disabled person and the carer are not put at risk.

What about aids and adaptations? There is a commitment in this order to assessing the needs of a disabled person in that respect. Many local authorities over the past 10 years—through the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970—have identified tens of thousands of people in the local community who need assistance in the form of aids and adaptations. Those are personal aids or adaptations to their properties or even to a child's school, and other types of physical assistance to protect and enhance the life of a disabled person and sometimes the carer. As a result of Government cuts in resources, more and more local authorities are using the technique of reassessing criteria, whereby criteria are implemented in such a way that many disabled persons, who believe that they are entitled to assistance through aids and adaptations, find themselves turned down by a local authority agency. I believe that the provision for access to information will enhance the ability of a disabled person, or his or her representative, to challenge the sometimes unfair, impractical and downright unjust decisions of some social services departments, especially those controlled by Conservative local authorities, which want to cut back on the provision of aids and adaptations.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has been concentrating on the way in which local authorities will have their work cut out to carry out this provision. I wonder whether my hon. Friend has paid any attention to those people who currently live within the curtilage of the Tory-controlled Westminster city council who would be designated under this order. Those are the hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people sleeping rough, many of whom are disabled. We see them every morning and night. Is there any way in which they would be catered for under the order? Can my hon. Friend conceive of a situation where an authority such as Westminster city council, which is more concerned with selling off cemeteries than with this sort of provision, does not pay much attention to ensuring that people living rough, among whom would be many disabled, are taken into account?

Mr. McCartney: I have two things to say in reply, neither of them helpful to the disabled or to those who live rough in the community. Westminster city council has already redefined its criteria for dealing with its homeless so that it is rare that the mentally or physically ill who roam the streets of Westminster are catered for. Secondly, the Department of Social Security has almost completely removed funding for hostels for the mentally ill and disoriented in inner-city London. Many people sleeping rough in London tonight are doing so because of mental or physical disabilities. The Government have rejected those people and have withdrawn any funding to assst them, leaving it to the Salvation Army and other Christian organisations to look after those who, under the order, should have their needs assessed and catered for. That is the reality in 1989. In London tonight, as we talk here, people are not having their needs assessed and where they have been assessed cuts in Government resources mean that those assessments cannot be acted upon to the benefit of the disabled person.

Because of advances in medical technology, people with Down's syndrome are reaching middle age and even their 60s or 70s. The order will place a requirement on local authorities to give special consideration to the needs of the elderly disabled. They are a special and growing group of people with specific needs such as day care and respte care. They may have carers who are themselves elderly. A constituent of mine in his late 80s cares for his

mentally-handicapped son who is a pensioner. He is still caring for his son in the community, as he has done throughout his life. The assistance comes from the Labour-controlled authority in Wigan, but not all local authorities provide the same facilities. There is a patchwork of facilities throughout the country. The level of service and commitment often depends on the local authority.

I hope that the Minister will try to ensure that, whether the people who require the services through these assessments live in Wigan, Brighton or some Tory shire, the necessary resources are provided. Why should a disabled person in Wigan have day care and respite care while down the road in a Conservative-controlled authority that care would be denied because of cuts in local government budgets? If we are to look after the elderly and disabled in the community, there should be a minimum level of services based upon their assessments, irrespective of where they live.

The Minister should give the House a clear idea of his intentions on resources. Down's syndrome children may have educational, physical or training needs. Where are the resources for a planned programme of assessment during the development of such children? We do not want such a child to be assessed in its first months of life and then to be dependent on the commitment of the parents and the whim of the local authority throughout its life as a toddler, school child, teenager and adult. We require an ongoing assessment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman, throughout a good deal of his speech, has gone very wide of the order. I have been tolerant, but as other hon. Members are waiting to speak I now ask him to return to the order before us.

Mr. McCartney: I was referring to assessment needs, especially those set out in the order, but I take the point, Madam Deputy Speaker. An assessment should not happen just once during a disabled person's childhood, but should continue to identify and monitor the needs of the child or the carer. We are not undertaking crisis management for the disabled, but providing resources and types of services based on an assessment of that child's needs as it develops in the community.

I take what you say, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is why I attempted to look at the assessment set out in the order. I thank you for giving me that leeway and I shall now give the Floor to one of my hon. Friends.

11.16 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I must congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on making the point firmly that the Government ought to make resources available when they are designating these functions.

I was very disappointed that the Minister introduced the order in such a perfunctory way. Before I deal with the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 and the designation of that measure, perhaps I could ask the Minister about the Access to Personal Files Act 1987. It says at the bottom of the order:

> "Section 1 insofar as it applies to personal information held for any purpose of the local authority's social services functions"

shall be carried out by a social services committee.

But as I understand it, a social services function does not have to be carried out by the social services department itself, and may be taken on an agency basis.

I am aware that in the Greater Manchester area the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has taken on some of the functions of the local authority in child abuse cases. It has done an extremely good job. It carries out agency work for the city of Manchester and perhaps Rochdale and one or two other authorities in that area.

Will the Minister explain to me, if the local authority has an agency such as NSPCC to carry out its functions, how far that body must make its files and records available to a person as a result of the measure. A social services committee might have to make available information that it holds, under rules laid down in the order, but can the Minister tell me the position where a body is carrying out a function on behalf of a social services committee?

Mr. Skinner: As my hon. Friend is asking that question of the Minister, who is not prepared to tell the House what the order is about—and that necessitates a lot of probing questions from my hon. Friend—perhaps he might also ask the Minister whether, within this broad remit, it would be possible to include, say, private residential homes for the elderly and the disabled? We might get into a lot of controversial areas, where people make large sums of money, in Tory-controlled council areas in the main, farming out these elderly and disabled people, and making a killing out of the taxpayer and the state. The net result is that in many cases some of those disabled and elderly people in places like Kent are not getting the proper treatment, as has been shown on television recently. Do those homes come under the order?

Mr. Bennett: I am not sure of the position, and I ask the Minister to explain what it is. Like my hon. Friend, I deplore the use of such facilities by local authorities. I see no justification for a local authority to subcontract its responsibilities for caring for the elderly. However, the role played by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is unique, and it may be able to perform a useful function in the prevention of child abuse.

There remain a number of problems concerning access to information, non-accidental injury registers, and so on. I hope that the Minister will respond to the many questions asked by my hon. Friends, and those that I want to pose, and that he will throw some light on who is responsible for allowing access to information when delegation takes place. The Minister will appreciate that where non-accidental injury is suspected a whole series of complications arise about to what extent one reveals that information. He will also be aware of the problems created by the difference in attitudes between social workers, who generally favour declaring information, and members of the medical profession, who are often reluctant to divulge anything.

The other part of the designation order concerns the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. I hope that when the Minister replies he will expand on the question of statements relating to young people. When I served on the Committee dealing with the Education Act 1981, which set up the whole framework for statementing, concern was expressed at the way in which families often needed to contact the health visitor, social services department, and education

[Mr. Bennett]

department. The Act established that it is the education department's responsibility to prepare the statements on young people.

That system works reasonably well, though from time to time I receive complaints that the preparation of statements does not proceed fast enough, and that some children wait a considerable time. I am very conscious that, occasionally, local authorities appear to prepare statements in relation to the facilities that they have available, rather than to the needs of the child in question, which is most unsatisfactory.

Concern was also expressed that, the statement having been prepared, there was doubt over what would happen to the young person on reaching 16 or 19 years of age. The point pressed home in the Education Act 1981, and in the Education Reform Act 1987, was the need to make statutory provision for the disabled from age 16 to 19. The Government resisted that proposal, which was a sad feature of their policy. The Government should make it clear that when young disabled people wish to stay in full-time education until age 19, they must have an absolute right to do so, rather than let it be a matter of local authority discretion. However, many local authorities have produced imaginative schemes offering education up to age 19, and in some cases well beyond that.

Section 5 suggests that at the point at which young disabled complete their full-time education, there should be a duty on the local authority to make a decision as to whether they should be designated as disabled and appropriate provision made for them. I feel certain that all right hon. and hon. Members want appropriate facilities to be made available—though I am equally certain that, at present, no such facilities are provided.

I should like the Minister to explain why, as I read section 5 and the order, responsibility should be handed over from education officials to social services officials. It seems to me that what upsets both parents and the young people themselves is to be passed on from one person who is supposed to be offering advice and assistance to another. Once contact has been established and they are on first-name terms with the person visiting, the family does not want to be introduced to someone else and have to explain all the difficulties again. This is particularly the case with regard to handicapped children. A detailed knowledge of what a young person can and cannot do is necessary. It gives offence if that has to be explained to somebody else who blunders in and asks whether the young person can do a certain thing, when anyone who had read the files carefully or knows the family well would know that the child could not manage to do that thing for himself or herself. This is something that causes the family anxiety and embarrassment.

I hope the Minister can explain why it is absolutely necessary to pass responsibility from the education department to the social services department at this moment. It would have been much more imaginative to leave the responsibility with the local authority. It could then decide whether it was more appropriate for these functions to be carried out by the education people or by the social services people within the local authority.

Mr. Skinner: Has my hon. Friend noticed the early-day motion that I have put down relating to the Derbyshire county council and the way in which it has managed to introduce and increase help to what is called the Centre for Independent Living to enable disabled people to look after themselves? To what extent will they be covered by this order? Can my hon. Friend explain this or shall we have to ask the Minister?

Mr. Bennett: I am afraid my hon. Friend will have to ask the Minister.

I have had the opportunity of visiting several colleges in Derbyshire where they have been making very imaginative provision for young people between the ages of 16 and 19, and in some instances beyond 19. It is a very good example of a way to encourage people with handicaps to integrate within the student body. It is very interesting to see how the other students are, on the whole, supportive of people with multiple handicaps. It is of tremendous benefit to the young people themselves, to the other students and, of course, to the parents. What causes the parents concern, however, is that when these courses finish there is so often nothing available for the young persons. Therefore, it is very good that under this legislation the local authority should have a duty to plan what is to be available for the young people thereafter. It may not be the most appropriate thing suddenly to say that their education must stop at 18, 19, 21 or 23 and from then on somebody else has to deal with them. It may be that a young person will get sheltered employment; then it is a question of the Department of Employment and the opportunities that it can give. Or it may be that a young person will not be able to get paid employment of any sort, which may well mean a sheltered workshop or something provided by the local authority. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover that I very much appreciate the work that Derbyshire is doing.

Moving on to the question of carers, it is an important function of the local authority to ensure that an assessment of the carers in its area is carried out. I want the Minister to explain how he sees this assessment being carried out in those areas where local authorities and local health authorities are working together. I am very well aware that several of the joint-funded schemes which were to set up facilities for people returning to the community or for supporting carers have had their money progressively reduced on the basis that those schemes were to pump-prime and, once they were completed, the local authority would take over responsibility. The difficulty is that the Government have created major funding problems for local authorities.

Mr. McCartney: May I give an example of the capital and revenue consequences for local authorities taking on such joint functions? A scheme is currently being operated in Scot lane, Wigan, involving three children—severely mentally disabled—who have reached the age to leave their special school. The local authority has adapted a bungalow and provided resources through the regional health authority. Having taken on the commitment, the authority now finds, in the first financial year, that the cost of care is not £14,300 but £35,000 per child. The regional health authority has said, "Take it out of any surpluses in your budget."

Mr. Bennett: I accept my hon. Friend's point, and I am sure that the Minister, when he replies, will turn his attention to the problem of resources. It is good for such

legislation to exist, but it is nevertheless important for the Government to make money available, otherwise people's expectations are raised when they should not be.

Section 8 of the original Act—the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986—is entitled

"Duty of local authority to take into account abilities of carer."

That is very important. But there is nothing worse than someone going around and asking carers what they are able to do and what support they need and then saying, "We cannot give you that support, because we cannot afford it." That, I am afraid, happens time and time again. I find it very distressing when people come to me in my constituency saying that they want their accommodation adapted and that the local authority, having made imaginative suggestions, then says that it cannot afford such adaptations.

Local authorities often delay payment. I sometimes suspect that they do so because they know that the way to avoid paying is to wait for the people concerned—particularly those who are elderly or disabled—to die before their accommodation can be adapted.

Mr. Skinner: I have listened carefully for about an hour to my hon. Friends, in the main—the Minister has not said much—and have come to the conclusion that there is something very sinister about the order. I am now convinced that it involves not only a transfer of designations but a question of passing the buck and the resources. My guess is that under the order local authorities will be burdened with having to carry out functions which will cost a hell of a lot and, because of demographic changes, will become increasingly burdensome. The net result will be that the Government will not provide the money.

I think that the proposal is merely cosmetic. It started off as a tiny little order, and we were supposed to believe that it did not really matter. There is a little explanatory note on the back. The Government do nothing unless it is part of a grand strategy, and I suspect that the present plan is to shift the provision of resources from taxpayers in the top bracket—who will be relieved of paying tax over and over again—and shove it on to the ratepayers. I think that my hon. Friend's last remarks hit the nail on the head.

Mr. Bennett: Indeed, every constituency in the country will be affected. My hon. Friend ought to know the history.

One of our hon. Friends was successful in the ballot and, in 1985-86, introduced a Bill to help disabled people. The Government did not have the courage to vote against it; they worked hard to water it down, but had to allow it on to the statute book. They then inserted at the end a provision that the legislation would not come into force until this and other orders were implemented.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend made an interesting analogy referring to the period between assessment of a person's needs and implementation of the requirement of that assessment. Many local authorities find that, having decided that someone needs a downstairs bath or bedroom extension, they must wait until the end of the financial year to see whether there is any slippage in the capital programme so that they can shift resources from one head of expenditure to another. Without such an arrangement disabled people, having been assessed, will require more resources for the assessment to be carried out and the construction costs met.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend's intervention illustrates that, while a little help can be provided for the disabled by way of designation and the use of words, nothing can replace the provision of real resources. I gather that in 1986 the Government did not want to put up the money, otherwise they would have made it a more attractive measure, and they would not have insisted on it being watered down.

Since the 1986 Act was passed, the disabled organisations have been lobbying the Government to implement it, and the Government have spent nearly three years delaying its implementation. Now, by way of a designation order and with minimal explanation from the Minister, they are implementing it without mention of the money that will be necessary for local authorities to carry out their functions.

As a result, local authorities will have more duties and the expectations of the disabled will be raised. Those expectations will be dashed and the Government hope that the local authorities will get the blame. That fact must be nailed to the Government tonight, unless the Minister says that money will be forthcoming.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend referred to the assessment of need that will have to be made by the local education department and the social services department. Local authorities are currently trying, from their own resources, to implement the Warnock recommendations relating to the special needs of the disabled in a normal skilled environment. The order will create a conflict of interest between those two local authority departments. The social services department will have to make an assessment of, say, a disabled child, but that will involve the interest of, and resources belonging to, the local education department. Will the Government in future measures such as this try to reconcile the Warnock recommendations with the additional resources required to meet the special educational needs of the disabled?

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I agree with the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has been making about rate support grant cuts hurting the social services and about the Government not providing sufficient resources for disabled people and carers.

Is my hon. Friend aware that a serious legal problem could arise under the order? Under the headings "Enactment" and "Nature of functions", we read:

"Section 1 insofar as it applies to personal information held for any purpose of the local authority's social services functions."

Then, under "Nature of functions", we read:

"Obligation to give access etc."

In terms of the disabled, "access" means getting out and about. Does this mean having access to, say, the town hall or access to Parliament? The latter is absolutely rotten for the disabled. I am thinking of one of my constituents, a little girl with a wasting disease living in an upstairs room and not having access——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make a speech, I am sure he will catch my eye. At the moment he is intervening and, I assume, putting a pertinent question.

Mr. Cohen: Does my hon. Friend think that a legal problem may arise from the use of the word "access" in the order? It may be concerned with access to information, but could it mean that local authorities must give access to all their disabled people to enable them to get out and about? If so, I welcome it, although it will make the gap between need for provision and lack of resources that much worse.

Mr. Bennett: I shall leave my hon. Friend to pursue that himself; perhaps the Minister will answer his point.

My questions for the Minister are: will the local authorities be given the resources with which to carry out their designated functions? How will the section dealing with the Education Act 1981 operate? Will it cause distress to families passing from the remit of the education departments to that of social services departments? Will he clarify the position of people carrying out agency responsibilities for social services departments?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has asked the Minister about five questions in five seconds flat. We all know that the Minister, who airily dismissed the subject at the outset, will not answer those questions. He thinks he is like his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—he wants to be left alone; he will not give interviews to anyone; he will not go anywhere. It seems that the disease is spreading along the Tory Front Bench.

Mr. Bennett: Surely my hon. Friend always travels hopefully. The Minister has a vested interest in getting to the Dispatch Box and using some of the allotted hour and a half. If he does not answer our questions, we and the people outside the House will draw our conclusions: the Government will not put up any more money.

11.42 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am a bit concerned about this order. There seems little point in designating local authorities' functions if they are not given the money and the will to carry them out.

The functions listed include authorisation for representatives of disabled people to act as advocates. Voluntary organisations have already embarked on that in Bradford. There has been some argument about whether people who are trained by local authorities will push for community care or whether they can be fully independent. The order brings into effect the parent legislation, providing such representation through the local authority. I hope that the Minister can assure me that representatives will not represent the local authority point of view.

There is a large hospital for the mentally handicapped in my constituency, and there has been a move to close it. Parents and relatives of the patients, who are being well cared for in the hospital, are resisting that move because they strongly suspect that the plan is to close the hospital and use the land—set in a handsome part of Bradford, with rolling green acres and a cricket field—for building development. The site resembles a college setting. There was dispute about some of the case conferences involving patients in Westwood. The local authority policy at the time was to move people into community care—a position for which there is a case. But the people concerned, whose views I stoutly defended, thought that the closure of an important facility such as Westwood hospital was an act on which there was no going back. If the community care proves to be faulty, and the local authority cannot cope because of the lack of Government funds, it is not easy to find the £750,000 required to reopen a redundant building, even if it is not immediately razed to the ground and sold off to developers. At the moment that is not envisaged because the regional health authority has the notion of forming a village community, part of the land being sold off to a developer, and the builder, in return, providing a number of designated houses so that there would be, as it were, care in the community, but with the back-up and community facilities of the hospital. It is absurd to suggest that there are, let us say, speech therapy facilities available for tiny groups in the community—perhaps half a dozen living in a community house. The facilities available at a specialised hospital such as Westwood could cater for 15 to 20, and one assumes that if people are out in the community they will come back.

My point is that there was a fear that the representatives would be appointed by the local authority and would present a local authority point of view exclusively without recognising the very great care provided and the virtue of retaining a hospital like Westwood.

Mr. McCartney: The situation is much worse than that. Regional health authorities automatically reduce the budget of the hospital where the disabled person——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have been listening carefully and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has strayed very far from the order. The hon. Member who is now intervening is going even further away. I call Mr. Cryer, to return to the order.

Mr. Cryer: Madam Deputy Speaker, I must point out that one of the enactments listed in paragraph 2 of the order, subject to exceptions, is the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, sections 1 to 5, 7 and 8, which specifically provide for representation and assessment of disabled persons. The point that I was making, although it was a bit wide, was by way of illustration and concerned the authorised representation of disabled people.

I wish to add one or two brief points. I am concerned that if the local authority is to be designated to carry out those functions the Government will require them to do so. We have in Bradford a Tory-controlled local authority which, through the mayor's casting vote, has reversed a great many policies which I must tell the Ministers were carried out in some areas by consensus. The reason why we lost a by-election in Odsal ward in my constituency was simply that a lot of people thought that things would go on pretty much as before in terms of the provision of basic services. They have been horrified that the Bradford Tory-controlled local authority—the mayor-controlled local authority—is proposing to sell off 13 old people's homes.

If the local authority is busy getting rid of functions that everybody accepts are basic prerequisites of local authority care, what is the good of this sort of order? What is the point if a local authority such as Bradford is just going to ignore it or, indeed, discard it? As the Government are going to place these duties on local authorities, will they give them the necessary facilities—in

my opinion, Bradford council will use any excuse not to do these things—or will he require them to ensure that they understand and implement the order?

11.49 pm

Mr. Freeman: This has been an illuminating debate, and I shall try, for the benefit of the whole House, to answer the questions that have been put to me.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) talked about the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. It is an Act very much associated with his name. The House will recall the Bill's proceedings three years ago. Sections 1 to 5, 7 and 8, as he correctly pointed out, deal with the representation and assessment of disabled persons. I confirm that the powers contained in the sections are being designated as being appropriate for discharge by a local authority social services committee.

The hon. Gentleman asked also about consultation with local authorities and with disabled and voluntary organisations. I confirm that there has been consultation not only with local authorities but with a wide range of interested parties, including voluntary organisations.

The hon. Members for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and Monklands, West asked about the implications of the order for the availability of resources to implement in particular the consequences of section 7. As the hon. Member for Monklands, West told the House, referring to a recent debate in the House, I confirmed that discussions between the Department of Health and local authorities were continuing—they have been going on for some time—about the financial implications of implementing the various sections of the 1986 Act which have not so far been implemented. I told the House that we hoped to bring those discussions to a conclusion in due course when we have analysed thoroughly the financial implications of the assessment and discharge from psychiatric hospitals into the community of those suffering from mental illness. As I said in that debate, it is very important to get right the assessment of the resources before taking further steps.

Mr. McCartney: When I met the former Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), she gave a commitment to come to Yorkshire to see the provision on the ground and to discuss the resource needs of my local authority. We cannot believe everything the hon. Lady says, but in the circumstances can the Minister say whether he is prepared to take on the commitment made last autumn to visit my local authority to see the assessments and to consider what resources are necessary?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) had, and still has, considerable energy. I may not measure up to her ability to visit different parts of the country. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me, I shall consider his suggestion.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Can my hon. Friend enlarge on his statement? Earlier he used the words "in due course". Can he say whether that is likely to be the spring or the summer?

Mr. Freeman: This might be an appropriate moment, in seeking to answer my hon. Friend's question, to link the answer with the answer to another question about when we expect to bring our conclusions on the Griffiths report to the House. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health said in the House about a week ago, we have not yet decided on the best way to proceed. We are still deliberating. As he said, we hope to finish our deliberations shortly and to bring our proposals to the House. I envisage that our conclusions in relation to the implementation of sections of the 1986 Act will fit into that framework. As I said in the Adjournment debate on the transfer of the mentally ill into the community, I am well aware of the concern felt on both sides of the House about the need for their continuing care in the community and for proper provision to be made.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I think it is accepted that Sir Roy, to the surprise of many people on the Government side of the House, saw a major role for local government. I hope we can be assured that the Government's hang-up, and especially the Prime Minister's hang-up, about local government will not impede them in reaching a sensible conclusion.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have no hang-up about local government. As I said, we are well aware of the importance of this issue. We are still deliberating and we will bring our conclusions to the House shortly.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked me a number of questions. He asked whether agencies such as the National Society for the Protection of Children were covered. The answer is no. As I am sure he appreciates, we are dealing only with the application to local authorities. However, I can tell him —and I am sure he knows this—that many voluntary organisations do have an open access policy to their records, and it is a policy that I, on behalf of the Government, very much appreciate and encourage.

The hon. Member also asks me about the clarity of distinction between local education authority functions and social services department functions. I draw his attention to section 5 of the 1986 Act. I think that there he will find the clear reference to those functions of a local authority which fall to the local education authority, or that part of the local authority's education functions, and I think that distinction is clear.

It is important to appreciate that the designation of functions order is to remedy a defect in the original private Member's Bill. That is not a criticism of the original Bill, but the effect of the order is to make it lawful for social services committees and directors of social services to deal with the 1986 Act and the 1987 Act.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is it true that a young person on whom there is a statement kept will have guidance coming from the education department until he completes his full-time education, and at that point responsibility for that young person will be handed back to social services? Can he justify that?

Mr. Freeman: I do not wish to mislead the hon. Gentleman by giving him an answer which may be ambiguous. I understand the significance of the question and, although I do not believe it is directly relevant to this order, I do undertake to write to him.

He also asked me about the Education Act 1981 on statementing, that is, assessing special needs children. Of course, this is a matter more properly for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science

[Mr. Freeman]

but it should be done in co-operation with the involved parents, and the information is often but not always shared.

I hope that I have dealt with and answered to the best of my ability the questions raised during this brief debate, and I hope that the House realises, as I am sure it does, that this order is dealing purely with the designation of functions to the local authority social services committee. The order is clear. It has been debated.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 108, Noes 0.

Division No. 82] **[11.58 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Durant, Tony
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Nil

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Harry Cohen.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Local Authority Social Services (Designation of Functions) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 19th December, be approved.

Access to Personal Files

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): It may be for the convenience of the House if we take motions 3 and 4 together. [HON. MEMBERS: "Object."] Objection taken. We shall deal with them separately.

12.5 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move

That the draft Access to Personal Files (Social Services) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 16th January, be approved.

Before I come to the substance of the access regulations, it may be helpful to hon. Members if I say a few words about the background to them. The regulations apply the Access to Personal Files Act 1987. That Act, as no doubt hon. Members will recall, was promoted with great sensitivity by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). It was keenly debated in both Houses and was subject to extensive discussion in Committee.

The Data Protection Act 1984 enables people to know what is recorded about them in computer records. The regulations before us tonight are concerned with records which are not covered by the data protection legislation —they deal with records kept manually. However, in drafting the regulations we have sought as far as practicable to keep in line with the corresponding provisions in the data protection legislation so as to avoid confusion, particularly as an authority may be using both methods for keeping its records.

During the passage of the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 a commitment was given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington), the then Minister of State, Home Department, that, subject to no difficulties being encountered in the consultation process, regulations would be made and that we would endeavour to make them by the end of 1988. We virtually achieved that and they will be made as soon as the necessary approval has been given by Parliament. In their preparation we have consulted widely with organisations representing local authorities, voluntary organisations, health service interests and other concerned bodies.

In the previous debate on the Local Authority Social Services (Designation of Functions) Order, I stated that we had followed that procedure strictly in relation to the draft order.

To allow authorities time to adjust their procedures, it is intended that the regulations should be brought into force on 1 April. To assist authorities, we are issuing guidance to them. Circular LAC (89) 2, which was issued in January, gave advice on social services records and is, of course, subject to approval being given to the regulations by Parliament; a copy of the circular is in the Library of the House.

Much interest was expressed during the passage of the 1987 Act in access to medical records——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I understand that the circular to which the Minister has just referred states, in relation to the charging of fees, that the authority will no doubt take into account applicants' ability to pay. Does that mean that his Department is encouraging local authorities not to charge any fee, or does he envisage that local authorities may have a sliding scale of fees and decide whether to charge depending on the circumstances of a particular applicant?

Mr. Freeman: I shall deal with that point now, although I was intending to come to it a little later. The hon. Gentleman knows that the proposal is that there should be a maximum fee of £10, but it will be up to local authorities to charge at their discretion. I understand that some local authorities will wish to waive or abate fees depending on the financial circumstances of the individual seeking access to personal files. That is perfectly consistent with the regulations. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's point.

As I was saying, much interest was expressed during the passage of the 1987 Act in access to medical records. Those records were excluded from the Act, but we undertook to hold talks with the medical profession on a voluntary code of practice on access to medical records. Those discussions are proceeding. An agreement has not yet been reached, although substantial progress has been made.

I am determined to see the establishment of a voluntary code shortly. If there is any question of further delay, I shall meet with the profession's representatives myself to ensure that a voluntary code is concluded satisfactorily. Once we have had the profession's agreement, I think it right that we should consult also other non-medical health professionals who maintain records on patients and those bodies that represent patients' interests.

After that outline of the background to the regulations, I turn to the regulations themselves, starting with the social services regulations. The Access to Personal Files Act 1987 takes forward the establishment of individuals' rights to know what was recorded about them by local authority social services departments. In 1983 the then Secretaries of State issued to local authorities in England and Wales general guidance on the principles governing disclosure of information in the records in question to people who were the subject of the information. The Secretaries of State said that they shared the increasingly held view that people receiving those services should, subject to adequate safeguards, be able to discover what was said about them in those records.

The following year the Data Protection Act was enacted. This included provisions enabling individuals generally to see what was recorded about them in computer records. Orders were made under that Act to add to the general safeguards in relation to social work records.

There are circumstances where it would not be right to grant access to all the available information, and I will explain those circumstances, but first I should emphasise that it should be exceptional for information to be withheld and, even then, it should be possible to release most of the available information, though some may need to be made anonymously to conceal the identity of a third party. For the most part, information held manually in social service records will become readily available. I hope that the House accepts that sentiment and the general principle running through our approach in these regulations. In framing the regulations, we have kept as closely as possible to the provisions of the data protection legislation and the guidance issued by the Data Protection Registrar who has been consulted about them.

Following a request from an individual, a local authority will have to tell that person whether it holds

[Mr. Freeman]

information about that person and to give that person access to it. That includes expressions of opinion. Although the Act does not confer a right of access to any indication of the intentions of the authority towards that person, we have recommended authorities to let him or her know of them. Generally, it is good practise to do so in the course of an individual's continuing care rather than waiting for a formal request for access. We have said that this should be seen as part of a process of encouraging users of services to participate as far as possible in actions concerning them. Similarly, the Act only requires access to be given to so much of a person' record, before these regulations come into force, as is necessary to make the accessible information intelligible. We have advised authorities that there is likely to be significant advantage in them making available as much information as possible. That could lead to a greater clarity and understanding of an individual's background, especially in a child care case.

Access may be by supplying an individual with a copy of the information or by such other means, such as letting that individual see the information. If, however, the individual, having seen the accessible information, requires a copy of it, he or she must be given one. If any of the information is not intelligible without explanation, the individual is to be given an explanation of it. That would apply if, for example, the authority holds the information in a coded or abbreviated form or if it is in professional jargon which cannot be understood without the key to the code of meaning. The explanation should be sufficient to make the information intelligible to people unconnected with the authority. In some cases the individual may still not be able to understand fully the information, but should be able to take it to another person for advice.

As I have said, the authority will be able to charge a fee of up to £10 for access at its discretion.

Some of the information which the authority holds may contain material provided by a health professional. Where this is the case the local authority will have to notify the health authority, or the health professional person, if not employed by a health authority within 14 days of receiving the request. Where either the health authority or the health professional says that access must not be given to the information, or part of it, the local authority is relieved of its obligation to grant access. The circumstances where a health authority or health professional may do this are when access is likely to give rise to a risk of serious harm to the health of the individual or another person, or where access would enable a third party—other than a health professional—to be identified, or for him to be identified as the source of the information. I sense that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) will ask for the definition of a health professional. He will find it in the details of the regulations.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The local authority will have a great deal of work to carry out. Is the Minister satisfied that the £10 fee—that is the maximum sum; the local authority might wish to charge less—will cover the cost of carrying out the work? If not, will the Minister provide money for local authorities to ensure that the regulations are carried out?

Mr. Freeman: The earlier intervention dealt with the effect of the regulations on the person making the application and the hon. Gentleman is more concerned about the financial consequences for the local authority. Clearly the local authority will look at the financial implications of the regulations by averaging the cost implications of all the applications made during the course of a financial year. It is not possible to guarantee——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: I am still trying to answer the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will contain himself, I shall reply as fully as I am able to his hon. Friend who is trying to elicit information from me in order to inform the House of these important regulations.

The local authority will consider the financial implications by averaging the number of applications made during the course of a financial year. Hon. Members will not expect me to give a guarantee that the cost of local authority personnel in preparing an answer to a particular access question will be covered. But during the course of a financial year I am sure that a local authority will look at the average costs. As I said earlier, it is open to a local authority to abate or waive a charge if the local authority believes that a certain category of residents in the local authority area deserve such treatment.

The local authority may withhold other information in certain circumstances. We have told authorities that that decision should be taken at senior management level. Information may be withheld because of a risk of serious harm to the health or emotional condition of the individual or a third party. We have said that withholding information on that ground would be most exceptional.

Information may also be withheld because the identity of a third party, other than a member of the staff or a paid carer, would be revealed or could be identified as its source. The local authority is required to notify a third party of the receipt of a request for access and to seek consent to access, but access may not be given without that consent unless the information can be made anonymous.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister said that the charge can be up to £10. Will that figure be a straight poll tax right across the board for everybody who wants access? What happens if at the end of a year a local authority discovers that the charge that is has levied is not sufficient to meet all the costs? Will the Government make up the difference? Will the Government give advice, as they did on charges for eye and teeth checks, that some will pay and some will not on the basis of means? What will happen if a local authority fails to charge sufficient to cover its costs? Will the Government foot the bill?

Mr. Freeman: The generous rate support grant settlements announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for all local authorities in the financial year 1989-90 are more than sufficient to cover the costs involved in bringing into effect the regulations that I have been describing to the House.

If the authority does not receive the third party's consent within the 40-day time limit, the authority has to give access to as much of the information as possible without revealing the other person's identity or that the third party is the source of the information.

The local authority may also withhold information where it is held for the prevention of crime; where it comprises reports which magistrates courts may withhold; where it is subject to legal professional privilege; or where disclosure is restricted by the law relating to adoption or special educational needs.

Children who have the understanding to make a request for access are entitled, like adults, in accordance with the general law, to see what is recorded about them. Where a child does not have this capacity, a parent or a person with the legal power to act as a parent in relation to the child will be able to make a request for access for information recorded about the child.

Detailed guidance has been given to local authorities about dealing with a request from or in relation to a child, along the lines of that given by us in respect of the data protection arrangements. The access regulations allow an individual aggrieved at being refused access to appeal to a committee of the local authority. This is, of course, additional to any general rights that the individual has to apply to the courts—for example, for judicial review—or, in the case of maladministration, to the local government ombudsman.

The access regulations, along with the corresponding parts of the data protection legislation, provide individuals comprehensively with a right of access, subject to certain specified safeguards, to the records of the local authority services involved, whether they are kept on computers or by traditional means. The legislation is contributing to the development towards greater sensitivity to the needs of individuals in delivering services and support.

I expect that these sensible regulations will have the broad support of all hon. Members. They are very much in sympathy with earlier statements by Ministers about the implications of the 1987 Act and the Data Protection Act, and I commend them to the House.

12.27 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am sorry that the Minister thought that I was attempting to intervene when I was merely shaking my head at his statement about the generous rate support grant. I had the privilege of visiting the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) a few months ago, and I discovered that his local authority was threatened with rate-capping. It had responsibilities in social services but could not carry them out. We do not want the Government to say, as a result of the order, that authorities will have to raise the money from some other aspect of the social services budget. I fear that many authorities will be in that position.

The order deals with access to personal files and social services obligations. It relates not just to the Data Protection Act 1984 but to the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 which was introduced by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and has made such an impact on our discussions. The access provisions would allow people to examine records kept manually or in any other non-computerised form. It is true that good practice already exists in some local authorities, which are already preparing for the orders because they believe in the individual rights that the orders and the Act embrace. We cannot disregard this need. Local authorities and their associations rightly remind us time and again of the need for training so that they will have staff capable of dealing with the problems of administration. All that must be adequately resourced. Following a request from an individual, the local authority will have to tell that person whether it holds personal information and give him or her access to it.

Other arrangements can be made to satisfy the rights of the citizen. The Minister has referred to the fee, and there has been an exchange about that. We understand that at the moment the maximum would be £10. There is in that a whiff of a means test. People should not have to satisfy a test of that kind to obtain information to which they are entitled.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend agree that a local authority such as Bradford, which is Conservative controlled by virtue of the mayor's casting vote, will tend to charge the maximum fee while Labour—controlled authorities, keen on open government, will tend to impose lower fees? Labour authorities will then be criticised for devoting resources to providing a service that the Government urge them to support.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend, with his experience of Bradford's newly-elected authority, will be proved right. The tragedy is that the Government will blame local authorities—saying that it is a matter of choice, and that local authorities are denying people the information to which they are entitled. In the absence of proper resourcing, we are entitled to make that charge.

Mr. Skinner: In the event of a Tory-controlled local authority, such as Bradford, being hell bent on charging maximum fees while a neighbouring authority charges, say only £2, the public and local authority employees may be so incensed that the information will be leaked for nothing. The Government are adept at leaks. Their files appear to be scattered all over Whitehall and Westminster, with people picking them up at will. Brown envelopes arrive in everyone's mail every other week. It is conceivable that someone offended by massive charges being imposed by a Tory-controlled authority such as Bradford may say to himself, "I feel sorry for the public —they have been mistreated already under the social services provisions and they need the information that I can provide." That individual may be tempted to release the information by using the system of leaking—the Westland form of leak—so widely employed by the Government.

Mr. Clarke: Bradford appears to be emulating many aspects of the Government's approach which we find unacceptable. I trust that in respect of leaks, Bradford's Conservatives will not be so foolish as to follow the Government's lead—otherwise they may find themselves in Europe. However, if I develop that point, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will instruct me to return to the subject of the debate.

The Minister spoke of exemptions from the general provisions of the order. He mentioned health, professional persons, and so on. Those are important exemptions, and when the Data Protection Bill was debated we learned the reasons for them. Nevertheless, we must be careful to avoid abuses and to ensure that the public fully understand why those exemptions exist.

We have the advantage of having previously debated a similar order in respect of Scotland. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will make more relevant responses

[Mr. Clarke]

than did his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who may have answered off the cuff but did not enter into the spirit of the Access to Information Act 1984 or of the order. On that occasion, there was a discussion about children's panels, which do not exist in Scotland. Perhaps the Children Bill will correct that omission.

We welcome the consultations that the Minister says have taken place, but I should like more detail than the outline given in the hon. Gentleman's introductory speech. Perhaps he will provide that later. Nevertheless, the order gives meaning to the Data Protection Act 1984. Social workers agree that it will lead to the provision of better records, and to more informed decisions by social workers. Such records are by their very nature complex, containing a mixture of opinion and fact and a great deal of third-party information, but some of this makes it difficult to open up such records widely to the public.

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), who has considerable experience of these matters in the Health Service, made it clear that the Labour party is utterly committed to opening up medical records as well. Our commitment is based firmly on extensive consultation and, by agreement with the medical profession, ensuring all the necessary safeguards. If the Government have been involved in consultation to the extent that the Minister claims, can he tell us whether we are any further forward in opening up medical records even on a non-statutory basis? The House looks forward to his reply on that point.

The £10 maximum that the Minister suggested did not seem to be all that much but might be different for a person on income support. Happily there are councils, including Strathclyde, which have decided to exercise their discretionary power and say there will be no charge at all, and it may be that even Bradford will catch up on that laudable approach. What is interesting—the Minister referred to this—is that the DHSS does not plan to charge for similar information under the Data Protection Act 1984. The Minister might consider whether charges mean that we are putting up a barrier which might prevent some people, perhaps many people, from seeking the information to which they are entitled.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does my hon. Friend accept that many such people will be young people in care, who would naturally turn to those responsible for that care—the social services department—to come up with the fee? It should be absolutely clear that anyone up to the age of 18 who is being financed by the local authority ought not to be charged.

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. He has made the point that very often the people most in need of information and with the greatest right to have access to it will be penalised because they simply cannot afford to get it.

The Minister has confirmed that 1 April will be the date of introduction of this measure. The lead-in time seems rather short and notwithstanding the consultations there are bound to be difficulties with third parties, professionals, and so on, who may not necessarily be acquainted with the obligations. I wonder just how difficult that timescale will be seen to be.

The Minister used the expression "serious harm" yet again today. Serious harm and, indeed, harm in itself really ought to mean that we have a clearer definition of what is involved. We are being told that people cannot have access to information because it would lead to serious harm according to somebody's interpretation. We are entitled to know whose interpretation it is, where the expression arises and how meaningful serious harm will be in application.

Does the Minister agree that the 40-day rule could definitely cause problems, for example if the consultant was on holiday? If no reply is given within 40 days it is accepted that the information can be made available, but the consultant, on reflection, might not have wished that.

The Under-Secretary of State, when responding to this point in the Scottish debate, said that another consultant could give an opinion, but the other consultant might not be so aware of the circumstances as the consultant dealing with the case. Therefore, although we endorse the principle that there be a number of days allocated, it is important that the Minister should monitor that. I raise this constructively if only because it is right to bear in mind the views of the applicant, to whom 40 days may well seem a very long time.

Mr. Skinner: There could be a further complication. My hon. Friend has referred to consultants and the 40-day period. We heard a few days ago that the Government intended to introduce new proposals for hospitals and others to opt out. That will affect consultants very seriously. Is it just conceivable that the order could be overtaken by a Bill changing the procedures affecting consultants? Might not the whole arrangement, in certain circumstances, become deformed?

Mr. Clarke: I have no doubt that my hon. Friend, with his sharp intellect, has identified yet another possible defect. It would not surprise me in the least if we saw such examples.

The financial burden on local authorities is obvious, but even if pilot schemes are to take place the Government have given no indication of their global thinking or their attitude to proper resourcing. Will the Minister look sympathetically on requests that he receives from local authorities anxious to carry out their statutory duties and to respond to individuals' right of access to information? Have the implications of the regulations been discussed with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work? Certainly everyone involved in social work takes the view that training is important. New obligations are being placed on social workers. They are the subject of constant unfair criticism, and I think it right that we should ask whether that body has been asked for its opinion.

What are the implications for the voluntary agencies? Again, there must be cost implications. I trust that a Government who claim to believe in "voluntarism" have taken that point on board.

In the earlier debate one of my hon. Friends referred to the number of mentally handicapped and mentally ill people in prison. Perhaps we should also hear about any problems and costs imposed on the prison service.

The regulations do not seem to lay an obligation on local authorities to notify people when parts of the record are withheld. In my view, people should know when information is not complete. The Data Protection Act

1984 provides a right of appeal first to the registrar and then to the courts. I invite the Minister to deal with that in his reply.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who introduced the Access to Personal Files Act 1987, must feel somewhat disappointed. Clearly even the regulations as presented by the Minister are bound to lead to delays and extra costs. I wonder whether they reflect properly the spirit of the Act and the fact that it was so well received by the House. There are times when I feel that the Government display indifference, if not at times hostility, to Acts that are on the statute book as a result of the activities of private Members. That is most unfortunate. That Act, in common with others, arose because of the will of both Houses—reflecting, we hope, some measure of democratic input—and the Government should respect such views.

12.43 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): As previous speakers have pointed out, the regulations implement provisions of an Act piloted through the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who deserves much credit for his dedication and application—although I am sure that he would acknowledge that he received widespread support from both sides of the House.

It should also be acknowledged that the Government have stuck reasonably closely to the timetable that was envisaged. The end of 1988 was given as the first date when these instruments would be introduced, and April 1989 does not represent too much slippage.

Exemption on the ground of serious harm represents some progress. I share the reservations of the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) about how that will be defined, but the fact that it is "serious harm" rather than, as originally proposed, simply "harm" is a step forward. Had it remained as "harm", a coach and horses could have been driven through the provisions.

When the measure was going through, there were, among many other areas where access to personal files was sought, calls for access to personal files in respect of education and further education. That call was withdrawn on the understanding that separate powers already existed in legislation which would enable the Government to bring forward in due course similar instruments for information to be made available in those circumstances. When does the Minister hope to publish that instrument—I understand that a consultation paper concerning schools has already been issued—and when will it come into force?

We should emphasise the significance of what we are doing. It is fundamentally right that people should see what is recorded about them on social services records. Apart from anything else, it gives them an opportunity to detect and correct mistakes which, if they were allowed to remain on the record unamended, could be damaging and not be in their personal interest. It allows them, one hopes, to have more say in decisions that might affect them. It acts as a discipline on those who keep records in that, hopefully, they will be more objective in what they record, avoiding unfair comments which, if put to the test, could not readily be substantiated.

It is regrettable that we are going about these matters in a piecemeal fashion. The Act and these instruments give rights to the citizen in regard to manual records which, in most respects, already exist for computerised records under the Data Protection Act 1984. So we have that Act for computerised records, these provisions for dealing with social services records, and another instrument, to which we shall come, relating to housing. Even so, that does not cover all the areas where one would like to have better access to information on individuals.

The instrument now before the House does not relate to local education authorities, welfare services or school psychological services. My hon. Friend's Act did not extend to housing associations, not because of any lack of desire on the part of my hon. Friend but because he realised that if he was to get his legislation through, it had to be in narrower terms that he would have liked.

Bearing in mind that, in the last Session, my hon. Friend succeeded with a measure covering medical records for employment and insurance purposes, it is clear that hon. Members in all parts of the House will continue to introduce or support private Members' Bills to extend the rights of the individual to have more information—and, in this case, information about themselves. It is regrettable that there could not be more general acceptance of the need for that so that it could be included in a global Bill, rather than having to proceed in this piecemeal fashion. We live in hope.

In his introductory remarks, the Minister referred to medical records and said that discussions were still taking place. I understood him to say that if progress was not made in the near future, he would intervene personally.

It is regrettable, too, that almost two years have elapsed since the then Minister of State, Home Office, now the Patronage Secretary, said in Committee on 1 April 1987:

> "If more openness is what hon. Members on both sides of the Committee want, they should know that they are pushing at an open door. The Government and the profession are in favour. Therefore, I am willing to give an undertaking today on behalf of my colleagues with responsibilities for health that they will enter into talks with the medical profession at an early stage with a view to achieving substantive and timely progress in opening up medical records further on a non-statutory basis."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 1 April 1987; c. 60.]

Perhaps something has got stuck behind that open door—perhaps it is still ajar. I hope the Minister will give it a good push. We have waited a long time, and it would be interesting to know where the log jam originates. If the Minister cannot give us a timetable for introducing a scheme, perhaps he will tell us how long he is prepared to wait before intervening personally. We are due a better and fuller explanation of what is going on.

Of course, in some circumstances it will not be in the interests of a person that full information should be given out. Serious harm could result in some cases. But it would be helpful to know whether the information given was all the information being held. The regulations do not provide for that, but it should be encouraged as a matter of good practice.

I also have serious reservations about the review of decisions in paragraph 11. If one is dissatisfied with a decision, one can appeal to a committee composed of three members of the same authority that made the decision. That conflicts with the Data Protection Act 1984. Much has been done to try to keep these two legislative spheres in parallel. Under that Act, people have recourse to the registrar and then to the courts. The Minister said that a person who is dissatisfied can take his case, by means of judicial review, to the courts, or appeal to the local

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authority ombudsman. However, those are cumbersome courses of action, and not as simple for a person who is anxious for information as direct recourse to the courts. Practice may show this up as a weakness in the regulations. If so, I hope the Government will think again.

I have already brought up the issue of the £10 fee in an intervention. The legislation has compelled local authorities that might otherwise be dilatory and reluctant to provide social services information to adopt the good practices that are already practised by many others. Many authorities have adopted the 1983 circular encouraging them to good practice—but that guidance did not mention fees. Local authorities often give information without charging, and it would be regrettable if they now used their option to charge. Those most likely to need to call on social services departments for information will often—not always, but I suspect a strong correlation—be people in the lower income brackets.

In his reply to my intervention the Minister indicated that it would be possible for a local authority to waive or abate a particular fee. That, so far as it goes, is quite welcome, but it opens up the quite clear possibility that local authorities will have to introduce some rather complicated guidelines of their own to deal with the circumstances in which a fee may be waived or abated. It will involve at least some minor degree of means-testing, and I think it would be very preferable if no fee at all were to be charged. That would certainly be far simpler, and, as I have said already, would continue the practice that, in many cases, exists already.

The fee is charged for application and it is retained even if the applicant gets no information. This could cause considerable annoyance if, having paid the fee, one got no information, either because it had all been withheld or because there was no information there in the first place. It might have been fairer if the fee had related to information given—if there were to be a fee at all.

It is my understanding—and the Minister can correct me if I am wrong—that in addition to the fee of up to £10 that can be charged for manual records, access to which is covered by the present regulations, a £10 fee can be charged for access to computerised records under the Data Protection Act. If one's records are both held manually and computerised there is the possibility of having to pay £20. There would appear to be a possibility of an—I was going to say "anomaly", but that is not the word—of double-charging. Of course, we cannot amend this instrument, but the Minister could consider for the future whether it might be possible to have one complete fee of £10 to cover both. That would be an advantage.

We certainly welcome these regulations. The Act which my hon. Friend did so much to get on the statute book is now moving to the stage where it will come into operation. I have indicated a number of areas in which it will come into operation in a manner that is not as satisfactory as we should like. Further, it relates to a more limited area than I know my hon. Friend would have liked to see. None the less, the regulations are welcome for going as far as they do.

12.58 am

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I should like to question the Minister briefly about paragraph 10 of the regulations. The erasure of inaccurate information raises in my mind the question of what privilege is enjoyed by those whose opinions will be made available to the person who has asked to be allowed to see his personal records.

One naturally thinks that the right to see one's records is a sign of openness and that there is nothing to hide, but I often wonder whether we are not too easily led in the view that merely seeing what is written about oneself will somehow enlighten one without raising doubts in one's mind or, conceivably, according to one's temperament, a feeling that somebody has written something about one that is distasteful which impugns one's honesty or one's honour. I wonder, therefore, whether it might not actually do more harm than good.

People talk about their desire to see medical records. I certainly do not want to see my medical records. I do not want to know what my consultant thinks about my life expectancy. I might get a nasty shock, which I would rather not have. However, since we are now talking about social security, that is perhaps an argument for another day.

On the question of inaccurate information, or an opinion that the person reading his records does not like, what protection is given to those who have provided that information or expressed that opinion? Would it be possible for a person, having seen his personal record, to be in a position to allege that it represented a libel on his character?

My hon. Friend the Minister took some trouble to explain to us that it was possible that certain information could be retained by the authority on the ground that it might be harmful to the recipient. That is an essential safeguard. Nevertheless, if frank and honest opinions are to be given and placed on a record—that may be an important consideration if the records are to have any validity for those who are to use them—there is always a danger that those opinons will reach the person who has asked to see his personal record, and who may rightly judge from the remarks that a libel has been written and that he has therefore been damaged.

How do we safeguard the person who writes the opinion? Is it written into the regulations and have I missed it? Do the regulations convey a certain privilege for those who write the opinions? If not, will we fall into the situation where records will be so anodyne that they will not be much use to the social security service which may want to use them and will be written simply because somebody—the person whose records they are—will see them, or will the records continue to perform the role that they have performed in the past as a valuable guide which, due to their confidentiality, could contain all the information and opinions that were felt necessary to assess a person and his position? I hope that my hon. Friend can reassure me about paragraph 10. I look forward to hearing what he has to say.

1.1 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I wish to raise two points, one about whether the regulations deal carefully enough with the handling of sensitive information and the other about resources. The right of access to information is important, but it is recognised in the

regulations that it cannot be an absolute right. The information about an individual might reflect upon a third party and the third party information should not be readily available to the first person.

On exemptions, paragraph 9(4) refers to

"information . . . held by the local social services authority for the purposes of—

(a) the prevention or detection of crime, or

(b) the apprehension or prosecution of offenders".

The paragraph says that that information would not be made available. Is that provision tight enough? If the case work of a social services department involved child molesting, the detection of a crime, the prevention of a crime or a potential prosecution might not take place because, although the social services department had a great deal of information, it could not take action. Are the regulations tight enough to cover such a case? Other hon. Members may put forward better cases which do not refer to the molesting of children.

The other question I wish to raise concerns resources. Local authorities have been under considerable pressure generally for some time with cuts in the rate support grant, quite apart from recent adjustments. In Derbyshire, for instance, we have something known as "grant capping" as well as rate capping in other areas. It might be that in quite difficult financial circumstances these regulations will be acted upon, systems will be set up, and the next stage will be that the poll tax will come into operation, with all the difficulties that involves. Already in Scotland the poll tax levels are much higher than was suggested by the Minister, and that is likely to happen in England and Wales as well. The difficulty will be that procedures may be established for which funds could be found by local authorities, but at some later stage the whole system will fall into disuse because of the great financial burdens being placed upon them. I really think some financial provision should be made by Government in order to see that the system works properly.

It has been suggested that the £10 fee, which is the maximum, could in some cases prevent certain people using the system. I think it is quite likely that the costs in many cases will be at the £10 level, or even more, because of the areas involved. Local authorities may reduce the fees, but it is likely that some local authorities will be faced with far greater pressure to reduce fees than others. It will depend what the demand for information is.

It is quite likely that access to information legislation will be used more by middle-class people, who are much more aware of their rights and know the procedures involved. It might be appropriate for them to pay a £10 fee, but in many working-class areas, with progressive authorities providing full information as to what becomes available, the practice will be extended, or would be if the funds were available for it to be done.

I just want to look at the different areas involved in this to get some idea of what will happen in terms of the complexity of the measure and the fees authorities are likely to find themselves involved in. The procedure for requesting information is laid down in section 3. It might be that, when the procedure is pursued, insufficient information has been required and the matter has to go back to the people who initially made the application. There are various time limits in which information has to be sought. Then there is the whole complex area about exemptions, both in terms of personal health information from health professionals and the other exemptions, partly referred to in section 10.

Turning to the procedure for the erasing of information, the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) raised the point about the erasing of opinions. I would like the Minister to say how far that actually applies within section 10. Is it the case that when it says information is to be erased, that is supposed to apply to factual information, empirical detail which can be checked as being true or false, as distinct from judgment and opinion, even though it might be very reliable judgment and opinion, on which it is not possible to use empirical techniques? Is the entire material erased? If the empirical information is erased, perhaps there would be nothing for the value judgment to latch on to.

Finally, there is a review of possible decisions and appeals against provisions. Therefore, the procedure involves great complexities which are likely to become extremely expensive. I believe that we should spend large sums of money on civil liberties and democratic rights and procedures so that people can exercise those rights, but the local authorities need to be in a position to operate the system.

1.10 am

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The instrument about access to personal files relates to freedom of information and freedom to information. I agree with some of the anxieties that have been expressed from both sides of the House.

First, I wish to refer to the £10 fee that can be incurred under the Data Protection Act 1984 and under the instrument. I believe that it will create all sorts of problems, a couple of which have already been mentioned. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) raised the very good point about manual files costing £10 in addition to computer files so that a £20 charge could be incurred. Under the Data Protection Act, Government Departments set up all sorts of files. They could charge £10 for access to each file so that in some cases a fee of hundreds of pounds could be incurred. What is to stop a local authority setting up all sorts of files within its social services department and then charging £10 for access to each file? It is difficult enough for the person seeking the information to know which file to ask for, so he would have to ask for them all and pay the fee for the lot.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge and give credit to the Department of Social Security which does not charge a fee for access to its computerised files under the Data Protection Act. One hopes that local authorities will follow that example.

Mr. Cohen: I certainly hope that other Government Departments will follow that example, but we cannot be sure that they will. The £10 fee is a dangerous issue because social services departments deal with some of the poorest people in the community to whom £10 is a lot of money. The £10 fee will effectively stop those people getting access to their files. The system will be unfair on individuals with similar cases as it will vary from area to area as one authority takes an enlightened view and makes no charge and another authority charges the maximum £10. That is not a fair way to deal with individuals. Therefore, the Minister should think again about the fee.

[Mr. Cohen]

As the Minister said, there is broad agreement that there should be access for individuals about whom the records are kept. But he went on to list a whole range of exceptions. For example, health authorities have only to say that a case is an exception and it automatically becomes one. I believe that that is wrong. Why should a health authority have more rights than a local authority social services department? They are both dealing with sensitive problems, so why should health authorities have more rights to secrecy? In many cases, they are already excessively secret and that is wrong. At least local authorities have democratic representatives—councillors—whom individuals can lobby for information, but they do not have such a right with the health authorities. The exception for health authorities is too blanket an exception.

Why have health professionals got special blanket privileges? Under the schedule, even people such as chiropodists, art therapists and music therapists have only to say that the information cannot be made public for people to be stopped from obtaining the information that they want. That is ridiculous. The schedule should be more carefully thought out than that. An ingrowing toenail should not be sufficient to prevent a person from getting his social services records.

Where information is specifically given by a doctor or other health professional on a confidential basis, there is possibly a good reason for the exemption applying. But I remember the Cleveland case. The Minister should have addressed the exemption in relation to that case because the parents who were aggrieved and trying to obtain justice for themselves thought that it was the health professionals who were to blame. They would not be helped by the regulations because the health professionals still have a special privilege of secrecy. Such parents would not obtain the information they wanted from the files, but would have to rely, yet again, on trying to force a huge public inquiry. They could not even rely on the courts to obtain information because another of the exemptions is the magistrates courts under the Magistrates' Courts (Children and Young Persons) Rules 1988. They would be blocked there and that is another exemption stopping people from obtaining information in cases of acute concern affecting their own children when their rights to look after their children had been impugned. A parent often needs to have access to the social services department's information on the case in a magistrates court to fight a child care order that they feel is unfair and to challenge the social services, or at least be able to present their case. The exemption will prevent them from doing that.

The Minister mentioned another exemption in cases in which the social services department felt that trauma or emotional damage could be caused. The Minister said that that would be used in rare cases to stop information being given, but it seems to me that that could apply to almost all social services cases. If a social services department wanted to be bloody-minded, it could use that exception in all cases and it would become a commonplace excuse to stop people obtaining information. It could be an enormous loophole, and the Minister should consider that. If the exemption is likely to be abused, the Minister should take action.

Another exception in which people cannot obtain information to which the Minister referred was cases in which a third party was identified as the source of information. Again, there could be a genuine case in which the third party should not be identified, especially in a child abuse case, and we all accept that people should not be discouraged from reporting serious child abuse. Again, there should be the right to challenge, perhaps in a court, because it may be that a third party is unreliable or even malicious and that, because of the use of the exception, the individual affected does not have the chance to challenge.

The final exception that I shall raise is what the Minister called the "legal profession's privilege". Exactly what does that mean? After all, several Conservative Members have signed a motion seeking to get rid of the closed shop. This sounds like a closed shop. Why should the legal profession have a right of exemption over what information people can find out about themselves from their files? I cannot envisage what the Minister's phrase means, so will he please explain it?

I appreciate the Minister's point about the local government ombudsman. I think that we should extend that provision to the health ombudsman so that people who want to complain about health authorities or health professionals unjustly denying them access to their information can go to the health ombudsman.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that there should be a proper appeals arrangement with the data registrar. Under the Data Protection Act 1984, for example, the data registrar can investigate and the courts can also become involved. A proper appeals procedure should be available.

1.21 am

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Like my hon. Friends, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the regulations, and the fact that the Government are prepared to put into operation provisions that will, for the first time, give a great deal of access to clients who, in the past, have been wronged by information in their files which, in many instances, had been secured for legitimate reasons by social services departments because the nature of the information in the files acted to the detriment of clients and their representatives.

In these days when we are trying to persuade people to come forward with cases of abuse—whether physical, sexual or mental—we are sensitive to the way in which the guidelines are operated. Will the Minister therefore tell us what additional provisions there will be for training social workers in the provision and presentation of information? It is essential for the operation of access to personal files that social workers, social services departments and those involved with the files and the information in them can interpret them properly and give a clear understanding of their objectives, of the information required and of the way in which the information is provided. Unless there is training in the provision and preparation of information, the wrong information could be provided, to the detriment of the physical and mental health of the individual concerned, or it could be used as an excuse for not providing information that should be provided.

I will give the Minister some examples of cases with which I have been involved, either as a Member of Parliament or in my previous occupation in personal social

services case work. The information that I provide is confidential and will not be presented to attract any publicity for the individuals concerned, nor does it present any criticism of those involved with the cases. It simply shows how the system as currently operated breaks down and where the personal files provisions could assist in ensuring, I hope, that such cases will not occur in the future.

The first case involves a mother and daughter relationship. A health worker notified the social services department that the unmarried mother was commencing a relationship with a gentleman known to have suffered mental illness in the past. Although she felt that there were no signs of mental illness now, she felt that a serious relationship between that man and woman could be detrimental to the child's development. The mother was then approached by a case worker from the social services department, who advised her that that report had been submitted. The mother's views were then sought about the relationship. She openly admitted that the relationship was continuing and developing and that she was not prepared at that stage to indicate to the care worker, or anyone else, that the relationship would end.

A report was immediately initiatied by the social services department, which included the suggestion of removing the child from the mother. The report concluded, however, that there was no evidence of physical abuse to the child by the mother or by the gentleman. There was also no evidence from the child's voluntary play school, other than that the mother was an excellent mother, and there were no problems with the child's development, physically or mentally. Yet three months on, that child was not only removed from the mother—without any access to information as to why that should have happened—but was offered for long-term fostering. Absolute access was refused by the magistrates on information submitted by the social services department. Because a third party provided information about that mother's relationship—which was subsequently found to have no real substance in the mind of the care worker concerned—the mother was separated from her child. The child was offered for long-term fostering by the social services department concerned, which one assumes would lead to a complete breakdown in the relationship between mother and child and the child then being offered for adoption.

The second case relates to a couple applying to the local authority to become foster parents after seeing an advertisement in the local paper. This is a mature couple, with two teenage daughters and a young lad of seven or eight. After extensive investigations by the local authority, the parents were advised that all that the local authority was waiting for were reports from the local police and from their former local general practitioner. The parents were told, however, that the local authority was so satisfied with the arrangements that an introduction to a handicapped girl would be facilitated for a couple of weekends so that they could all get to know each other. The intention was that that handicapped child would be fostered by the couple. The weekend prior to the fostering arrangement being formalised, a social worker went to the family home and advised the parents that one of the reports for which they had been waiting contained information such that the authority could no longer proceed with their application to become foster parents.

The result was a horrendous situation in which the couple believed that one or other or both must have concealed from each other information about their past so mucky or detrimental as to prevent them from fostering a child. Naturally, that affected their relationship.

After further pressure, the social services area director met the couple and reassured them that the authority intended to take no action with regard to their own children. The authority accepted, and did not retract the view, that the couple were excellent parents to their own children, but due to third-party involvement it could not give any indication of the reasons why at the 23rd hour it had rejected the couple's application to foster a child. The arrangement to seek information, a qualification of information or to have information amended is essential in such cases.

I cite the further example of a single mother involved in care proceedings. An anonymous telephone call to a local authority initiated an investigation of whether the mother was abusing her child—not physically or mentally, but that she was leaving the child on its own. Initial inquiries revealed that the allegation was unsubstantiated, but in the interim investigations it was discovered that the mother was associating with a gentleman whom the local authority had on record as possibly having been involved in the abuse of a child. On the basis of that information, the child was removed from the mother and remains in local authority care.

Personal files often contain subjective—sometimes highly subjective—comment and third-party comment may be highly irregular. An anonymous contribution might be regarded as substantial despite the fact that initial investigation might show that it was unsubstantiated. Anecdotal information may take on a significance that it should not have. Access to files should be given at the earliest opportunity, particularly when files go before case conferences, and it should be possible to challenge information provided by outside agencies. On many occasions disruption to a family's life occurs at the point when information is submitted to a case conference at which parents may be inadequately represented or not represented at all.

Access to personal files should be implemented in such a way as to protect the client and, in many instances, the children. It should also be borne in mind that in many instances outrageous decisions are taken which destroy the fabric of ordinary decent families, disrupting their lives, and they have no redress because they cannot challenge the information contained in the files. Therefore, I welcome the regulations.

1.32 am

Mr. Freeman: In the approximately six minutes that remain I shall seek to answer some of the points raised.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) referred to the means test. I stress again, as I pointed out when I opened the debate, that the sum of £10 is a maximum discretionary amount. It might be for the convenience of the House if I draw attention to the guidance notes issued to local authorities. In those we have said that authorities will no doubt take into account the applicants' ability to pay. That discretion is commendable and gives flexibility to local authorities.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman asked about staff, training and allied costs and resources available to local

[Mr. Freeman]

authorities. As the House will know, local authorities have been well aware since 1983—some six years—that we were encouraging access to information for local residents, so local authorities should have been putting into practice over the past five or six years access arrangements.

We have always encouraged open access. Many social services departments already operate open access policies. They have trained their staff and reorganised their records appropriately. Because they have been taking such steps over five or six years they have incurred and met expenses out of available resources—from rate support grant and rates.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about consultation, an important point. I can confirm that we have spoken to the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and have stayed in close touch. He asked about the other bodies that we have consulted. There are some 40 of those. If he writes to me asking me to detail them I shall be happy to do so.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the timetable for action. We issued a draft circular in January making it clear that Parliament needed to approve the regulations. Therefore, three months will have elapsed before the regulations come into effect. The most important point to make is that the general principle of open access has been in existence since 1983, so local authorities have had plenty of notice. We are simply bringing to a conclusion tonight a long process of encouraging open local government.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West also asked me who will decide on the issue of serious harm, and how it will be defined and who will interpret it. The way in which such decisions are made will depend on individual circumstances, but we have emphasised that such exemptions will be the exception and will relate to exceptional cases, and will not be used frivolously or lightly. It is important to be aware that it is also a safeguard for many clients and third parties.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) raised several points. I hope that I have dealt in part with his first question relating to the definition of serious harm. He asked me when the Government planned to publish other regulations and bring them into force. For example, he talked about housing associations, which are the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, and access to school records, which is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science. I am sure that he would not expect me to comment on when these other Departments had plans to publish regulations, but I will ensure that the record of the debate is brought to the attention of my colleagues in those other Departments. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me, as a Health Minister, to do other than relate my remarks to the regulations dealing with social service departments.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about medical access. I hope that I gave the House a clear assurance about my proposed consultations with the medical profession. If progress is not immediately forthcoming, he asked me to set a timetable for that. I am loth to do so, except to assure him, and the hon. Member for Monklands, West who is equally interested in this subject, and to repeat the assurance I gave at the opening of this brief debate, that I take the matter seriously. Promises were given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury. I shall bring the matter to a successful and early conclusion.

The hon. Gentleman also asked me about the appeal mechanism. It is certainly true that appeals are made to a local authority, but there is a general right of any citizen to appeal under, or about, the regulations and how they are implemented to courts of law and to the local authority ombudsman. The hon. Gentleman recognised that and pointed that out. This is not a right of appeal to, so to speak, an internal committee of the local authority. It is not the end of the road of an individual's right to appeal.

The hon. Gentleman asked about double charging. I think he has a point, although it may be theoretical rather than practical. I shall reflect on it. Social security departments are not obliged to charge for access to computer records under the Data Protection Act 1984. The hon. Gentleman has drawn my attention to a potential anomaly which I shall certainly reflect on——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 72, Noes 1.

Division No. 83] **[1.38 am**

AYES

Amos, Alan	Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Arbuthnot, James	Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Ashby, David	Irvine, Michael
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Jack, Michael
Beith, A. J.	King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Knapman, Roger
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Knowles, Michael
Boswell, Tim	Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Bowis, John	McCartney, Ian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter	Maclean, David
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	McLoughlin, Patrick
Burns, Simon	McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Butterfill, John	Moss, Malcolm
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*	Moynihan, Hon Colin
Carrington, Matthew	Neubert, Michael
Carttiss, Michael	Norris, Steve
Chapman, Sydney	Paice, James
Chope, Christopher	Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*	Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*	Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Cran, James	Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*	Skeet, Sir Trevor
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*	Stern, Michael
Dorrell, Stephen	Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Durant, Tony	Summerson, Hugo
Favell, Tony	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Fishburn, John Dudley	Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Freeman, Roger	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan	Twinn, Dr Ian
Gill, Christopher	Waddington, Rt Hon David
Gregory, Conal	Wallace, James
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn	Widdecombe, Ann
Harris, David	Wood, Timothy
Heathcoat-Amory, David	
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*	Tellers for the Ayes:
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*	Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*	Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Cohen, Harry	Tellers for the Noes:
	Mr. Bob Cryer and
	Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Access to Personal Files (Social Services) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 16th January, be approved.

Weights and Measures (Amendment) Bill

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): We now come to the Weights and Measures—[HON. MEMBERS: "Objection."] Objection taken.

Machine Safety

Motion made, and Question put,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4126/88, 7396/88 and the proposals described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 30th November 1988 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum of 11th January 1989 on machine safety; and supports the Government's intention to agree to the adoption of this directive as a step towards the completion of the single market by reducing incipient non-tariff barriers to trade.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is probably the most ridiculous and irrelevant exercise in which I have ever engaged. I am about to express a view on something that has already been approved by the Council of Ministers, something that has already happened, making our views irrelevant and making the House look completely stupid. May I ask whether it is in order to have the vote before you have announced the decision on whether the amendment has been selected?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I understood that Mr. Speaker's decision not to select the amendment had been communicated to him. As for his other remarks, they are not a matter for the Chair, as I am sure he recognises; but doubtless they will have been heard.

Mr. Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to be silly, but may I appeal to you somehow to get the two sides together to go to the Procedure Committee? What the blazes is the point of hon. Members coming here to express an opinion on something that has already been agreed? Can we not at least accept that on this issue the sovereignty of the House has disappeared?

Tonight and on Thursday hon. Members are being asked to vote on something that has happened, and on which the views of the House of Commons are of no consequence whatever. Like other hon. Members, I came here to play a part in democracy. What is the point of asking hon. Members to vote for something that does not matter at all—to express an opinion on something that has already happened, and applies to us all? Surely the House of Commons must make some sense. We are here as democrats to make decisions on things that matter, but on Thursday we shall be discussing something on which, because it has already happened, our views are completely irrelevant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have considerable sympathy with the views that the hon. Gentleman has expressed, but these are not matters for the Chair. If the hon. Gentleman feels that the matter is appropriate for the Procedure Committee to consider, perhaps he ought to make a submission to that Committee. As I said earlier, what he has said will doubtless have been heard. In any case, it will be on the record.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will cover himself properly.

Mr. Cook *(seated and covered):* Would you have the courtesy, Sir, to explain to the House why hon. Members must endure the inverse convention of sitting here with a hat on while you can answer points of order standing in the normal way, with your head bare? Is this not a means of making hon. Members look ridiculous, and deterring them from raising points of order during a Division?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not hold me responsible for the conventions, traditions and Standing Orders of the House. That is a matter for the House. And when the hon. Gentleman talks about bald heads—well, with respect——

Mr. Cook: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not mean to imply that I held you responsible. I thought that perhaps you, from your vantage point of vastly greater experience than mine, might be able to explain the reasons for this particular requirement of the Standing Orders.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would not dream of trying to explain to the House the reasons for our Standing Orders. If the hon. Gentleman was suggesting that on future occasions I should be appropriately covered, he might be prepared to have a whip-round for a wig for me.

The House having divided: Ayes 62, Noes 11.

Division No. 84] **[1.49 am**

AYES

Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Favell, Tony
Fishburn, John Dudley
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stern, Michael
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wallace, James
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Haynes, Frank
McCartney, Ian
Meale, Alan

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4126/88, 7396/88 and the proposals described in the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 30th November 1988 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum of 11th January 1989 on machine safety; and supports the Government's intention to agree to the adoption of this directive as a step towards the completion of the single market by reducing incipient non-tariff barriers to trade.

Disabled People (Employment Opportunities)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

1.59 am

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I am grateful for this chance to speak about employment opportunities for the disabled. Although I am not obviously disabled, as the House knows I suffer from kidney failure and require a dialysis machine to keep me alive. I make that point not to seek the House's sympathy but to underline the fact that disabled people are not just those in wheelchairs or who are missing a limb—that group makes up as little as 5 per cent. of the total. The disabled can be deaf or blind, they can suffer from epilepsy or be injured at birth or in an accident. They are a diverse and varied group and in some cases their disabilities may take the form of personality problems.

From disabled people I have met I have gained a strong impression that they all want to be useful. They can overcome their inevitable limitations if only they are given the chance. What is more, having something to do—like a job—drives out the introspection and despair that come to those who are struck down or incapacitated by serious illness or accident. I refer to the feeling that a person is finished and is of no further use to himself or his family. To that extent, employment opportunities for disabled people give them a dignity and value of a sort that cannot always be understood by the able-bodied. It cannot be overestimated, and employers should be aware of it when being asked to accept disabled people in their companies.

Although it is not entirely clear how many people make up the disabled work force, the recent Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report stated that there are about 6 million disabled people in this country, of whom 70 per cent. are aged 60 or over. Some who were included under the heading "disabled" probably would not think of themselves in those terms, but whatever the case, it is not unreasonable to point out that about 1 million people, using the OPCS definition, are disabled and of employable age. To that extent, the duty laid down in the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944—that employers with 20 or more employees should draw 3 per cent. of their work force from the registered disabled—might seem reasonable, particularly as there are 25 million people in work in the United Kingdom. That would suggest that there is a pool of 700,000 registered disabled people to draw on. In fact, that is not so. My hon. Friend the Minister told me in a parliamentary reply last December that there were 374,238 registered disabled; so the figure in the Act is unrealistic, to say the least. One wonders why we continue with it.

On the other hand, what about the 600,000 unregistered disabled? How many of them have employment, and how many cannot work? I do not know whether my hon. Friend can shed any light on that point, but it needs definition.

Registration as a disabled person is voluntary. It is open to any person who, on account of injury, disease or congenital deformity is substantially handicapped in obtaining or keeping employment, or in undertaking work on his own account. Registration means having a green card, and one's name is kept on the register of disabled

people held by the disablement resettlement officer, who, in turn, is the interface with industry and the employment training scheme.

Under the scheme, someone seeking employment training will see the disablement resettlement officer, who will either pass the person on to the training agent whose job is to assess his capabilities and produce an action plan, or direct him to an employment rehabilitation centre for a two-day assessment of his potential.

One of the employment rehabilitiation centres serving the Newbury area is at Egham, where there is a 12-week waiting list. That shows its popularity, and perhaps its need to expand. If the training agent decides that a person does not need to go to the employment rehabilitation centre, he can direct him to a training manager, whose responsiblity is to find him a training course or, ideally, a placement in industry. Some may go to workshops on the sheltered placement scheme.

Recently I visited Enham Industries, at Enham Alamein near Andover. The centre provides employment for disabled people in a range of occupations and serves my constituency. It is financed by voluntary bodies and is widely used by the employment training scheme. It provides sheltered placement, for which it receives from the employment services £3,150 for each person it takes on in its workshops. All of those whom it takes on are fairly severely disabled. Its liaison personnel help to place disabled people in ordinary jobs, going out and interviewing employers.

Enham believes in a very careful assessment of those who come to it and likes to do a two-week assessment—as it puts it—to discover the disabled person as an individual with all his or her problems. I think it feels that the two-hour assessment under the employment training scheme by the training agent is far too brief to be meaningful. I admit that its assessment costs £150, against £20 for the assessment by the employment training agent, but since assessment seems to me to be the touchstone for discovering a disabled person's capabilities I was sorry to hear that the local employment training initiative had no interface with Enham in the sense that it synchronised its efforts with those of Enham and that, if employment training bought training places at Enham, its budget enabled it to buy only four days a week. It was my clear impression that under the employment training scheme the provision of assessment and the training of disabled persons is underfinanced. Let me give just one example. The sheltered placement training total at Enham is currently 60, although there is room for 70 people.

What, then, of disabled people seeking jobs in industry? Everyone I have spoken to talked of the reluctance of too many employers to consider disabled people. As one handicapped person put it, it is as if "disabled" were a taboo word. It is said that many disabled persons prefer not to register, to avoid categorising themselves.

I understand that the Spastics Society in England and Wales conducted a survey in which 50 people with disabilities applied for jobs, disclosing their disability. At the same time 50 able-bodied people applied for the same jobs. Invariably those who listed disabilities did not even get an interview. It may be that companies are not sufficiently aware of the £6,000 grant they can receive to adapt their premises and equipment for a disabled employee, but the fact is that a large number of disabled people still look to sheltered placement for employment. I do not belive that it has to be so.

If I hold the view that more finance is needed for employment training in terms of the disabled and for sheltered placement I am also of the opinion that much more encouragement needs to be given to industry to think about employing disabled people and to recognise that "disabled" does not refer simply to people in wheelchairs.

Recently I met Mr. Geoff Busby, the information technology project director of the British Computer Society. Geoff is a spastic with the sort of handicaps that might make it seem unlikely that he could ever work. In fact, he has three A-levels and 10 O-levels and a master's degree in computer technology from Essex university. Because he cannot use his hands, he turned to computers since he understands them and can operate them with his nose. He has been seconded from GEC Computer Services to his present job. Clearly he is the right person to head up an organisation devoted to the disabled and to getting them jobs. He is unequivocal in his belief that industry needs to be educated in the potential that disabled people possess, particularly in areas such as information technology.

I am aware that in 1984 the CBI and the TUC, together with the Manpower Services Commission, drew up a code of good practice on the employment of disabled people, but, as Mr. Busby told me, the equipment used for training the disabled is often old-fashioned. Training schemes are aimed too much at the severely disabled, and too many conferences about employing the disabled are attended mainly by the disabled. Like everyone I have spoken to, he believes that what is needed is a massive promotion campaign aimed at industry, particularly where it uses computers, VDUs and equipment with a keyboard that can be coupled to a voice synthesiser.

To sum up, what I am asking of my hon. Friend is that his Department provides more finance for training and education about the potential that disabled persons possess.

Lastly, I suggest that we look at the inducements available to a disabled person who gets involved in training. He or she will receive unemployment benefit, plus a £10 training allowance. Is it enough to persuade him or her to try very hard, particularly if the only prospect is a low-paid job with a salary not much above the level of benefit?

From a string of parliamentary answers it is clear that too many Government Departments, the House included, employ only a minuscule percentage of disabled people. If we are to give impetus to encouraging industry to create opportunities for the disabled, perhaps we should set an example ourselves. There may be no better place than in the Houses of Parliament.

2.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) on having secured this Adjournment debate on employment opportunities for disabled people. I fully understand his deep interest in the subject.

The Government have a long-standing commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities are allowed to develop their talents fully within the labour market. Indeed, it has been the policy of successive Governments

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to provide the help that such people may need to obtain employment, to develop their skills and expertise, and to achieve their aspirations at work.

It is important that people with disabilities should be able to bring their skills and abilities to bear fully in the labour market and to share in the benefits that able-bodied people obtain from work. The continuing growth in the number of employment opportunities and the emergence of skill shortages which will be exacerbated by current population trends reinforce this importance.

My Department has been actively engaged for many years in developing employment and training provision for people with disabilities. There is a lack of precise information about the employment situation for these people. However, it is clear that many of them enjoy a very satisfying working life. We are aware, however, that this is not the case for all people with disabilities and we are constantly trying, through the development of our programmes, to ensure improved prospects for people. To do this we need to take into account relevant issues such as changes in the general economic situation and the increasingly high, and quite justified, aspirations of many people with disabilities and their wish to live and work in an environment in which they are as far as possible integrated with their able-bodied fellow citizens.

I am sure that hon. Members will agree that what I have to say this evening demonstrates that we have made significant progress over recent years in developing provision in this direction while also ensuring that separated, or sheltered, provision is available for those people for whom it is the only practicable answer to their problems.

It is evident from working in this area over a period that two things remain constant. First, not only do people have to contend with a very wide variety of disabilities but the extent to which disabilities handicap people in relation to employment can vary immensely. I am sure we all know of people with quite severe disabilities who successfully obtain and hold down jobs with little or no help from others. On the other hand, there are many who require more careful, and often continuing, support. Second, the impact of what we do turns on what others are able to do. The important role which employers need to play is self-evident, and I am encouraged by what I have seen of their efforts, particularly those who have gained recognition under the Department's fit for work award scheme. We also need, and are grateful for, the support of voluntary organisations. This is also a useful point at which to mention the Government's appreciation for the advice which is received from the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Disabled People and its chairman, Mr. Ken Baker. I particularly value the links with the national advisory service, which I have been able to develop through Mr. Baker since his appointment as chairman.

Despite all that has been achieved—and I believe that this has been considerable—the Government recognise the need for constant attention to this area of their activities. I shall return to this point when speaking of current activities within the Employment Department group to seek a clearer view of the people with disabilities who need help in obtaining and retaining employment, and to review all provision for the employment and training of people with disabilities.

Time does not permit a description of the entire range of provision available. The scope is very wide, as I know from visits to a large number of the facilities and organisations concerned, including in recent months the Barnsley Light Industries Sheltered Workshop, the Queen Elizabeth Foundation for the Disabled and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf's centre in Birmingham and indeed, later today, the institute's residential centre, Court Grange, in Devon.

However, I would like to make a couple of broad observations about this provision before giving some more detailed information about its scale and nature. Services provided through the Employment Department's employment service and Training Agency are very comprehensive. They cover assessment, rehabilitation, training, sheltered employment and placing services. There are also, broadly speaking, two distinct types of service. There are those services available to all job seekers and those which are specifically for people with disabilities. Most of our disabled clients benefit from the first type of service, mainstream programmes. At a time when we are emphasising the importance of integration it is right that this should be the case.

In the period 1983-88 placings of disabled people into work rose some 50 per cent. to 94,000. Over the same period the number of people with severe disabilities placed into sheltered employment rose from 15,000 to 18,000. Levels of expendiure are also not insignificant. In 1987-88 some £126 million was spent on programmes specifically for people with disabilities. This included £86 million on sheltered employment and £23 million on employment rehabilitation.

We encourage people with disabilities to make full use of the mainstream services available at jobcentres. They can, for example, find out about job vacancies and the range of employment, training and enterprise programmes, as well as the special services for people with disabilities. Many of them find jobs without further assistance, and often quickly but others require a greater degree of help. Often training will be needed. For young people the youth training scheme—YTS—provides school leavers with a bridge between school and work. The Training Agency has introduced a wide range of special help to encourage young people with disabilities to enter YTS. This includes delayed entry, extension of stay, assessment courses and special help such as adaptations to premises or communication aids for deaf people.

For adults, our aim is that training should be available for those people with disabilities who need it to obtain or retain employment. Where possible they should be able to participate fully in mainstream training programmes, and there are relaxed eligibility criteria to enable them to do this. Most significantly, provision for people with disabilities is an integral part of employment training. The client-centred approach, with each trainee having a personal action plan, is particularly suitable in this instance. Furthermore, wherever possible, people with disabilities train alongside their able-bodied counterparts. The early results of this programme are very encouraging.

A range of special help is available to participants. This includes the loan of special equipment and financial assistance with adaptations to equipment and premises.

There is also a personal reader service for blind trainees and a communicator service for people who are deaf. Residential training is also available if necessary.

In addition to the mainstream services there is a range of specialist help. For example, there are more than 400 specially trained disablement resettlement officers who provide an advisory counselling and placing service for those people with disabilities who have particular difficulty finding a job. Their commitment and expertise is the cornerstone of our success. Disablement resettlement officers are able to help people take full advantage of the range of special schemes which are available to help people with disabilities overcome problems which they may encounter in getting or keeping a job. To give brief details of these, may I say that the fares to work scheme offers financial assistance to people who are unable to use public transport as a result of their disability.

The special aids to employment scheme provides people with the special equipment needed to do their jobs. Many of the items issued are new technology based, including computers, desk top publishing equipment, and equipment providing speech output or large character display for people with visual handicaps. In some cases equipment is provided so as to enable people to work at home if they are unable to travel to work. The adaptation to premises and equipment scheme provides financial assistance to employers who need to make adaptations in order to employ a specific disabled person.

The personal reader service helps towards the cost of employing a sighted reader to help visually handicapped people at work.

Finally, the job introduction scheme allows employers to offer a trial period of employment, usually six weeks, to people with disabilities. The employer receives a grant of £45 per week for each disabled person recruited.

For some people the help offered by the Training Agency's employment rehabilitation service is essential before they can seek work. This service aims to assess the capabilities and preferences of people to help them decide what sort of work is most suitable for them. It is delivered in a number of ways. As well as the employment rehabilitation centres, of which there are 26 throughout the country, a network of mobile and more flexible facilities is being developed. There are also significant developments under way to improve the quality of rehabilitation by developing modules for learning job-search techniques, literacy, numeracy and core skills. For many people with severe disabilities, employment means independence, self-esteem and social contact and represents a major step towards integration into the life of a community. But in spite of all the help that is available, some people are just not able to compete in the open labour market.

The provision of suitable work arrangements for people with severe disabilities is an issue of particular importance. Towards the end of 1987 I chaired a very interesting and useful conference which explored this in some depth.

The employment service is providing support for over 18,000 people with severe disabilities under the sheltered employment programme. The majority of opportunities are in sheltered workshops and factories run by voluntary bodies, local authorities and Remploy. In view of its importance in this field, I take a close personal interest in the affairs of Remploy, holding quarterly meetings with its chairman, Ivor Cohen. There will clearly continue to be a need for such provision. However, the past three or four years have seen a rapid growth in the sheltered placement scheme which enables some severely disabled people to work in an integrated environment alongside able-bodied workers. The Government make good the deficit between the pay people earn as a result of their actual productivity and the normal weekly wage for the work undertaken.

That the sheltered placement scheme has commanded widespread support is clear from the scale of its recent development. By the end of next month, 5,000 people will be supported under the scheme. I am hoping for further expansion in 1989-90.

I should emphasise that the scheme could not work without the considerable efforts of sponsoring organisations—local authorities, voluntary bodies and Remploy——as well as the willing participation of host organisations, many of whom are private sector employers operating in a highly competitive market. What makes them so willing then to take on workers who may be quite severely disabled? There is probably no single answer to that question. One factor perhaps stands out here. The sheltered placement scheme is an initiative which recognises explicitly that some people cannot contribute to the productivity of the firm on level terms with fully fit colleagues. We therefore say to the employer, "You pay for that person's ability, we will pay for the disability". A simple enough concept perhaps, although not always easy to translate into practice. But it seems to work. The scheme offers the chance to work in what is, in effect, open employment alongside fit colleagues.

I have mentioned already the absolute importance of the role to be played by employers in improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It is crucial to the development of opportunities for all people whose disabilities put them at a disadvantage in the labour market.

There are two approaches to obtaining the support and involvement of employers which need to be considered. There is first the quota scheme, an issue which engenders deeply held but widely differing views. However, there is general acceptance that the scheme is not working as well as was intended when it was introduced in 1944. Indeed, it is believed by many people that it cannot work in its present form and is seen by many employers as unhelpful to the promotion of equal opportunities in employment for people with disabilities. The Government are committed to promoting equal opportunities by education and persuasion backed by practical help for individuals and employers. The code of good practice on the employment of disabled people was introduced in 1984 with the support of the CBI and the TUC. It is full of useful advice and guidance on recruitment, career development, retention of existing employees who become disabled, and so on. It was the first of its kind in Europe.

Employers may also have access to one of the 71 local teams of the disablement advisory service which offers encouragement and help to adopt positive policies and practices in the employment of people with disabilities. It also acts as the access point for employers to many of the schemes to which I have referred earlier.

One particular stumbling block to the further development of provision is the general lack of information about the numbers, characteristics and needs of people with disabilities who are handicapped in relation to employment. The recently published second report of the OPCS survey of disability in Great Britain provides an estimate of the numbers of disabled people in employment

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and those who are unemployed. However, the report does not provide sufficiently precise information about economically-active people whose disabilities are relevant to their employability.

As I have said, we are not dealing here with a static situation. The programmes that my Department supports need to reflect those changes which are taking place, for example, in the composition and size of the labour market and in the attitudes of people with disabilities. I should like to close by referring to two important steps taken recently to review our policies and programmes in the light of such developments.

First, we have commissioned a major research project to establish the number of economically active people with handicaps that are relevant to their employment and to provide information about their characteristics, their experience of employment, their use of the employment service and Training Agency services and their need for employment-related assistance. The obvious sensitivities make this a very difficult area into which to inquire. However, the methodology for the survey is being developed and the results are expected in the second half of this year.

Secondly, as announced in the House on 9 March 1988 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, we have initiated a wide-ranging review of the policies and services supported by the employment service and the Training Agency to help the employment of people with disabilities. This review is taking account of the advice received from various quarters, including the Public Accounts Committee in its report on employment assistance to disabled adults. It is now well under way.

The issues to be examined in the review are complex and it is important to the long-term interests of people with disabilities that we should take sufficient time to get it right. I hope, in particular, that the conclusion of the review and the consultation which I expect to follow will give us an appropriate basis for ensuring that people with disabilities receive the best possible support for getting and retaining work and for developing their full potential, as far as is practicable, alongside their able-bodied colleagues over the next decade.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 8 February 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Palestine Liberation Organisation

1. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have made any representations to the Palestine Liberation Organisation asking it to amend those sections of the Palestine covenant which call for Israel's destruction.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): Mr. Bassam Abu Sharif, a senior adviser to Mr. Yasser Arafat, has said in terms that "the Charter of the Palestine Liberation Organisation . . . has been superseded by the decisions of the PNC, the author of the Charter".
We take every opportunity to welcome that sort of moderate statement and to urge the PLO to continue to fulfil the commitments made by Yasser Arafat at Geneva.

Mr. Archer: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman appreciate that the covenant is, by its terms, binding on all PLO spokesmen unless and until it is amended by a two thirds majority of the congress? While I hold no specific brief for the Israeli Government, will they not have a genuine problem in persuading the Israeli people that they should negotiate with people who still have it on record that they will settle for nothing less than the total destruction of Israel?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point—that the covenant has not been formerly repealed or amended, but it was described by Bassam Abu Sharif as having been "superseded" and Yasser Arafat undoubtedly takes the same view. It is important to concentrate attention on present reality. The Palestinians have moved, and the best way of testing their intentions is to negotiate. Of course the right hon. and learned Gentleman is right to say that the Palestinians need to convince the Israelis of their sincerity, and in that sense formal amendment of the covenant would be an additional help. However, I urge the Israelis to concentrate on the actual reality that has emerged.

Mr. Page: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that four other hon. Members and myself returned from the west bank and the Gaza strip on Monday? During our visit, we did not find one Palestinian who denied Israel's right to live within secure borders. Will my right hon. and learned Friend make every effort to persuade Israel to come to the conference table for an international peace conference to bring peace to the region?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Of all the messages that my hon. Friend could have brought back from his visit, that which he has chosen to emphasise is certainly the most important. We all wish to see Israel achieve security behind recognised and secure boundaries—just as we want to see the right of the Palestinians to self-determination being upheld. The way to achieve that is to emphasise precisely the point made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Foreign Secretary may be aware that I was a member of the delegation to which the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) referred. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that our viewpoint is similar to that presented by the Americans in a statement this morning which most people will welcome? Will the Foreign Secretary make the point both to the Israelis and to the Americans that the Palestinians have moved, and that now is the time for the Israeli Government to go to the negotiating table so that we may begin to see the process of peace breaking out in that troubled region?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I welcome the way in which the hon. Gentleman emphasises the central point. The document published by the United States State Department to which he refers is not yet formally available, but the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the fact that friends of Israel on both sides of the Atlantic, and in all parts of the House, for the sake of the objectives that we all have in mind for Israel, are urging the same message on the Israeli Government. That is the important point.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that so long as article 19 of the PNC exists, describing the establishment of the state of Israel as illegal, no Israeli Government will want to negotiate with the PLO? Does he also accept that so long as the PLO threatens the Arab mayor of Bethlehem with assassination and supports terrorism in the state of Israel there is little likelihood of negotiation ever starting?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would rather add this to the points that my hon. Friend has made. So long as friends of Israel of his wisdom continue to urge their views with so little perception of changing conditions, Israel will remain in danger. I do not doubt the sincerity of my hon. Friend's commitment to Israel's peace and security. I note, however, that although the exact words used about the threat against the mayor of Bethlehem are unclear, both Arafat and Mayor Freij himself have denied that there was any thought of intimidation. If that is the reality, that is the important point to get across.

Mr. Kaufman: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that when I saw Mr. Arafat last month he specifically said that he had been quoted inaccurately with regard to Mr. Freij, and that he regarded the mayor as a personal friend? Mr. Arafat also said that he was ready to discuss the Palestine charter with the Israelis around the international conference table, which is the proper place for such discussions.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that instead of making excuses not to talk to the Palestinians

the Israelis ought to be concerned about the international condemnation of the violation of human rights to which the United States State Department document has drawn attention and which is a stain on the reputation of a nation which has prided itself on being a liberal democracy? Is it not about time that instead of killing and arresting Palestinians, the Israelis tried to protect and maintain their security by talking to the Palestinians and making peace with them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The tone and style of the right hon. Gentleman's comments, added to other comments made in the House today, underline the extent to which Israel is losing both good will and time. They also underline the extent to which all the friends of Israel would like her to face the facts as described on both sides of the House and to be ready to meet the Palestinians half way.

Mr. Michael Marshall: What opportunities does my right hon. and learned Friend foresee for further direct dialogue with Mr. Yasser Arafat? Does he regard the opportunity to invite Mr. Arafat to attend the centenary conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, following the precedent of the Rome IPU conference in 1982, as a useful exercise for this country to follow?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The value of further meetings with Mr. Arafat must, I think, be judged on the basis that there is no point in promoting a cycle of meetings for their own sake although we are certainly ready to promote them when they serve a useful purpose.

Nelson Mandela

2. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the South African authorities over the continuing imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and his colleagues sentenced at the Rivonia trial.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): We continue to urge the South African Government to release, immediately and unconditionally, Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners.

Mr. Caborn: Will the Minister consider making further representations, particularly in the light of discussions that I have had today with Nelson Mandela's lawyers? I gathered from those discussions that the lawyers' access to Mr. Mandela had been further reduced and that he now has even less contact with anyone outside his family than before his move to the outskirts of the prison.

I believe that that move by the South African authorities, particularly after the British Government's welcoming of it, is now being interpreted as no more than a sop to the international opinion that had been building up in favour of Mandela's immediate release, and that the British Government should make further representations to the effect that the international community is not prepared to be conned in the way that the South African authorities believe that it is.

Mrs. Chalker: I repeat that we have always called for the full and unconditional release of Nelson Mandela, not to the place where he is currently held. I note what the hon. Gentleman said about his telephone conversation this morning and later this afternoon I will take up the matters that he has raised. A great deal would be achieved by the unconditional release of all political detainees. A start would be made towards negotiation and dialogue and the renunciation of violence by all who have perpetrated it both within South Africa and across its borders. Until Nelson Mandela is released unconditionally, together with other prisoners, I do not believe that we shall see the signal for which the whole world is waiting.

Mr. Gardiner: Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that a great many Conservative Members also hope that Nelson Mandela will be released, if only to break the log jam blocking constructive dialogue with moderate leaders such as Chief Buthelezi? Will she also note that the process would be greatly encouraged if Nelson Mandela's release could be linked with some relaxation of international sanctions?

Mrs. Chalker: We have always felt that to create a climate in which a dialogue could succeed there would have to be a suspension of violence on all sides and that it would have to be in the context of the unconditional release of all political detainees. There is still a long way to go. I do not believe that we should alter our position unilaterally until we see real progress in South Africa, for which we long and for which we continue to work.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why should the South African authorities take any notice of British urging which is merely an empty gesture? Is not the simple truth that the South African Government and the South African authorities persist in waving two fingers at the rest of the world because they do not want to respond in any way? Why will the Government not now act and actually do something?

Mrs. Chalker: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman is adopting a very simple approach to a very complex problem. There is absolutely no doubt that the British Government's recommendations are listened to. I believe firmly that we played a major part in securing the abandonment of plans for new foreign funding legislation and that that has had a quite profound effect, but we await the full results.

Mr. Cran: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Her Majesty's Government are actively promoting development among the black community in South Africa, as evidenced by the fact that Her Majesty's Government are committing £25 million to development, including the provision of 650 scholarships? Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that Her Majesty's Government are co-operating with other EEC countries on further initiatives? Would she care to speculate as to why the Opposition continually prefer to ignore those facts?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the size of the current scholarship programme. The number of scholarships for black South Africans is to rise by the end of 1991 to about 1,000. We want to give positive assistance. I further note that the help being given to black South Africans is greatly welcomed in South Africa and by many other people. I hope that the new realism that we are beginning to see in southern Africa about the positive measures being taken to help black South Africans will soon be appreciated by Opposition Members.

Turkey

3. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet a representative of the Turkish Government to discuss human rights issues.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I both discussed Turkey's human rights record with the new Turkish ambassador last week. We have no immediate plans to meet any other representative of the Turkish Government.

Mr. Wallace: I am grateful to the right hon. Lady and would be interested to learn the response to her representations. Is it not the case that, although Turkey has now signed both United Nations and European conventions against torture and other inhuman and degrading treatment, there are disturbing reports coming out of Turkey about people being arrested, held incomunicado in detention and tortured? Will not our efforts to bring pressure to bear on the eastern bloc countries on human rights issues be compromised so long as an accusing finger can be pointed at one of our NATO allies?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand the hon. Gentleman very well. There is no doubt that the accusations made in recent reports about the violation of human rights are both serious and disturbing. We have urged the Turkish Government to investigate the alleged abuses. Although there has been some improvement in recent years, the Turkish Government will have to make further efforts to eradicate torture and to adhere to the conventions that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. We shall continue to press them to do so. The Turkish Government may have taken some steps, but there is still a long way to go.

Mr. Moss: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Turkey can never be accepted as a member of the European Community until the transition to democracy is complete and its record on human rights is as good as those in the rest of western Europe?

Mrs. Chalker: As my hon. Friend knows, the Turkish application was referred to the Commission for an opinion in April 1987. We await that opinion and when it comes the Council of Ministers shall take into account all the relevant factors, including Turkey's human rights record. We hope that in the intervening period that record will continue to improve.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Can the Minister tell us whether Turkey's terrible human rights record makes any difference to that country's standing in NATO or to the British Government's position in relation to Cyprus?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about Cyprus. He will know, of course, that what the Turks want in Cyprus is what others want—a reunified state with a federal structure. It does not matter whether the conditions that we are talking about exist in Cyprus, in Turkey or anywhere else—there should be respect for human rights.

Mr. Conway: Does my right hon. Friend not agree that Turkey has made substantial progress towards solidifying her fledgling democracy and that it ill becomes hon. Members to forget that Turkey is a valuable member of NATO? We should support Turkey in making progress towards a more solid democracy and, one hopes, towards membership of the EEC.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that Turkey is a close and most important NATO ally. He is also right when he says that democracy is taking firm root in Turkey. Elections held there about 14 months ago were regarded as free and fair by European Parliament observers. That is a good start, but there is no doubt that there is still great concern about human rights in Turkey. I know that my hon. Friend shares those concerns. We urge Turkey to continue to monitor what is going on and to curb excesses, if there are any, so that torture is eliminated and human rights respected.

Mr. Robertson: Will the Minister tell her hon. Friends that the NATO Alliance was created to defend freedom and not to crush it? Instead of exhorting the Turkish authorities to make efforts to stop torture, the Government should tell them to stop torture immediately. Why do the Government not make it clear to Turkey that as an absolute precondition before its application to join the European Community will even be considered it must immediately stop all torture in its prisons, release all those imprisoned for non-violent political activities, and repeal those parts of the penal code which deny fair trials and limit trade union and political activity? If the Government do not make those demands we must conclude that the Conservative party has lost interest in human rights as a matter of principle and is interested in them only as a matter of prejudice.

Mrs. Chalker: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Conservative party fully supports the convention on human rights and is opposed to torture. As I said, in the past week both my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have made this clear to the new Turkish ambassador. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has also made that clear. We will not comment on the application of Turkey to become a member of the European Community until we have studied the Commission's opinion. We attach importance to our relationship with Turkey and we are keen to see progress, but we are likewise keen to see the cessation of torture and the recognition and proper upholding of human rights in Turkey. We shall do everything to encourage the Turkish Government to achieve that. I know that they would wish to do so, but there is still considerable doubt.

Vietnamese Refugees

4. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress Her Majesty's Government have made in consultations with other Governments and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to further the initiative to resettle Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong, announced by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 22 December 1988.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have launched a vigorous diplomatic campaign urging other resettlement countries to respond generously to our initiative. At our request, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has undertaken to do the same. It is too early to say what the outcome of our campaign will be, but initial responses have been encouraging.

Mr. Sims: In negotiations with other Governments, will my right hon. and learned Friend emphasise that we have not only a humanitarian responsibility towards those original boat people, many of whom have been in camps in Hong Kong for 10 years, but a moral responsibility to the people and Government of the greatly overpopulated territory of Hong Kong who have housed and fed those genuine refugees?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, it is entirely right to emphasise those points. The people and Government of Hong Kong have responded consistently and effectively to the demands and pressures resulting from the inflow of boat people. That is another reason, in addition to the humanitarian reason, for seeking to promote the programme as effectively as we can.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If this tragic problem continues to be addressed at the present slow pace, will it not remain with us up to and beyond 1997, and is that not an appalling prospect?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and I know of his long-standing concern about this problem. It is because of our strong wish to see the problem resolved on a time scale which finishes ahead of 1997 that we have been taking the decisions and steps that we have.

Mr. Wells: Are not the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong principally refugees in the sense that they are economic migrants from an extremely poor standard of living in Vietnam to richer pastures in Hong Kong and through Hong Kong to other metropolitan countries? Would it not, therefore, be sensible to conduct robust negotiations with the Vietnamese Government with a view to the resettlement of these people in Vietnam?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the cause of the problem. It is undoubtedly because of the economic migration factor that it has been right to introduce the pattern of screening now in place, with the advice of the UNHCR, so as to identify the genuine refugees and encourage the re-establishment of the others in Vietnam. We have held a number of rounds of talks with Vietnamese officials and I have twice raised the matter at ministerial level. We have emphasised the need for effective arrangements to be made for the reception of these people back in their homeland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: How vigorous is vigorous and how encouraging is encouraging if, after 10 years, people are still confined to camps, which is surely no better than palatial house arrest?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The fact that it has proved so difficult to sustain the prospects for onward movement of the boat people in the face of the sudden upsurge in their number in the past two years has emphasised the need to introduce changes which check the prospect of indefinite growth and serve to reduce the numbers to a manageable proportion while giving us the prospect of being able to persuade other countries to join us in tackling the problem while it is still of a measurable size.

Mr. Greg Knight: Given that 20,000 Indo-Chinese have been admitted to this country since 1979, including over 13,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong, do not the facts speak for themselves? Do not the Government have an honourable record in admitting these people, bearing in mind the other immigration pressures that we face?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out. Given the huge pressures from other directions, our record in respect of this group of people has been important. In view of the diminishing prospects for the reception of more such people around the world, it was necessary and right for us to give a signal to future boat people that they could not keep on flowing into Hong Kong in search of a future that could not and would not exist.

El Salvador

5. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States of America concerning international co-operation on the conditions under which the next elections will take place in El Salvador.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): None, Sir.

Mr. McAllion: That is a very disappointing answer. Can the Minister tell us why the Government have not taken steps to persuade and encourage the Governments of El Salvador and the United States to consider seriously the proposal from the FMLN to postpone elections for six months to create conditions for free and fair elections which would allow the FMLN to participate and, more important, would allow all sides to abide by the result of the elections?

Mr. Eggar: Of course, we welcome any sign that the FMLN is prepared to take part in the electoral process. Any delay in the election date is a matter for the Salvadorians to decide upon. The FMLN announced originally that it was prepared to avoid military action for about five days around the election date. This has recently been extended. The democratic parties within El Salvador will doubtless consider the proposals, but the decision is for El Salvador, not for the United Kingdom or for the United States.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my hon. Friend consider that perhaps one of the most conducive ways to bring about a good election in El Salvador would be for the FMLN to announce an indefinite cease-fire which would allow a democratic election to take place and would also allow the successor Government to tackle the problem of human rights abuse, not least the activities of the death squads?

Mr. Eggar: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. The FMLN has conducted operations that have harmed and killed innocent civilians. It has sought deliberately to intimidate and murder local mayors. That is not the way to make the atmosphere conducive for democratic elections.

Mr. Corbyn: Does not the Minister realise that abuses of human rights in El Salvador are largely due to the activities of the death squads and that there is now an opportunity, perhaps for the first time for many years, of getting a genuine move towards peace? Does the Minister agree that the FMLN proposal to postpone elections for

six months would allow peace to return so that there may be a proper, free and democratic election campaign? What we are asking is that the Minister uses his influence on the United States Government and on the Government of El Salvador to get them to consider seriously the proposal to allow peace to return so that elections can be held. He cannot take a hands-off approach if he supports the Government.

Mr. Eggar: We are concerned about and condemn the activities of the death squads. However, we are confident that the El Salvador Government do not encourage or condone such activities. President Duarte has recently condemned extremist activity from both the Left and the Right. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would also criticise the FMLN. The fact is that it has made indiscriminate use of land mines, and there have been summary executions, kidnappings, car bombings and the deliberate killing of mayors. The United Nations special representative had noted that those actions were the deliberate policy of the FMLN.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister look to the future rather than the past and give a wholehearted welcome to the FMLN peace offer, all the more so because it was unexpected? Will he consider ways in which the good offices of the United Kingdom, of our European partners and, above all, of the United States—which has a particularly strong role in El Salvador—can be used to try to get the elections postponed and the offer considered seriously?

Surely the hon. Gentleman agrees that, whoever is elected the next president of El Salvador, it will be better for him to be the president of a country at peace in September than of a country ravaged by civil war in March.

Mr. Eggar: I have already made it clear that the timing of the election is a matter for the people of El Salvador and the democratic parties within El Salvador. My understanding is that the Government there are considering the latest proposal from the FMLN. I dare say that when the hon. Gentleman goes to San Salvador he will be able to update himself on the position there.

South Africa

8. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review the Government's policy towards South Africa in response to the representations made to him by the World Council of Churches delegation led by the Reverend Canaan Banana, the first President of Zimbabwe.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I explained to the delegation, our objective remains the replacement of apartheid through peaceful means by a non-racial, representative system of government. We do not believe that punitive sanctions against South Africa would help achieve this.

Mr. Allen: Will the Foreign Secretary concede that that answer—like the Government's policy on apartheid—is inappropriate and unacceptable in a developing situation which is getting worse by the day? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the World Council of Churches delegation—the most high-powered ever assembled—felt that it had had a poor reception from him? Yesterday, it issued a press release in which it said:

"With the exception of Great Britain, we found a willingness on the part of the governments we visited to listen to the delegation and to consider some form of economic pressure."

When will the Foreign Secretary respond? Who is he prepared to listen to on this issue?

Hon. Members: Not the hon. Gentleman

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Certainly not the hon. Gentleman. —*[Interruption.]* I listened to him with attention but I do not respond to him, because I believe that his advice is misconceived. I listened to him, as I listened for an hour and a quarter to the delegation. I listened attentively and with respect to what it said. It did not, however, in any sense diminish my conviction that the imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions would create an economic wasteland and contribute nothing to the ending of apartheid. I drew the delegation's attention to the fact that the Anglican bishops in South Africa have recently called for carefully selected and targeted forms of pressure to be chosen which would

"avoid, as far as possible, the creation of further unemployment".

That formulation drives a coach and horses through the case for punitive sanctions.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many Conservative Members will be delighted that the Foreign Secretary gave a poor reception to members of the World Council of Churches, because many of us are worried and suspicious about where the funds of the World Council of Churches are going? Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that much of that money is going to terrorist organisations—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Hon. Members may not all agree with what is being said, but the hon. Gentleman has a right to say it.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that much of that money is going to terrorist organisations, both inside and outside South Africa? The people who religiously give money every Sunday to church collections should be told the facts.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I listened to the case being made by the delegation, because it was representative of a wide range of opinion from around the world. I pointed out to it, however, a recent comment by the Reverend Stanley Mogoba, who is a member of the executive committee of the South African Council of Churches. He said:

"those who advocate sanctions as a panacea for all the problems of South Africa have had that myth exploded in their faces".

I hope that the delegation will reflect long and hard on that message.

Mr. Alton: Having called to his aid the South African Anglican bishops, will the Secretary of State consider taking up the case of Charles Bester? He is an 18-year-old South African who was gaoled for six years for failing to join the South African defence force on the ground that, as he was a Christian, he could not join that force as a matter of conscience. Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman seen early-day motion 176, which has been signed by more than 80 hon. Members from all parts of the House? Is he aware that some 55,000 people in this country have signed a petition calling for Charles Bester's release?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand, as anybody must, why some young South Africans refuse to do military service, and one must respect the strength and sincerity of their views. Decisions on that matter, however, are for the individuals concerned and we have no locus to intervene on their behalf in such circumstances.

Mr. David Nicholson: Can my right hon. and learned Friend say what representations he has received from the World Council of Churches or, indeed, from the Reverend Canaan Banana about acts of repression carried out by black African countries?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Not without notice.

Mr. Anderson: The Foreign Secretary quoted the South African bishops' call for selective and targeted sanctions. Does he agree with that call? Is he happy with the efforts of the Department of Trade and Industry to promote British exports to the Mossel bay development, which is designed to avoid the oil embargo, and its efforts to promote computer sales to the centre of military research in South Africa? Will he have a word with the DTI about that?

In the light of the British attitude to exports to South Africa is it any wonder that the eminent persons group of the Churches came back with such a negative view of the British Government, alone of all the Governments that it met, and that this Government are perceived throughout the world as the best friend of apartheid South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's views on this matter remain stuck in a time warp more firmly than anybody else's——

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's views remain stuck in 10 Downing street.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My views remain stuck on the firm foundation of common sense. The fact is—the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) may not like it—that no voice arguing the case for change in South Africa is heard with more attention than that of the Prime Minister of this country. There are two simple reasons for that—our opposition to apartheid is unqualified, but our opposition to sanctions is equally unqualified. In our judgment the imposition of sanctions would make the matter a great deal worse and not better. I invite the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) to reflect on the words that I quoted from the Anglican bishops of South Africa. To call for carefully selected and targeted forms of pressure, but then to go on to say, that they must take care that they

"avoid, as far as possible, the creation of further unemployment".

is to commit oneself to a nonsense. The Anglican bishops are driving a coach and horses through the case for sanctions.

Sir Ian Lloyd: I warmly welcome the replies that my right hon. and learned Friend has just given. Has he noticed the astonishing similarity between the position of Mr. Gorbachev and the present President and his successor in South Africa? Both inherited political systems that are entirely indefensible by modern, western, democratic criteria, both are endeavouring to mitigate the consequences of those systems and both are staging slow and painful retreats from them. Can he see any logical consistency in the idea that the western democracies should give full support to the former, but should give no support to the latter? In view of the astonishing human rights record of Zimbabwe, has President Banana any right to come here and preach to western democracies about how they should handle the South African Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am interested, as always, in my hon. Friend's well-informed views on this matter, but I hesitate to join him in a precise parallel between one president of one state and another. It is clear that we have welcomed the steps that have been initiated by President Botha to promote the reforms that we all agree to be necessary. We hope that Mr. de Klerk, in his capacity as party leader, will lead his party, and so South Africa, on the road to reform. That is our common objective and we want to move towards it as quickly as possible.

Nicaragua

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will discuss at an early date with the United States Secretary of State the implications for peace in central America of United States policy in respect of Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: We are in regular touch with the United States Administration about a wide range of issues, including central America.

Mrs Fyfe: Does the Minister share our concern about the proposed appointment of Bernard Aronson as assistant Secretary of State with responsibility for inter-American affairs, considering that this man knows no Spanish, has apparently shown little interest in central American affairs other than Nicaragua and is chiefly known as a fund-raiser for the Contras?

Mr. Eggar: We have noted press reports of Mr. Aronson's appointment and we look forward to working with whoever is appointed as the new assistant Secretary of State.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my hon. Friend discuss with the United States means of bringing pressure on the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua on behalf of human rights? Could encouragement be given in the interests of free speech to remove the ban which the Sandinistas have placed on the opposition radio and newspapers in Nicaragua?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Nicaraguan Government are complying neither with the letter nor the spirit of the Esquipulas agreement. We look forward to improvements in both those areas.

Unita

11. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will discuss with the United States Administration the need to cease aid to Unita.

Mrs. Chalker: The United States Administration are well aware that it remains our policy not to provide assistance to Unita.

Dr. Moonie: Now that the Cubans are well ahead of schedule in pulling out of Angola, will Her Majesty's Government consider making representations to the

President of the United States to cease American opposition to Angola's membership of the IMF and the World Bank and to recognise the present Administration in Angola?

Mrs. Chalker: United States policy must be a matter for the new President and his team, who are well aware of our position. We see that Angola is looking for sensible ways of becoming financially more robust. We are sure that in the longer term it will need help to do that. We have provided some aid for a number of years, but it is nothing like what will be needed for the change that it will have to undertake. I do not believe that any country will stand in the way of Angola when the right time comes.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the time for the United States to end aid to Unita will be when all 50,000 Cuban troops have been withdrawn from Angola? Is she aware that Unita is prepared to put aside its arms if the MPLA Government will sit down and negotiate a settlement with Unita? Does she agree that the only true way to peace is for democracy to be installed in that country?

Mrs. Chalker: We are pleased to see that the Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola is proceeding. The task now is to ensure a smooth implementation of that. It is of course being overseen by the United Nations Angola verification mission—Unavem. I believe that peace can be returned to Angola and that it is the wish of both sides that that should happen. It may be some time before peace is finally secured, but we hope that a lasting peace will be secured. If there is anything that this country can do towards that end, we shall indeed do it.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Given the increasing reports of Unita and South African defence force activity in northern Namibia, are the Government putting at risk the major prize of Namibian independence by agreeing to cut the United Nations transition assistance group—UNTAG—force from seven to three battalions? If as the secretary-general says, the four battalions are being held in reserve, what state of readiness will they be in? Will the Government support the UN Secretary-General who can call them to go into Namibia, and not wait for the cumbersome process of using the Security Council?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman will know that it is a cardinal principle of United Nations peace-keeping that the Security Council must authorise the deployment of forces. While the secretary-general has agreed with the Security Council to deploy, we hope shortly, three enlarged battalions plus an enhanced number of military and peace observers—who are absolutely crucial for monitoring—he has still retained 7,500 troops as a ceiling for the military contingent.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that in 1978 the then secretary-general said that we must review the situation at the time. Cuban troop withdrawal is now well and truly on the way, Unavem is monitoring it, there is detente between South Africa and Angola and the joint commission has now been established to deal with any alleged breaches. The situation has now changed. We must see how it goes, and the machinery is there to do whatever is necessary to bring about Namibian independence starting, we hope, from 1 April.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: I listened with interest to my right hon. Friend. Is it not a fact that the United Nations peacekeeping force is remarkably small for the likely task that it will face in such an enormous country? Will my right hon. Friend carefully monitor the situation, and will she tell us how many British troops have already been committed to this task?

Mrs. Chalker: We shall send a signals unit and contribute to the observers who are going. I cannot give the exact numbers now. It is important to realise that the five permanent members of the Security Council are united in their belief that the secretary-general—after visits to the area—was right in his judgment that the numbers to be deployed could be reduced from the 1978 estimate, when conditions were different. It is important that the secretary-general be given adequate resources to fulfil his mandate. As I said, if there turns out to be a genuine problem, we shall reconsider increasing the size of UNTAG's military component beyond the 4,650 that the secretary-general considers adequate to implement the plan to lead Namibia to independence.

United States Secretary of State

14. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the new United States Secretary of State.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I expect to meet Mr. Baker on Sunday next.

Mr. Macdonald: When the Secretary of State meets Mr. Baker, will he discuss the American Administration's decision to double expenditure on defence bases in the United Kingdom over the next two years? Was the right hon. and learned Gentleman consulted by the American Administration before news of the decision was made public, that is, before the defence budget was presented to Congress last month? If he was not, is not that humiliating for him? If he was consulted before the decision became public knowledge, why did he not inform the House? Has not this House as much right to know as the American Congress?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not expect to discuss with the United States new Secretary of State the continued maintenance of American bases in this country, which is warmly welcomed by Conservative Members.

Mr. Cormack: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets Secretary of State Baker, will he discuss with him a joint approach to be taken to the Israeli Government by both our Governments? The Israeli Government should be told that their genuine friends on both sides of the Atlantic are rapidly running out of patience, and believe that the Israeli Government should respond to the approaches made from both this country and the United States. If they do not, they will find themselves isolated.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I take note of my hon. Friend's clearly expressed view, which has been widely supported today from both sides of the House, and for which there is much support on the other side of the Atlantic. My hon. Friend is right to underline the fact that the engagement of the United States in the peace process is of vital importance. We welcome the opening of a dialogue

between the United States and the PLO. I look forward to discussing the development of these policies with the new Secretary of State.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Secretary of State accept that there is a great deal of dismay in many parts of the United Kingdom about the proposal to increase expenditure on United States bases in our country? Does he accept that many people want bases such as the spy base and communications centre at Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, closed, because they put this country at risk? It is the United States nuclear communications centre and we want it to go. Does the Secretary of State also accept that the House has never formally given permission for that base to be established? It is a disgrace to our democracy.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I accept that the hon. Gentleman speaks, as so often, for a tiny minority of the people of this country. The great majority of British people and of hon. Members welcome the continued presence of the United States which, with all its resources, contributes to the strength and security of this country and the Alliance.

Sir Dennis Walters: When my right hon. and learned Friend discusses the middle east with the American Secretary of State, will he suggest that Mr. Shamir should be pressed to explain how he can possibly reconcile his statement the other day that he will not withdraw from any of the occupied territories with Israeli acceptance of United Nations Resolution 242?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree that there are many questions that can usefully be put to Mr. Shamir, when he visits a number of countries on both sides of the Atlantic, to try to encourage him in responding to the needs that are so widely identified by all hon. Members.

Middle East

17. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Palestine Liberation Organisation about the case for amending the Palestine national covenant as a condition precedent to peace negotiations in the middle east.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. William Waldegrave): I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given earlier this afternoon by my right hon. and learned Friend to the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

Mr. Marshall: I refrain from referring to the question put to my right hon. and learned Friend earlier this afternoon. Can I emphasise to my hon. Friend that as long as the Palestine national covenant exists, as it does, and as long as the Palestine Liberation Organisation makes claims on Jerusalem, the likelihood of talks starting is limited?

Mr. Waldegrave: I genuinely have little to add to what my right hon. and learned Friend said. I re-emphasise to my hon. Friend that it is surely in the interests of peace that there should be a response to the positive moves that the PLO has made.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister aware that there is widespread agreement with the views that he expressed not long ago about the terrorist past of some members of the Israeli Administration and that there is also widespread support for the view he expressed that that terrorist pattern is still being continued in the repression of the Palestinian population of the occupied territories?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support but, with respect, my point was somewhat different—that some of those who used force in the earlier part of the history of Israel laid down those methods and turned to the methods of peace, which is to their credit. It would also be to their credit if they recognised that there are Palestinian leaders willing to do the same.

Mr. Marlow: Has my hon. Friend yet had any evidence from the Israeli authorities that they accept that there will be no peace and stability in the middle east until they accept the need for Palestinian self-determination and if he has yet to receive any evidence of that, what further means are the Government going to use to persuade the Israelis of the self-evident truth on this matter?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Venice declaration made it clear that the British Government and the European Community agree with my hon. Friend that self-determination for the Palestinian people must be part of a permanent solution in the middle-east. Everything that we are doing on the diplomatic front is intended to lead to a peace conference where that can be achieved.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that there can be no peace whatever in the middle east until both sides come to a negotiating table? Does he accept that in order to induce both sides to come to that table, each must feel that there is a possibility of receiving fair treatment and that, at present, the Israeli Government—for whom few of us would have voted, but who have been democratically elected—are deeply concerned that they will be left in a corner with little support and forced into a deal from which their own state will be in danger? That may be fine for us to look at here, but it will not suit the people who live there.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. and learned Member and I have little disagreement about what needs to be done. Face-to-face negotiations between the principal parties is the only way forward and I agree with him that there is nothing to be gained from trying to isolate the state of Israel, which would only further undermine Israel's sense of security. We must conduct an even-handed policy in the region.

East Germany

18. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has assessed the extent to which the recent announcement of arms reduction in its forces by the East German Government represents a further lowering of tension in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We welcome the announcement by the GDR Government on 23 January that they intend to reduce the size of their armed forces. But the effect which these cuts will have on the overall East-West balance of forces will be small, and a number of questions remain about how the cuts will be taken and whether obsolete or modern equipment will be involved.

Mr. Madel: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that proposed or actual reductions in forces by East Germany do not reduce tension in Europe so long as the Berlin wall remains in place? Will he also confirm that it remains the Government's policy to work for a peaceful reunification of West and East Germany?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the way in which the continued presence of the Berlin wall makes a mockery of all our efforts to remove barriers in Europe. We all look forward to the day when it comes down. On the wider question, successive British Governments have taken it as axiomatic that real and permanent stability in Europe will be difficult to achieve so long as the German nation is divided against its will.

North Atlantic Council

20. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he expects the main subjects for discussion at the ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council on 8 and 9 June will be and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The ministerial meeting of the North Atlantic Council in June will address, as have other recent council meetings, the maintenance of Alliance security in an improving East-West atmosphere. Four months ahead of the meeting is too soon to know what specific issues will head the agenda.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend impress on our European allies the importance of a positive attitude towards burden sharing in view of the enormous size of the American contribution to our defence effort?

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. The Alliance should recognise the share that the United Kingdom takes. From time to time we have had to draw attention to the fact that others in western Europe have been cutting their defence budgets, which is a bad signal for the maintenance of Alliance coherence.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order later.

Afghanistan

3.30 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are now being taken by Her Majesty's Government to send essential aid supplies to the people of Afghanistan.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): We have provided £60 million of aid for the victims of war in Afghanistan since 1980, including £10 million in the current financial year. In addition, I have just agreed a further contribution of £500,000, particularly to meet the needs of mothers and children. Two hundred and fifty thousand pounds of this is being channelled through UNICEF and £250,000 is for the relief programmes of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Winnick: As someone who opposed the Russian occupation of Afghanistan from the beginning—*[Interruption.]* I did. I immediately tabled an early-day motion in January 1980—I am pleased that the Russians are finally leaving. I note what the Minister has just said about aid to Afghanistan. Would it not be unforgiveable if the leading powers simply looked on, because of the political situation in that country, while people are starving? Is it not absolutely essential for Britain to co-operate fully with the United Nations to ensure that aid continues to be given? Finally, will the Minister comment on the report in today's *Evening Standard* that various factions of the resistance movement are threatening to fire on planes bringing aid? If that is so, will they not bear the responsibility for all the distress which will be caused if supplies do not reach that country?

Mr. Patten: I am delighted to make it clear to the hon. Gentleman and the House, in case there is any doubt about the matter, that we have not used, do not use and will not ever use the denial of food or medicines in order to try to accomplish political objectives. We have made it absolutely clear that we distinguish between humanitarian assistance channelled through international relief agencies and assistance for development purposes to a particular Government or regime. I wish that everybody else took the same view. We were one of the first and most generous contributors of relief in Afghanistan in the camps along the Afghan border. We shall continue to provide assistance as and when we can. I am delighted to report that the executive director of UNICEF has telegraphed us today to thank us for our latest contribution.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that, apart from the provision of food and medical aid, one of the greatest threats to the existing Afghan population, as well as returning refugees, is the millions of unexploded mines and shells which threaten to maim children as well as adults? What help does Britain propose to give to train the returning refugees in mine awareness and clearance?

Mr. Patten: We have had a mission in Pakistan talking to the United Nations co-ordinator on that very point; we shall continue to give assistance in so far as we can so that the mines can be cleared. As my hon. Friend said, they represent a substantial danger to the returning population. We must all want to see as many Afghans as possible return in safety and honour to their country over the next few months.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Launderdale): The present aid that the Minister has announced for UNICEF and Red Cross operations in Afghanistan is warmly welcomed. Will he reaffirm his support for Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan's determination that humanitarian aid should be given, regardless of political discrimination? Will he accept that it is unfortunate that any earlier statements from the Foreign Office gave the contrary impression?

Mr. Patten: Yes, I am certainly very happy to give the commitment that the right hon. Gentleman seeks. We will continue to provide assistance from time to time as we are requested to do so. I think I am right in saying that the £10 million to which I referred earlier was provided by us before Prince Sadruddin was given his present job. I am pleased that I have had the opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding that may have existed.

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): Will my hon. Friend accept that, in view of the serious suffering and malnutrition of children in Kabul—we have witnessed the scenes on our television screens—we welcome very much what he has said so far about the level of aid that has been provided? But, as the situation may well get worse, can he give the House an assurance that he will keep under review the figure that he has announced?

Mr. Patten: Yes, I am happy to give my right hon. Friend that assurance. I anticipate being able to tell the House, at intervals over the coming weeks and months, of further contributions that we have made to the relief operations in Kabul and elsewhere in Afghanistan.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Minister confirm that at our meeting last week—I refer to the deputation about the question of overseas aid generally—he said he would be only too willing to search for projects in order to try to reach the figure of 0·7 per cent. of GDP for overseas aid generally? He has a long way to go and has plenty of money to play with, so we could find adequate resources for those in Afghanistan. Will he also confer with his colleagues concerning the fact that there is little point in sending food while at the same time Britain is using agencies to send in arms and weapons of war, which are probably going to Pakistan to keep the fight going? We need to feed the millions of people in Afghanistan, but there is no need for Britain, through its agencies, to continue this war.

Mr. Patten: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that one of the high spots of my year so far has been the meeting that I had with him the other day. I was particularly pleased to be able to explain to him—to his satisfaction, I thought—that the United Kingdom's aid programme was now increasing in real terms. One of the ways in which we will continue to use our aid is by providing humanitarian assistance in countries like Afghanistan, and our record in Afghanistan is pretty well as good as anyone's.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): My hon. Friend's announcement of additional support for the people of Afghanistan is very welcome, but will he take note of today's reports that aeroplanes carrying aid into Afghanistan have had to turn back because the crews are

nervous about going to that country? If necessary, will he talk to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and others to see whether we could provide the wherewithal to get the supplies in ourselves by way of air support?

Mr. Patten: I do not know exactly why the United Nations air lift has taken rather longer than it would have liked, literally, to get off the ground, but we must hope that it will manage to start soon. I do not believe that the conversation my hon. Friend has suggesed would be either sensible or fruitful.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I do not think that the Minister fully understood the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) put to him earlier. Surely my hon. Friend's point was that the flow of arms into Afghanistan must be staunched. Otherwise the war is going to intensify, as will the problems for the civilian population of Afghanistan, and further food and medical aid will be necessary as a result. Will the Minister make whatever representations he can, and will he ask his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to make representations, to ensure that the peace accord that brought about the Soviet withdrawal is adhered to by all sides so that genuine peace can return to Afghanistan?

Mr. Patten: The major channel for the introduction of weapons into Afghanistan was, of course, the Soviet army.

Mr. Alastair Goodlad '(Eddisbury): Is my hon. Friend aware that his comments this afternoon are broadly welcomed in the House? Will he also confirm that the task of reconstruction in Afghanistan will require substantial amounts of external assistance and that he is in touch with his counterparts in other countries and with multilateral agencies to ensure that such assistance will be forthcoming?

Mr. Patten: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. I am sure that all hon. Members look forward to the day when we can work with a broad-based Government in Afghanistan formed as a result of a genuine act of self-determination—in other words, when we can have a normal aid relationship with a broad-based Government in that country.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I am very glad that the hon. Gentleman has cleared up the difficulties and confusion about the press reports. I am not sure whether they were false or whether there has been a change of heart. Bearing in mind the General Assembly resolution last November which stated that aid should go to all Afghans irrespective of political labels, some of us were very confused when we read in the press on Monday that Britain had ordered that its £10 million contribution must not be used for emergency food supplies. Will the Minister confirm that the press got it wrong? I was very glad to hear his correction.

I understand that at 11 o'clock this morning—and there has been no correction about this—the plane had not left the ground because the crew were afraid. If the provision of food and blankets for those people, including many children, who are in dire straits is urgent, is it not possible to consider military escort? If the fear is as great as it appears to be, are there any other ways to ensure that the relief reaches those people?

Mr. Patten: On the second point, the international relief agencies use other channels to ensure that they can maintain their medical and supplementary feeding programmes. However, it would not be particularly wise of me to set out for the House the exact nature of those channels. On the first point, our policy is consistent and it has not changed. I recognise that very often the best way to keep a secret is to make a statement in this House; however, I hope that people will take notice of what I have said today at the Dispatch Box.

Public Libraries

3.42 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about public libraries.

My principal concern is to facilitate the improvement of the public library service for the benefit of its users. I want to give the service access to additional sources of revenue, while preserving the principle of free access to the basic service. It was for this reason that I issued last February a Green Paper, inviting views on how we might improve the present service still further.

The Green Paper evoked a notable response. About 7,000 individuals and organisations replied, 2,000 of them by personal letter. There has been a vigorous and healthy debate and I am grateful to those who took trouble to let me know their concerns. I have arranged for a summary of their responses to be placed in the Library of the House.

The Green Paper addressed two related groups of topics. First, the encouragement of joint ventures with the private sector and the possibility of further moves towards contracting out—measures which do not require legislation. Secondly, the correction of anomalies in library authorities' present powers to charge and the possibility of widening those powers—measures which do require legislation.

There was wide support for joint ventures with both public and private sector bodies. To encourage their wider introduction, I will undertake a programme of case studies, provide pump-priming funds for selected schemes through my public library development incentive scheme, and look for other cost-effective ways of helping possible partners, including voluntary agencies, to get together.

Many who commented adversely on contracting out assumed wrongly that it was equivalent to privatisation of the library service. Library authorities will remain responsible for the nature and quality of any service that they contract out. The only purpose of contracting out is to produce as good a service at less cost, or a better service at the same price. I believe that the practicability and value for money of that approach should be tested. I shall commission some work to examine that approach, involving those authorities that have expressed interest. If it seems satisfactory, I will fund some pilot investigations.

I turn to the question of charging. Although there was general support for a free basic service, there was no consensus on what it should cover or how it should be defined. I concluded that it will be necessary to adopt the alternative approach, mentioned in the Green Paper, of specifying those services for which charges may be made. I propose doing that by regulations to be made, in association with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, under an enabling power contained in the Local Government and Housing Bill presented to the House on 1 February by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I will specify in a moment the particular powers that I intend introducing in that way.

Before doing so, I remind the House of an important safeguard for free access to the library service that we have built into the Local Government and Housing Bill. We have excluded from the scope of the enabling power two main elements that are generally regarded as the core of the free public library service. They are, first, the borrowing—by any person living, working or studying full-time in the area of an English or Welsh library authority—of books, journals and pamphlets availabe within a library or mobile library of that authority; secondly, the use for reference and consultation purposes of all such materials and microform materials, or any catalogue of the authority's own holdings, by any person within a library of that authority. That statutory safeguard demonstrates our commitment to maintaining the essential core of a free public library service.

Subject to that major safeguard, I propose, in due course, using the power in the Bill, to make regulations to preserve the powers to charge currently contained in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, to correct certain anomalies and to introduce modest new charging powers. The relevant regulations will be subject to affirmative resolution by Parliament.

I intend giving library authorities power to charge for: obtaining and notifying the availability or non-availability of an item reserved, subject to a limit that we shall prescribe; damage to materials and equipment; the borrowing of certain non-print materials for which a charging power would be appropriate; the late return of borrowed materials; articles that become the property of the person to whom they are supplied; the use within the library of certain facilities, such as computers.

I also propose giving library authorities power to charge for assistance given by library staff—for example, in helping a person conduct research among a library's materials, over and above what can reasonably be expected as part of a general service. It seems reasonable to us that the library authorities should have discretion to charge for special services involving their staff in more than half an hour's work.

All the powers will be discretionary. Authorities will be able to decide whether or not to charge for any service. When they do decide to charge, they will be able to decide whom they charge and the concessions that they give. We will also have powers to require that those charges are made known in advance to members of the public.

We will not take powers to proceed with certain other measures, such as book premium subscription services or charges for special book collections.

We will carry out further consultations before the appropriate regulations are introduced. We shall also consider with local authority associations and others how more library authorities can be encouraged to reinvest in their library services a substantial part of the income that the services earn. We know how beneficial an incentive that practice can be to development. I believe that those changes will help to improve still further our splendid public library service.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I welcome the statement, and congratulate the Minister on his courage in coming to give it orally to the House. This must rate as one of the most embarrassing and humiliating climbdowns by any Minister in recent times. Every proposal that the Minister put forward in his Green Paper he has had to abandon in the face of the intelligent criticism that he has received from all around the country.

That, however, in no way compensates for the form in which this new piece of non-legislation will be introduced. It is a sad but accurate reflection of the lack of importance that the Government ascribe to the public library service that the legislation should appear as clause 124 of the

Local Government and Housing Bill. It will be seen through its Committee stage by the Secretary of State for the Environment, whose tender concern for the public library service is a byword in the House. We believe that the service is of great cultural importance and deserves the attention of the Minister responsible, in this instance the Minister for the Arts, and we wish that he had sufficient spirit to fight for his own service rather than allowing it to be handled by other Ministers behind his back.

We welcome the Minister's constructive reply to the 7,000 responses that he received, which utterly rejected his absurd and dangerous ideas such as the premium book lending scheme and compulsory tendering for services to old people's homes. In particular, we welcome the news that there will be no new definition of the core service, that services to old people's homes will not be put out to competitive tender, that there will be no new definition of who is and who is not eligible to use public library services and that libraries will continue to serve free of charge companies, corporate bodies and collective bodies as well as individuals.

Will the Minister confirm that charges will not be possible for inter-library loans, that no authority will be able to introduce a premium book lending scheme, and that the proposed legislation applies only to England and Wales? Will he tell us what will happen about libraries in Scotland? Above all, will he confirm that library authorities will be free to decide not to charge for new services, and that there will be no element of compulsion?

In short, will the Minister confirm that all that clause 124 of the Local Government and Housing Bill does is clarify sections 7 and 8 of the 1964 Act, and that he got it completely wrong in his Green Paper? In doing so he wasted a great deal of public money, and alienated any remaining good will that his Government might have in the public library service since so under-funding and reducing support for it. At least the statement makes it clear that the exercise has been unnecessary, and shows the public how little the Government care for the public library services—as for all other services that local authorities provide.

Mr. Luce: That was the most awful lot of fabricated hot air that I have heard from the hon. Gentleman for some time. Whether it meant that he really agrees with what I am doing I am not entirely sure, but that may well be precisely what he means.

As far as I am aware, this is the first time in history that we have had a public debate on such a scale about our library system. A Green Paper has been produced and there has been much constructive discussion, and my concern now is to ensure that we find ways of improving our excellent public libraries still further. The suggestion that all the proposals in the Green Paper have been rejected and that I have decided to implement none of them is absolute nonsense from beginning to end. I have rejected some, such as the premium service, because I do not consider them worth pursuing, but my statement listed a range of effective measures that I propose to introduce. I might add that much of what I propose covers anomalies that existed under Labour Governments in the 1960s and 1970s. I think, therefore, that underneath it all the hon. Gentleman must agree with everything that I am doing.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned clause 124 of the Local Government and Housing Bill. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I, along with other Government colleagues, have made it clear since July 1987 that the Government as a whole would introduce enabling powers to allow certain local government services to be chargeable, and that among those services would be library provision. It seems logical, following that and having said that the Government would legislate, that we should provide a clause in the Bill to do just that. We are fulfilling an undertaking that the Government gave in 1987. Believing as I do in maximum discussion and open government, I believed that there should be discussions after the Green Paper about the future of the library service and the right way to proceed. I believe that we have had sensible discussions.

The hon. Gentleman asks about inter-library lending. In the 1960s and 1970s under Labour Governments there was freedom to charge for inter-library services, and that is what happens today. I have already explained that the measure applies to England and Wales but not to Scotland. That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Does not my right hon. Friend's excellent decision to continue to uphold the entirely free lending of library books give the lie to the irresponsible scaremongering of Left-wing local authorities and Opposition Members?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I have provided an additional safeguard for the core library services in clause 124 of the Local Government and Housing Bill, but in a handout to the public Derbyshire county council said that it believed that the Green Paper meant that the Government were planning to charge everybody, even children, for the free service. That was a total and utter distortion of what the Green Paper said.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Minister agree that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) appeared to be looking a gift horse in the mouth? The Minister's climbdown is entirely welcome. The proposal that there should continue to be a basic free library service throughout the country would have appealed to a capitalist such as Andrew Carnegie. Even the late Joe Orton would have seen a good deal of sense in the Minister's proposal to charge for damage to library books.

We welcome in particular the Minister's decision to scrap the proposal for a premium book service, which was always nonsense, and his proposal that there should be an annual fee to secure access to more popular books, as well as his decision to scrap the proposal to charge for the lending of books that are brought in from another library. That decision supports the concept that the library service is a national service. We see much cause for rejoicing in the Minister's repentance, and we shall take it in our stride that he has allowed these matters to be delegated to the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. I made it plain in the Green Paper that the Government intend to maintain a free basic service, and there has been no change. Since the Green Paper was published, however, various people have deliberately misrepresented what I said in it. I gave as an example Derbyshire county council, but there are many others. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support. As for the inter-library lending service, I have already made it clear

[Mr. Luce]

that I intend to introduce a discretionary right to charge for the reservation of books, but there will be an upper prescribed limit of £1·50.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a wide welcome for his decision that the lending of the printed word will continue to be free? Is he also aware that most people will see the very good sense of introducing new discretionary charges as a means of supporting the amount of revenue that is available to the library service? Will his sensible proposals for some experiments in contracting out be kept within a specific time scale?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his remarks. I have already explained that I shall be introducing regulations concerning discretionary charges, and they will be subject to affirmative resolution. Before that, however, I have undertaken to hold consultations with the revelant authorities and with anybody else who is concerned, so there is plenty of scope for consultation. I shall proceed as rapidly as I can with a study of the practical problems of sub-contracting. I hope to identify particular local authorities that would like to co-operate in pilot investigations.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Is it not the case that, when the Department of the Environment comes to determine the rate support grant, or the revenue support grant when we have the poll tax, assumptions will be made about what local authorities should obtain from charges, even though they are discretionary, as a way of fixing the grant level? Is this not a back-door method of pushing local authorities to make these charges? Will the Minister explain how his statement will affect libraries that do not operate in one building as they used to do? In my constituency, one school library in a school with 2,000 pupils is run by the public library service; it is the public library, and the public can walk in and use it. Another library organises book fairs to encourage people to come and look at books. Will they be pushed to charge for organising such activities? If they are, that will be a thundering disgrace.

Mr. Luce: On the hon. Member's first question, I must remind him, as I stress time and again, that the powers being given are discretionary. It will be totally up to local authorities whether to make charges and if they do they can decide in what areas they will make them and what concessions they will grant to particular categories of people. There is no change on that. I am seeking to give local authorities scope to raise resources that will enable them further to improve the service to users. That is the main objective of the statement. The position remains precisely the same for school libraries, hospital libraries and prison service libraries. Since the 1964 Act, it has been possible for local authorities to provide services, often with special financing arrangements, to schools, hospital authorities and others. There is no change from the charging position that existed under Labour Governments.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the rather churlish reply of the listening party to the listening Minister will not be echoed throughout the country? Most people will be extremely glad that he has listened to representations and has produced an exceptionally balanced and fair statement and has given the strongest safeguard ever for the free lending of books to people who want to borrow them.

Mr. Luce: I am very grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. When I introduced the Green Paper I said that we would continue to have a basic, free service. I thought that would be strengthened by introducing, as I have, the safeguard in the Bill.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): May I declare an interest? My background owes a great deal to the use of a public library. When one went to school and stayed on while so many did not, it was beneficial to use "research" facilities in the local library. May I ask the Minister about section 10 of his statement which is about charging for "unreasonable research"? How will that be determined? What is reasonable and what is unreasonable? Surely it is not for local authorities of any persuasion to tell a young person trying to study that the information that he is asking for is unreasonable when they would not know.

Mr. Luce: I appreciate exactly what the right hon. Gentleman is saying, and I also appreciate his support, which is shared by the vast majority of the British public, for our public library system, which is one of the best in the world. We should also understand the scale and nature of the changes that have taken place in our library system in the last 25 years or so. The range of expert specialist information that is now available in public libraries is enormous. Many businesses, scholars and other people wish to draw upon the services of public libraries. If a local authority feels that it wishes to introduce discretionary charges for businesses or people or any specialist group that wishes to use more staff time than the 30 minutes that I have chosen, then it is reasonable to allow discretion to make a charge.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): May I, as a former public library committee chairman, thank my right hon. Friend for what he has said, and for keeping Colonel Sibthorpe firmly in his grave? Will he say yet again how monstrous it was for local authorities such as Camden to encourage by scare tactics pensioners to write to their Members of Parliament saying that the Green Paper was intended to bring in a charge for the public library service? Will he try to educate Opposition spokesmen about the difference between a Green Paper and a White Paper?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Her Majesty's Opposition do not understand what true consultation really means. A Green Paper is for the process of public discussion about the right thing to do. My hon. Friend is right to say that some sections of the community deliberately went out of their way to distort what we were proposing for discussion in the Green Paper, and the Government's intentions. I have given some examples and my hon. Friend has given another. They are now seen to be very foolish for what they did.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to the subsequent business and I have to tell the House that no fewer than 35 right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to take part in the broadcasting debate. We have a ten-minute rule application as well. I shall allow questions

on this to go on for a further 15 minutes, bearing in mind that the matter will be discussed in debates on the Local Government and Housing Bill.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Why does the Minister expect to get credit for withdrawing a statement that should never have been made in the first place? Is it not rather like saying, "We are going to break your fingers," and then when that does not happen we have to say, "Thank you very much"? It is monstrous that the suggestion of a charge for borrowing should ever have been made. We are delighted that the lady was for turning and that our books are not for burning. The Minister must come back with better than this.

Why does the right hon. Gentleman confuse the nature of libraries? In this age, why should the use of computers be charged for any more than a reference book should be charged for? Lastly, we are delighted that he is to keep his hands off Scotland.

Mr. Luce: It is not I who suggested that the Government proposed an end to the free basic service. That was suggested in certain other quarters, including one or two unions and one or two county and district councils that I have already quoted. I made our position quite clear in the Green Paper, and I have not changed one bit on that. There has been no change as far as I am concerned. As the hon. Gentleman has said, none of this applies directly to Scotland. He also knows that since the 1964 Act successive Governments have had certain powers to charge. Labour Governments did not choose to change that in any way or to restrict the powers of the 1964 Act.

As I see it, my job all along has been to overcome some of the grey areas, the anomalies that exist and that have been growing because the nature of libraries has changed. Libraries have expanded and the amount of information at their disposal has changed. We need to adjust to that.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I declare an interest. Does my right hon. Friend agree that some of his many excellent recommendations may be difficult to implement if we lose the net book agreement? Is he prepared to have discussions with his right hon. Friend about that and will he confirm that the library licence will continue?

Mr. Luce: As my hon. Friend knows, the net book agreement is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who at the moment is undertaking a study on general competition policies. No doubt this matter can be incorporated in that study. As I say, that is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend, but my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) is right to draw my attention to it because it is a matter of general concern in terms of the levels of readership in this country. I did not quite catch the second part of my hon. Friend's question.

Sir Hector Monro: Library licences.

Mr. Luce: At present there is an arrangement that provides for a 10 per cent. discount on books to libraries, and I know of no proposals to change that policy.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister may feel that he could have presented worse proposals to the House, but does he not understand that some of his proposals will lead to the Government being regarded as meaner in spirit and more attached to dogma than some of the less philanthropic Victorian captains of industry? Does he accept that there are those—perhaps some of them are his advisers—who are eager to see greater uniformity? Will he make it quite clear that uniformity will not be an aspect of Government policy, and certainly not if it is to be applied at the lowest standard?

Mr. Luce: Why the hon. Gentleman should reach the conclusion that these proposals contain an intention to restrict libraries—he referred to a meaner spirit—I do not know. The whole purpose of this exercise is to give library authorities the scope to improve their services still further by making charges in reasonable sectors, which will be the subject of further debate in the House as a result of the regulations. My simple concern is to enable our efficient library service to improve still further, and to give it scope both to do that and to provide an even better service to the user. As to uniformity, I make it plain again that the power is discretionary, and the local authority alone can charge what it decides to charge, or can decide not to charge at all.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): My right hon. Friend may not be aware that the Isle of Wight had the first comprehensive free lending library service, long before the public library service. The announcement that he has made today will be widely welcomed. Is my right hon. Friend aware of the considerable financial liability of local authorities that have to provide a prison book service, particularly to prisons holding international terrorists who require books in other languages, which are extremely expensive? My right hon. Friend has already alluded to the prison service. Will anything in his statement enable a more realistic charge to be made to the Home Office?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to an important point. Libraries provide a wide range of special services, including library services to prisons, schools, hospitals and old people's homes. Under my proposals, the position on such services would not change. There has always been discretion to make special financial arrangements with the authorities in charge—as he rightly says, in the case of prisons it is the Home Office, and in the case of schools, it is the school service—about the charges to be made for those services.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will free photocopies of scientific periodicals still be available from Boston Spa? If I were to send the Minister a great deal of evidence that I have had in the course of preparing for the third Dainton lecture for the British Library from the universities of Hull, Leeds, Birmingham, Cambridge and Norwich—this shows that the price of scientific periodicals has gone up faster than the average inflation rate, creating a real problem for university libraries—would he consider that specially expensive form of scientific information through periodicals and books?

Mr. Luce: I will give thought to the point raised by the hon. Gentleman and give him a fuller answer by letter. As he knows, Boston Spa is part of the British Library, and what I am proposing here affects only the general public library system.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's announcements on continuing free access to the library book and the modest increase in opportunities to bring extra income to the library service. However, will he reconsider his suggestion that one of the criteria on research aspects be half an hour, because half

[Mr. John Bowis]

an hour may have more to do with the ability of the librarian than the complexity of the research? Will he also consider ensuring that whatever criteria are used should be clearly labelled as such and publicised for the people using the service?

Mr. Luce: Of course I will take my hon. Friend's point into account. As I have already stressed, we shall have consultation on the proposals before regulations are introduced. The regulations will not be introduced until after the Local Government and Housing Bill receives Royal Assent.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Do the joint ventures that the Minister is proposing mean that libraries will be splattered with advertisements? The private sector does not show any genuine altruism in these matters. What about this half-hour charge? Does this mean-minded measure mean that people who are, for example, disabled, slow to move or slow to read will face a penalty charge? If it is to apply to the public at large, will it apply to Members of Parliament? Will they be charged, or will there be one rule for Members of Parliament and one for the public outside, who are facing the imposition of charges by this mean-minded group of Tories?

Mr. Luce: Once again, there was rather a lot of hot air in that question, but I shall ignore that and answer the specific questions. There is a great deal of support for joint ventures between the public library service and the private sector, which cover a range of services in which value for money and better services can be achieved—for example, in publishing and information. There is a joint venture experiment on ethnic minorities with Asian publications in Leicestershire, and an experiment on information services in Gateshead. We are trying to harness the private and public sectors to provide better services.

As to the hon. Gentleman's second point, there was considerable support in response to the Green Paper for some kind of charge for what was described as the value-added services, or fee-based research—that is to say, services that provide extra benefits to users through more speedy delivery of the information or a more convenient or special service. I thought it only right that we should consider providing a charge under that umbrella. I am open to persuasion, argument and discussion about the time scale of this.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that any extra revenue raised by the charges will not end up in the Exchequer, but will be recycled to the benefit of basic library services? Will he also confirm that there is already great variation between library authorities in the amount raised from charges, partly because there is confusion about the exact legal status of those charges?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an important point. Although there is no change in the Government's position about hypothecated charges or taxation, it is important for local authority, in assessing whether to make charges, to relate that to the ways in which it can improve services to users. I hope to give local authorities some guidance on the best case histories of this when they are considering charges.

My hon. Friend is right: there has been much misunderstanding as to what is and what is not chargeable under the 1964 Act. That was one reason why we introduced the Green Paper. I hope that what I have announced this afternoon will lead to a clearer picture about what can and cannot be charged for.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Minister aware that he is getting a reputation for being a parsimonious philistine, and that he ought to give an undertaking that any income that library services choose to get from the lending of tapes or whatever else will not be taken away by loss of income support for the local authority from the Exchequer? Would it not be better if all library services of all sorts were declared free, for the benefit of everybody? That would be better than this creeping privatisation and creeping charging in the library service that the Minister seems to be encouraging.

Mr. Luce: If being parsimonious means to obtain an extra £300 million of taxpayers' money to invest in a new British library, and to add 33 per cent. in real terms to overall taxpayer support for the arts in the past eight years, then I am happy to be described as parsimonious.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that record numbers of people, including children, are using libraries and that that number will increase dramatically when the new, brilliantly conceived British library comes on stream? Will he look at the concept of charging for damaged books, presumably including paperbacks, bearing in mind the high cost of books? How will people be charged for damaged books?

Mr. Luce: In all categories of arts, not just libraries, my ambition is to see a growing number of people enjoying the facilities. It is an anomaly that it has not hitherto been possible to charge for damage to materials and equipment. We may need to give some guidance to local authorities about how that is to be achieved, but it is right to introduce discretionary power to charge.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Minister said a few moments ago that the British library system is the best in the world. If that is so, what justification is there for messing around with contracting out? Is not the Minister aware of the immense cultural and literary contribution that the library service has made to generations, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said, including myself, who received their self-education largely from the library system? Is it not the case as well that private libraries, which I remember, have virtually gone out of existence while the public libraries have retained their strength through the way in which they have provided a service for millions of people?

Mr. Luce: I have already made it clear that the justification for sub-contracting is only on the criterion that it produces better value for money or an improved service to the consumer. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he does not think it is a good thing if it achieves just that? My concern in all the proposals is to find ways of strengthening still further a very good and professional library system. That is the intention of the measures.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Will my right hon. Friend assure the House on the future of

services in rural areas, such as Shropshire? Can he say under what circumstances it can be justified for taxpayers and ratepayers to subsidise the lending of compact discs free of charge? If someone can afford a player for such an expensive hobby, surely he should not expect the taxpayer and the ratepayer to subsidise it. So the crying of wolf and stinking fish from the Opposition Benches is a farce in the 20th century.

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. Since 1964 there has been a general power to make charges in the non-print area. As I have toured many libraries, I have found that many library authorities make charges for non-print facilities such as videos and cassettes. All I need to do is clarify the law, which is vague and anomalous. It is for that reason that I have introduced a specific proposal.

As to rural areas, as my hon. Friend knows, there are a large number of mobile libraries which provide an excellent service. He might like to know that in the period from 1977-78 to 1986-87 there was a 37 per cent. increase in the number of service points for public libraries.

Mr. Fisher: Of course we welcome a repentant sinner like the Minister. In view of his kind remarks about consultation, will he join me in congratulating the 7,000-plus people who wrote to him about his proposals, all of whom criticised vehemently what he proposed in the Green Paper? Without their criticism, he would not be backing off in the way that he is today. Will he explain to the House how he arrived at the period of half an hour that he considers to be adequate time for reference work? Will he reconsider that, and admit that it was plucked out of the air and bears no relation to the sense of what was put to him by my hon. Friends or by his Back Benchers?

At the risk of rubbing his nose in it, may I ask the Minister to confirm that the six powers he itemised are all available under the 1964 Act, with perhaps some ambiguity about damage to books? Not a single one of those six powers is new. I repeat that this is a welcome climbdown. It is deeply humiliating for the Minister that he has had to accept that all so-called radical proposals in the Green Paper are not worth a row of beans.

Mr. Luce: I have seldom heard such absolute nonsense from the hon. Gentleman. He must be desperate about something; I cannot make out what it is. I am very pleased that the broad proposals that I put forward in the Green Paper have been generally accepted. Only two proposals —the premium book service and one other—have been dropped. I have produced one or two variations. The whole point of the Green Paper was discussion. The bulk of the Green Paper in one form or another has been implemented. There are areas under the 1964 Act where it was not possible to charge, for example, for the reservation of books or for damage. The hon. Gentleman is either deliberately distorting the position or else he has not done his homework.

Mr. Speaker: Application under Standing Order No. 20.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Later.

Hospital Closures (Leicestershire)

4.23 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement by Leicestershire health authority of the closure of seven hospitals in the area."

This morning, I and hundreds of others, including small children born in these hospitals, attended the offices of Leicestershire health authority. At its meeting, the authority recommended the closure of seven hospitals in Leicestershire, the partial closure of another and the removal of general practitioner maternity beds from three others.

The decision of the health authority was taken in complete disregard of the wishes of the local people, thousands of whom signed petitions and wrote letters of support for the excellent work of these hospitals. The health authority has acted in an arrogant, irresponsible and undemocratic way. It has shown itself to be utterly inflexible when confronted with legitimate arguments. It has cast aside the anxieties and concern of the consumers of the Health Service, the very people it purports to serve.

I have written to the Secretary of State for Health and asked him to intervene. I urge him to do so. Closing down is not opting out. Closing down does not give people more choice; it does not give people a better or a more responsive service. It means no service at all. Ending the maternity and geriatric services will put an enormous strain on community services and on ambulances. It will reduce choice and will result in job losses. It will put pressure on mothers who will be literally in labour.

The National Health Service is of great concern to me as a member of the National Union of Public Employees and it is also the concern of my constituents. We cannot reassure people that the NHS is to flourish and survive by destroying it bit by bit. Even at this late stage, the health authority must demand extra cash from the Government, especially as one hospital recommended for closure is Blaby hospital, which is in the constituency of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

After the recent air disaster at Kegworth in Leicestershire, Ministers were quick to congratulate the hospitals and emergency services in the county. The congratulations were richly deserved. Now the Government have a chance to match their good words with good deeds. The people of Leicestershire deserve a first-class health service which is open to all, giving better services and not taking them away.

I ask that leave be given to adjourn the House so that we can discuss fully the future of the Health Service in Leicestershire following this appalling decision.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement by Leicestershire health authority of the closure of seven hospitals in the area."

As the House knows, I have to take into account the requirements of the Standing Order and to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I listened

[Mr. Speaker]

with care to what the hon. Member said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering his application is to decide whether it should be given priority over business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that the matter he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Now I will take the points of order. I already had notice of one. Mr. Holt.

Points of Order

4.27 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask for your indulgence. Perhaps you can guide me. If you look at Question No. 99 on the Order Paper for today, you will see that it stands in my name and begins:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department".

The question which I tabled was to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The Foreign Office decided to transfer the question to the Home Office. I cannot understand how the Home Secretary, with all the wisdom he has, can answer a question about the activities of the Foreign Secretary. Surely that is the responsibility of the Foreign Secretary. There must be a mechanism which enables Back Benchers to ask a question about the activities of the Foreign Secretary without having it transferred.

I raise the matter with you, Mr. Speaker, because I intend to table the same question for the next cycle. I ask you to note Question No. 12, which relates to Israel, Question No. 88, which relates to Zambia and, more particularly, Question No. 56, which relates to Gibraltar. The Isle of Man, for which the Home Secretary answers in the House of Commons, is a Crown colony. I cannot see how the Home Secretary can answer when I asked when the Foreign Secretary last met members of the Manx Government.

Mr. Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's perplexity. I cannot give him an answer. Perhaps he should wait for the answer to the question, when all may be revealed. I cannot go further than that.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point of order relates to Foreign Office questions. I am sure you will have observed, Mr. Speaker, that a total of no fewer than eight questions were not asked or were withdrawn today. Not only is this infuriating to those who are unsuccessful in the ballot for questions and who hope to catch your eye to ask a supplementary, but it is a discourtesy to the House and to you, Mr. Speaker.

Is there not a case for the House to look at this and perhaps debarring an offending Member from tabling any further questions for a period? If you tell me, Mr. Speaker, that that is not the matter for you, will you in any event express your displeasure at this growing practice?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to hon. Members who have not alerted the Chair to the fact that they cannot be present at Question Time. Some right hon. and hon. Members do, of course, have perfectly good reasons for not being present and three hon. Members told me of their inability to be present this afternoon. However, it is distressing for hon. Members who are not called on one question, but who hope to be called on another which is broadly similar, to miss their opportunity because another hon. Member is not present. I say again to the House that, if hon. Members cannot be present, they should always let the Chair know.

BILLS PRESENTED

Cervical Cancer (Testing and Treatment)

Mr. Jimmy Wray, supported by Ms. Joan Ruddock, Mrs. Maria Fyfe, Ms. Harriet Harman, Ms. Clare Short,

Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Eddie Loyden, Mr. Jimmy Hood, Mr. Don Dixon, Dr. Lewis Moonie and Mr. Alan Meale, presented a Bill to establish a body known as the National Cervical Cancer Service, which will be responsible within the National Health Service for managing a national system for making cervical cancer tests available once every three years to all women aged between 20 and 65 years, and for supervising the provision of treatment for cervical cancer; to provide for the making of tests by doctors acceptable to the women concerned; to provide through the National Cervical Cancer Service for action to make women aware of the need for such tests; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 68.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the draft European Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Not less than 20 Members having risen in their places and signified their objection thereto, MR. SPEAKER *declared that the Noes had it, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Instruments, &c.).*

Land Registry (Reform)

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enable Her Majesty's Land Registry to gain agency status; to thereby improve the flexibility with which is uses externally generated funds for fees; to improve its accountability to consumers; to make its fees more responsive to customers' demands; to provide guarantees of service; and to reduce the present case backlog.

This is an important subject which had the attention of the Public Accounts Committee in July of last year, a report from the Auditor-General in 1987 and an Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) in 1987; and it was, of course, dealt with at some length by the Farrand committee on conveyancing in 1985.

The purpose of my Bill is first to give greater flexibility and freedom of management to the Land Registry by giving it agency status, so that it can better deal with the huge number of applications that it receives, which on present evidence appears likely to be sustained. Secondly, it is to make the fee-charging system more responsive to the changes in the property market, eliminating the £103 million Treasury surplus which has been generated over the past 10 years, and giving customers better value for money.

Thirdly, the Bill will increase the registry's delegating ability to recruit staff according to local needs and to retain them to increase the calibre of staff and thereby to improve the turnaround of work, much of which is complex. Fourthly, given the fact that even on an agency basis it will constitute a statutory monopoly, the Bill will set down a framework for outside standards for speed and quality of customer service and a rate of return on the registry's financial assets.

In the past 125 years, the Land Registry has made it its business to register land and thus to give certainty to the title of real estate and changes in it. In a qualitative sense, it does that well. It has at present on the register 11·8 million of 20 million estimated titles. Last year, there were only 231 indemnity claims, totalling £226,000. It carries out those functions from about 16 full offices, with 9,300 staff, which is an increase of 2,000 in the past three years.

The registry's registration work is divided basically into two areas. First are the pre-contract and pre-completion inquiries from solicitors, which check on the validity of title. There were 5·2 million of those last year, which was an 85 per cent. increase over the past three years. At present, 90 per cent. of those inquiries are dealt with within four days, and they represent about 30 per cent. of the Land Registry's work. The other 70 per cent. of its work, which causes serious concern to the house building industry and to home owners generally, is the treatment of substantive applications to register for the first time or to change registration when properties are sold. Since 1982, the boom in house building, the sale of council houses, inner-city regeneration and the securitisation of mortgages have meant that these applications have more than doubled on an annual basis from 1·2 million to 2·8 million last year—and the number is still rising.

Surpluses averaging £10 million a year have been made from this increasing business. Inevitable manpower constraints have seen staff increased in that period by 50 per cent.—from 6,000 to 9,000—against the doubling of the business.

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

There have been three results of that. First, the backlog of work has increased to the extent that it damages the productivity improvements needed to make inroads into past backlogs. The Public Accounts Committee heard from the Land Registry last year that there were 900,000 —itself a record—outstanding substantive applications. I am told that there are now 1·147 million outstanding applications. As a result, although productivity is improving by 2 per cent. a year, it has not yet reached the levels achieved in 1982-83.

Secondly, that will result in delays in getting registration through, which holds up the completion of land sales. On Land Registry figures, the time taken for first registration is 35 weeks, against a 14-week target, and for other registrations it is 33 weeks. That causes delays and increased costs to builders and vendors—many of whom have to take out bridging loans. It has a detrimental effect on house prices, restricts the mobility of labour and, in many cases, causes considerable personal anguish.

The upshot is that the public are still providing the Land Registry with a substantial surplus every year, but are receiving a service which is unsatisfactory, at least in its speed of response, and one which does not look as though it is getting any better.

It is only fair to say that the Land Registry, assisted by the Government, has been making efforts to counteract these problems. It has introduced a £25 million computerisation programme; it has opened new offices —two more were opened last year—it has reduced and rationalised its fee structure—there was a fee change only last year—and it has tried to assist house builders by introducing development title certificates, which speed up new registrations where there are multiple applications from house builders. So far, however, those have only produced the prospect of improvement.

I believe, as do many people in the Land Registry, that it is constrained by a number of factors. First, it is unable to put its surpluses to effective use. Although, in April last year, it was freed from gross running cost control by the Treasury, it is still subject to annuality. It is not, therefore, able to carry over its surpluses or effectively its spending plans between years rather than within years. Secondly, it feels constrained by Civil Service rules on pay and recruitment, especially for senior staff. Professional entrants, and especially people on professional and executive grades, cannot be recruited locally, but must be recruited through the Civil Service Commission, which leads to delay. As a result there is a 40 per cent. under-establishment in executive and professional grades. I am told, too, that there are only 100 qualified solicitors among the 9,000 people working in the service.

Thirdly, because its incentives to improve productivity are cash-limited, the registry sometimes runs out of funds, which can be infinitely demoralising for staff. Fourthly, it is constrained by what the land registrar called the cumbersome nature of fee-making machinery. That means that the Treasury must be consulted, and the matter must then go through a rules committee on which is represented such bodies as the Law Society. That makes the progress extremely slow and non-responsive to the changes in a fast-changing market. The average time taken is about six months.

Fifthly, the registry is constrained by a perception of an adequate level of service which is based upon the problems and backlog of the past five years, rather than the prompt service for which the public are paying. The chief land registrar admitted to the Public Accounts Committee that the 14-week target for first registration—which has more than doubled in practice—was worse than the previous targets set by the Land Registry.

I believe that those problems can only be tackled by deep-seated changes, which my Bill is intended to introduce. The first change would be the introduction of agency status, which would improve managerial accountability, the freedom to manage, the ability to recruit staff of the right calibre and the ability to respond to local labour markets. I believe that that change would also improve staff morale, because staff turnover would fall.

The Bill would also improve the Land Registry's financial flexibility in two ways. First, it would allow the registry to invest its surpluses more quickly in the recruitment and retraining of staff. That would mean that there would be greater continuity in the staff between one year and the next. Secondly, the fees should more accurately reflect the state of the market. Therefore, the customer would get a better deal.

Although the Land Registry is a statutory monopoly, such changes must be buttressed by externally set performance indicators to measure response time, quality of service and even the repayment of fees in extreme circumstances. An externally set rate of return, either based on the registry's assets or its income, must be established to maintain its financial discipline.

Among the Government, the Law Society, the legal profession and home owners there is demand, and approval, for the pragmatic changes included in my Bill. Those changes will make registration and, therefore, house conveyancing much quicker. I hope that those changes will command the support of everyone in the House.

4.40 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) has set out the Land Registry's record of considerable success, even on his own terms. Any delays arising at the Land Registry derive from the huge increase in the work that it now undertakes. The hon. Gentleman has already said that the number of cases for registration of title have increased from 1·1 million to 2·8 million and that that figure is still rising.

From experience, everyone knows that any reorganisation will not reduce delays but almost certainly increase them until that reorganisation is complete. The hon. Gentleman has complained that surpluses cannot be carried forward, but the answer does not lie in agency status, in a change in the Treasury rules or through some statutory instrument introduced rapidly by the Government. If the Government had a mind to deal with the problem, it could be eliminated within a matter of hours.

The hon. Gentleman has accepted that the Land Registry has reduced its fees, but I am concerned that he believes that those fees should be more sensitive to the changes in property values. In recent years, however, property values have only gone up; they have not come down. It is likely that the fees would also go up if one had an agency that was directed to make money.

The second important feature about agency status is that it is the first step towards privatisation. The hon. Gentleman is concerned about accountability, but the Land Registry is accountable to the House. Privatisation would remove such accountability. Parliamentary questions may be asked about the Land Registry, but a study of the number of such questions asked shows that concern about it has diminished. Between June 1987 and June 1988, 52 parliamentary questions were asked, but from November 1988 only four questions have been asked. The hon. Gentleman has troubled to table only two questions. It is clear that his worries about the Land Registry have not produced, as one might suppose, a great swathe of parliamentary questions.

The Land Registry is essentially a service. I am aware that agency status has been granted to Her Majesty's Stationery Office and to Companies house, but to award such status to the Land Registry could lead to a worsening of terms and conditions of service, especially as there has been an influx of temporary employees to HMSO and Companies house. Such people could not, because of the lack of training, provide the efficient service and rapid response which the hon. Gentleman desires.

When agency status is established as a step towards privatisation, there is much fear, based on experience, that it will lead to an increase in charges. The *Financial Times* today states that statutory water companies plan to impose price rises of between 30 and 50 per cent. That has been announced as the privatisation legislation is being discussed in the House. It points out:

"The Government's difficulty is that ministers have no legal powers to control their price increases".

Once the gas supply industry was privatised, its charges increased. We already know that electricity charges have been increased by 15 per cent. as a prelude to privatisation.

House buyers who will use the services of the Land Registry perhaps once or twice in their lives need certainty and need to know that service is the priority rather than increased profits demanded by an agency as a step towards privatisation. Given the current situation, house owners and potential house owners need certainty and low charges above all else. In May 1988 the interest rate was 9·5 per cent. Since then those who have a £30,000 mortgage for 25 years have had to face a 32 per cent. rise in their mortgage repayments. In January, the interest rate was 13·75 per cent., which means that those with a £30,000 mortgage have seen their payments increase by £66·59. The repayments for those with an £80,000 mortgage held for 25 years have increased by 34 per cent., which is equivalent to £221·82. In those circumstances, we should make every endeavour to keep any additional charges that must be met on house sales to the absolute minimum. The hon. Gentleman has already demonstrated that the Land Registry has done that.

We do not want the reorganisation of the Land Registry, but we want its service expanded and developed. That should be done under the accountability that the House can provide. Therefore, I hope that the Bill will be opposed.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 104, Noes 127.

Division No. 85] **[4.45 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, David
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Critchley, Julian
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
Maclennan, Robert
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Page, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Woodcock, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Bowis and
Mr. David Nicholson.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek

Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

Question accordingly negatived.

Broadcasting

4.57 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper, Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality (Cm. 517), and endorses the Government's proposals for the future of broadcasting contained therein.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have to announce to the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker has also asked me to say that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. He therefore intends to impose the 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 and 9 o'clock, but hopes that those who are called before then will bear that in mind.

Mr. Hurd: Today the House of Commons takes its part—a leading part, of course—in the debate on the future of British broadcasting which was launched by the publication of our White Paper. The Government have asked for comments from the rest of the world by the end of this month and after that we shall begin to take decisions on the contents of a Broadcasting Bill, which we hope to submit to Parliament in the reasonably near future. In shaping our proposals we shall of course take fully into account the comments made in this debate and, a few weeks ago, in another place.

The White Paper is the Government's child, but its godparents are Professor Peacock and his fellow members, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and the members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs. I know that my hon. Friend is hoping to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of the godfathers commented in *The Times* today—*[Interruption.]*—on the whole favourably, on the progress of the infant, and possibly my hon. Friend will comment as we proceed. I pay tribute to their work as godparents, at least of this debate.

Everyone agrees that change is inevitable because of the wider choice that is now possible. That is the common ground from which all the representations that we have so far received start. The question is what the framework for such change should be. The proposals in the White Paper enable, but do not prescribe. We are not in the business of guessing in advance which of the possible new developments will come fast and which slowly—let alone of placing bets with taxpayers' money on such guesses.

Rather than describe in full the contents of a White Paper which has already been much discussed, I shall take this opportunity to talk about the philosophy that underlies it. I shall also comment on radio, because I believe that the changes now possible in radio are among the most exciting contained in the White Paper. However, for the time being I shall concentrate on television.

We are at a staging post in the history of British television. The first stage was one television service provided by the BBC. At that time, the BBC had to ensure that, as far as possible, its monopoly programme satisfied the tastes and interests of a widely varied public. Two channels followed, then three, then four.

Theoretically, we could ultimately imagine a television screen that had become more or less like a book shop. The

customer in a book shop is protected against dishonesty, fraud and obscenity, but he is not tapped on the shoulder from time to time and told that he has spent long enough in the thriller department and should now go to the science department instead. Similarly, he is not greeted at the shop entrance by a gentleman telling him that he is welcome to visit all departments of the shop, but before doing so he must pay a fee that will go to benefit only part of the book shop.

We are a long way from the television screen as a book shop, but we are approaching an intermediate stage. In the next decade there will be scope not merely for four but for dozens of television channels, most of which will be delivered, not by limited UHF spectrum but by satellite, cable or microwave. The core of this debate is how much specific prescription and regulation is required as we move to this next staging post.

Most of the discussion in answering that question has been about the quality of programmes—that is at the heart of the debate. Quality must not be equated with the preservation of existing interests, and neither should we exaggerate as perfect the quality of what we already have; a certain hyperbole creeps in from time to time.

Our constituents who press the button for ITV on a Saturday evening would be surprised to learn that they were tiptoeing into a temple of our national culture—that is not how they see it. There is much that is ordinary, as well as much that is good, in British broadcasting today. It is true that both the BBC and the independent commercial sector have many jewels in their crowns. I have been re-reading Lord Reith's speeches, and the pessimists who predicted in the 1950s that independent broadcasting would ring the death knell of quality—he used some striking phrases—have been confounded. Perhaps there is a lesson here for today's pessimists.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does he accept that some of the comments made about his proposals, notably in television discussions by the media intelligentsia, reject the very reasonable point that he is making, which is that there is not much to be defended, particularly on the BBC, at the moment? Programmes such as "That's Life" and "Panorama" would not recognise "unbiasedness" if it smacked them on the head. There is not a great deal to brag about in the present system, and there is much scope for improvement.

Mr. Hurd: There is quite a lot to boast about. Personally, I do not share my hon. Friend's distaste for the two programmes that he mentioned, which I sometimes see. Sometimes we are all irritated or even angered by what we see on the television, but I hope that what I have said strikes a reasonable balance. Some interested parties speak in hyperbole about the glories of British broadcasting, but it is true that both the BBC and the commercial sector have many jewels in their crown.

The main argument advanced against the White Paper —I think that I shall carry my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) with me here—is that we are proposing to hand over broadcasting to market forces that will inevitably wreck the tradition of quality. Certainly, we believe that the viewer should take an increasing hand. As choice multiplies, less regulation and detailed prescription are needed. A little fresh air does no harm in broadcasting—indeed, I welcome the good, refreshing wind that has been blowing through broadcasting in recent years, through the restrictive practices and occasional complacencies in both the BBC and the independent sector.

The White Paper clearly sets out six main safeguards for the quality of British broadcasting and—acknowledging your admonition, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I shall describe each of them briefly. When those six safeguards are added together, they provide a convincing refutation of the criticism that we propose to be rashly destructive of quality.

First, the BBC will—as the White Paper states—remain the cornerstone of public sector broadcasting. I do not doubt that that will still be true when in about five years' time we start the next big clearly foreseeable debate on our broadcasting system and consider the renewal of the BBC charter.

The licence fee is not immortal and we want the BBC to experiment with subscription, which provides a more direct and legitimate link between viewer and broadcaster. We have deliberately not fixed a date for the replacement of the licence fee. We believe that it will be sensible, after 1991, to take into account, when setting the licence fee, the BBC's ability to raise income from subscription and other sources. By the time that the debate about renewing the charter is under way, we shall all have more experience of the working of subscription programmes. We shall also have had time to consider other problems, such as how BBC radio might be funded if the licence fee were replaced. None of those questions has been prejudged.

I am glad of the way in which the BBC, in contrast to some of its friends, has reacted to the White Paper. It knows that it is nonsense to suggest that we are subjecting the corporation to death by a thousand cuts. In practice, the BBC now enjoys greater certainty about its income for the next few years than it has traditionally enjoyed at many times in the past.

The second safeguard lies with Channel 4 and the Welsh S4C. The White Paper makes it clear that the remit which is the essence of Channel 4—to innovate and complement the broadcasting of others—must remain. S4C will continue with its present purpose. Under its remit, Channel 4 will provide guaranteed outlets for minority interests and high-quality programmes. For example, it will be required to devote a suitable proportion of its air time to educational programmes.

The question is not whether the Channel 4 remit should continue as it is—everyone to whom I have listened believes that it should, and that is certainly the Government's view. The question is whether the remit needs buttressing by some special financial arrangement in a world in which Channel 4 sells its own air time. We set out the options and arguments in the White Paper and I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will give the Government some guidance on this important point, which we have deliberately left open.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Has the Home Secretary seen the anxieties expressed about the White Paper by the Royal National Institute for the Blind and by other organisations of and for disabled people? The RNIB fears that many important specialist programmes that are now available, not least those of the BBC, may be at risk and that the development of new services will be

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impossible. They would benefit disabled people, but they will cost money. How does the Home Secretary respond to their anxieties?

Mr. Hurd: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's concern, but it is misplaced. I have already mentioned that the BBC will be continuing and I outlined the remit of Channel 4 to do things that other channels do not do, so the right hon. Gentleman's concerns will not be affected as all that remains unchanged. In addition, there will be far more space and opportunity and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will deal with that general subject in his winding-up speech. Far from being reduced, the opportunity for the programmes that the right hon. Gentleman and the Royal National Institute for the Blind have in mind should be enchanced.

The third safeguard is the quality tests that the White Paper proposes for Channel 3 and Channel 5 franchises. Both will be required to provide a diverse programme, so they are calculated to appeal to a variety of tastes. Tired and limited formats are not only boring for viewers and advertisers, but will not be acceptable to the Independent Television Commission—the successor body to the Independent Broadcasting Authority—because of the requirement for diversity. The Channel 3 regions, in addition, will have an express statutory requirement to show programmes produced within their regions. Prominence must be given to high-quality news and current affairs on Channels 3, 4 and 5 taken separately and there must be at least one body effectively equipped and financed to provide news for Channel 3. Schools programmes will have a guaranteed place on commercial television.

Those are the component parts of the quality hurdle and the height and importance of the hurdle thus constructed have been somewhat neglected in the arguments about competitive tender. Competitive tendering only comes after those concerned have got over the quality hurdle. That proposal arises from the present arrangements for awarding ITV contracts. I have always believed, since long before the debate in the country started, that they are deeply unsatisfactory. I have never blamed the IBA for the system, because it did not invent it. It seemed the best system at the time when Parliament was last reviewing those matters. But life moves on and the present system has turned out to be opaque, subjective and secretive. I have not been able to check the quotation, but I think that it was Gibbon who said that the Merovingian dynasty in France was a system of despotism, tempered by assassination. That is not an unfair description of the present system for letting ITV franchises. One moment all the franchise holders are there, the next moment one of them has disappeared down an oubliette with no particular reason given and no redress available. The White Paper proposes a straightforward approach, which could be a substantial improvement on that.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way when I have finished this point.

Competitive tender, as the Peacock committee said, is an inherently fairer and more objective procedure, which would also secure a proper return for the taxpayer in the use of a scarce resource. It is wrong to describe it simply as an auctioning of licences because that ignores the quality hurdle, which I have described. I know that the new chairman of the IBA, Mr. George Russell, is looking carefully at the interaction of the two concepts of the quality hurdle and the competitive tender. We believe that both are essential—this is an important point—but the exact way in which we ask the ITC to operate them is a matter on which we shall listen carefully to the advice that he and many others may give.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): The Home Secretary began his remarks by being critical of the quality of some of the programmes on ITV. He is now making great play of the fact that there will be a quality hurdle. But the quality hurdle will be lower than any that exists at present and its touch will be lighter, so how can he square his view that programmes are not as good as they might be now with recommending a system with a lower quality hurdle?

Mr. Hurd: The accusation made against us is that we are throwing away all concern for quality, but that is not so and the quality hurdle that we prescribe, which will be an enforceable condition for the letting of franchises, is substantial compared with the way in which it is often described. I have taken the House through the different elements that make up the hurdle and if the hon. Gentleman studies what I have said, he will agree, as he is fair-minded, that it is considerably more substantial than has been supposed by the more shallow critics of the White Paper.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): In dealing with that point, will my right hon. Friend recognise that the issue of tendering came through the original Peacock report? As I understand it, the Peacock committee, although not in session, has broadly altered its view and in its recent submission to my right hon. Friend it has made it clear that it considers that the ITC should have an override in relation to the concept of the highest bidder. Bearing in mind that, despite the Gibbonesque system that he has described, ITV has produced some substantially effective programming over the past 15 years, will my right hon. Friend look at the new representations from the Peacock committee?

Mr. Hurd: I had my hon. Friend's point in mind when I said that we believe, for the reasons that the Peacock committee gave and continues to give—which the Select Committee also gave when it reported on the matter—that both the elements of the quality hurdle and the competitive tender are good and necessary, but that the interaction between them and how the House asks the ITC to operate the new system are matters on which it is reasonable that we should listen carefully to any suggestions that George Russell or hon. Members may want to give.

I shall now turn to the fourth safeguard.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Before my right hon. Friend passes on to another point, I want to make a point about quality. Can my right hon. Friend reassure the House about the Government's commitment to regional programming and production? Can he say how that is to be achieved in the regions where there is little independent regional production, unless the regional ITV companies are to have a commitment to produce some of the programmes that they show.?

Mr. Hurd: That will be part of the hurdle. We are also encouraging—and, as my hon. Friend knows, this is already happening—a cluster of smaller independent producers, not only in London, but in the regions. That has been one of the hopeful developments in television in recent years.

Mr. Buchan: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I should like to make some progress now.

The fourth matter, which I know is on the hon. Gentleman's mind, is the necessary measures against the concentration of ownership. The White Paper makes it clear that rigorous enforcement is necessary. We should regard it as quite unacceptable if British broadcasting were allowed to be dominated by a handful of tycoons of international conglomerates. Effective rules that will safeguard diverse broadcasting ownership, editorial diversity, opportunities for new broadcasters and fair competition are key parts of our aim. We have set out a range of principles and invite suggestions on the scope and formulation of the rules that will flow from those principles. We are interested in views on the best mechanisms for enforcing the rules. Anybody who believes that he has found loopholes has failed to take into account that the White Paper deliberately did not attempt to set out at that early stage a complete set of detailed rules.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, because I want to continue this part of the argument. People should not be too quick to assume that there will be no limit on newspaper interests in the regional Channel 3 licences. The regional Channel 3 licences will, taken together, provide a major television channel which will be expected to maintain universal national coverage and which may operate national networking arrangements.

If a major national newspaper controlled a regional Channel 3 licensee, it could result in an excessive influence over communications and the flow of information. UHF television services will still be influential users of a scarce resource. Their ownership must remain diverse. We shall consider suggestions to tighten the present proposal in the White Paper that one person could control two, but not more than two, regional Channel 3 franchises. For example, there may be a case for a rule that would prevent anyone from controlling two large such franchises.

Satellite television is much in the news this week—at least in some newspapers. The White Paper is clear that the ownership of satellite television, including the use of satellite channels outside the jurisdiction of this country, will need to be taken into account, and that rules will have to be included on this in our proposals. The House may know that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has written to my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry about the media interests of Mr. Murdoch's organisation. My noble Friend has replied to him today, explaining that it is the Director General of Fair Trading who has the responsibility of keeping commercial activities under review and can refer them to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if he thinks fit. My noble Friend adds that the director general is aware of public comment about the widespread media interests of some groups and is already keeping an eye on that.

The fifth point concerns the safeguarding of standards. We propose no relaxation of the present requirements to protect the consumer on such matters as taste, decency and offensiveness. The White Paper proposes that that part of the legislation should be reinforced. Consumer protection requirements will be extended to all United Kingdom broadcasting services and the exemption that broadcasters have from the existing obscenity legislation will be removed. Sanctions will be provided against those who sustain unacceptable foreign satellite services.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary recall that only last week, during our debate on the Official Secrets Bill, he stated that the Obscene Publications Act 1964 was widely disproved of? Why, therefore, is he today seeking to extend it in this fashion?

Mr. Hurd: Because one of the difficulties is precisely that broadcasters are exempted from it. By plugging that loophole we are not dealing with all the defects of the legislation, but with one. I shall give way to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) or he will explode.

Mr. Buchan: Virtually the only regulation that is taken care of in the White Paper is the category of decency and taste, which the Home Secretary is mentioning. Does he agree that there is nothing either in what he has said or in the White Paper that satisfies Professor Peacock who says:

"This aspect of programme standards"—

that is to say quality, decency and taste—

"distracts attention from the much more important one of ensuring that programmes of high quality which challenge the viewer and foster our national cultures continue to be produced."

Regulation in the Home Secretary's eyes means the suppression of dirt. Regulation in our eyes means ensuring good quality programmes.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman's criticism would be just if the White Paper were proposing the abolition of the BBC and the Channel 4 remit, and the auctioning of franchises with no assurance of quality. As everything I have said so far is designed to show that that is not so, his criticism is wholly mistaken.

I am moving on to the hon. Gentleman's favourite subject which is the Broadcasting Standards Council. I am glad that he recognises its importance. It will be made statutory under the legislation. It is already fulfilling a needed role as a focus for public concern and as a watchdog across the range of services for which the individual regulatory bodies are responsible.

The BSC was established last year under the chairmanship of Lord Rees-Mogg to consider the portayal of violence and sex, and matters of taste and decency in broadcasting, cable and video works. I understand that he thinks that the council has made good progress on what he set as its priority task of drawing up with broadcasters a code of practice on these matters. It is about to undertake an extensive process of consultation on a draft code with the broadcasting organisations, the public and representatives of other interests.

The council believes that research in this area, which has certainly been fragmentary and conflicting in the past, is particularly important. It is taking steps to help that forward. In that, it is following the advice of the Home

[Mr. Hurd]

Affairs Select Committee. The council has also begun, wisely, to establish useful links with broadcasting, regulatory and other organisations in Europe.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Most hon. Members will welcome the functions of the BSC as described, but sex and violence are not the main problems. They can be quantified to some degree and a line can be drawn, although, thank God, I shall not have to draw it. But one cannot draw a line through vacuity. The proposals in the White Paper will lead to vacuity in our television service.

Mr. Hurd: The proposals will lead to diversity because clearly that will be a requirement. My hon. Friend is over-pessimistic in assuming that, provided that the standards I have mentioned remain in place, which is our clear intention, the result will be vacuity. There will certainly be a much larger range of choice, but it will have to be genuine choice. It will not be possible simply to provide a range of choice between vacuities. That is incompatible with our proposals. Much of our work was designed precisely to avoid that result. When my hon. Friend studies what I have said, I hope that he will see that that result not only can but will be avoided if Parliament eventually establishes this new framework.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I should like to proceed because many wish to speak.

The sixth safeguard is the search for European agreement on standards. I have already touched on that with the BSC. We have been arguing for international agreement which, without smothering enterprise, can help transfrontier transmission to provide checks against unacceptable programme standards, particularly regarding taste and decency. My hon. Friend the Minister of State can say a bit more later about the draft Council of Europe convention which he has helped to negotiate. We are not yet home and dry, but after many hiccups I hope that we are in sight of concluding a convention which promotes these objectives without handicapping our broadcasters on something about which they are all concerned—advertising breaks.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend give way on that specific point?

Mr. Hurd: I should rather proceed. I sense that I should conclude.

I am aware that in a speech which I hope has been decently concise I cannot cover all the ground of the White Paper. I apologise to hon. Members whose main interests lie in DBS, cable, MVDS or transmission. My hon. Friend the Minister of State will pick up any points made on those subjects. I shall simply mention one principle that we tried to include in the White Paper and which runs through several of these proposals. We believe that it should be possible to separate activities that are lumped together. Channel 4 has already shown how a broadcasting organisation can be a publishing house rather than a producer of programmes. In the process it gave the first important boost to independent producers, which our policies have reinforced. The same principle applies in the development of television and radio transmission networks, cable and MVDS. Where enterprising individuals or companies believe that they can perform a service better than the present provider, they should not be excluded simply because they cannot, at the same time, provide another service which happens to be harnessed to the first.

Mr. John Browne: With regard to the European convention, my right hon. Friend mentioned that he wished to keep enterprise alive, yet, as drafted, article 16 of the convention will allow a receiving country to shut out the signals from a direct broadcast satellite if they do not conform to the rules in that particular receiving country. If that country does not have commercial television, it can cut out all incoming advertising in its own language. Is that really something that the British Government are prepared to sign and still say that it is going to fortify enterprise?

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that my hon. Friend is right in saying that that will be the effect, but as my hon. Friend the Minister of State has been directly and personally involved in that perhaps he will be able to pick up the point when he replies.

I promised to say a word about radio; it would be wrong not to do so. Radio is achieving a strong revival. The days when it was treated as a poor, and perhaps even moribund, relation of television have long since gone. Under our proposal, the BBC will continue broadcasting Radios 1, 2, 3 and 4, and it is planning two other national networks. It is also completing its chain of local stations.

We propose to provide, for the first time, for national commercial radio. At the local level there could be scope in due course for several hundred new independent stations. Independent radio is booming. Its revenue rose 24 per cent. last year, making it the fastest-growing single medium. The IBA, while waiting for the new legislation, is giving community radio a very welcome early start—a fairly early start—with its scheme for some 20 incremental radio contracts under existing legislation.

Community radio—that is to say, radio stations catering for communities of interest or for small neighbourhoods—can do much, I believe, to help social cohesion and active citizenship. I believe that that section of the White Paper, which is less controversial than the others, is going to be a very important part of the whole picture.

I hope that what I have said shows that the White Paper proposals offer a reasonable and sensible means of arriving at the next staging post of broadcasting, of which I spoke. No one who actually studies the White Paper can really believe that we are proposing to allow British broadcasting to shrivel into empty trivialities. The fact is that in a free society quality is not best preserved by restricting choice. Our proposals enlarge choice, where enlarged choice is possible, but at the same time ensure that it is a real choice and not just a choice between different brands of pap.

Although it is not a matter, thank God, for the Government, I am not personally enthusiastic about the idea of the British public actually watching more television, in terms of quantity, than it does at the moment. I think that we have just about reached the healthy limit in that regard. But, even with the relative success of broadcasting in this country, we all know that television viewing is too often a passive activity: the television set is

on, and its products wash through the room without anybody necessarily deriving a great deal of interest or a great deal of sustenance from what is going on.

With greater choice, if we get it right, could come greater focus, greater sustenance, as people actually choose, and concentrate on, the programmes that fit their particular interests. It is an arid and a pessimistic doctrine that says simply that more must mean worse. It could mean worse, but if we get it right, as I believe we are proposing to do, more need not mean worse but could mean better. As every hon. Member knows, we live in a society which is richly varied in its sports and hobbies and in its cultural and intellectual interests, and we must aim for a television system—this is our aim, and I believe that the White Paper is the right way of achieving it—that will more fully reflect that richness and that variety.

5.35 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"declines to support a Broadcasting White Paper which, if implemented, would encourage the concentration of cross-ownership by auctioning franchises to the highest bidder, diminish the rôle of public service broadcasting, threaten the future funding of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and thereby discourage a wide variety of programme choice and generally reduce the high standards and consistent quality of broadcasting in this country.".

I am not sure that the Home Secretary, for all his talents, is at his best when he philosophises to the House. He began today with an analogy comparing broadcasting with a bookshop. Analogy is always a difficult way to proceed, and I was going to remind the right hon. Gentleman that he was comparing broadcasting with an industry that produces millions of books a year to choose from—let him look at the back pages of any edition of *The Bookseller*—has thousands of retail outlets, and has both a private and public system of borrowing. I would have mentioned all those things to the Home Secretary had he not finished his analogy by saying that, of course, it was not appropriate in the case of broadcasting.

He then went on in more typical fashion. First of all, in his mandarin way, he told us to listen to what he said and to take note of his assurances. We keep making the mistake of reading the White Paper, which is often at variance with the assurances that the Home Secretary gives us. The right hon. Gentleman then pursued his other debating technique—choosing a very limited item to criticise and then building on that limited item as though it were the whole picture. He always tells us that he is not particularly proud of what appears on television on a Saturday evening. Television on a Saturday evening is often pretty tawdry—it is usually made up of people who appear at the Prime Minister's pre-election rallies. But I suspect that if the Home Secretary could pursue broadcasting activities to Sunday evening he would share with me the view that what often starts with a classic serial and goes on to "Bread", "Wish Me Luck" and "The South Bank Show" is something to make most viewers proud of what British television produces. It is against that sort of background that we should be debating the White Paper.

I accept, of course, that changes in our broadcasting system are absolutely necessary. But those changes are not a response to failure. They are essential and inevitable not because broadcasting is bad but because, thanks to technological advance, what we broadcast in the future can be better. Listeners and viewers can be offered a wider range of channels and programmes than ever before. An increasingly discerning and sophisticated public demand that broadcasting should provide all the choices that are technologically possible. A White Paper outlining changes in broadcasting organisation is therefore very much to be welcomed, and we welcome the existence of the document, but we have to ask whether it proposes the right changes —changes which guarantee that British broadcasting will in the future, as in the past, provide the best possible programmes that the most up-to-date technology allows.

We believe that the White Paper must be measured against a number of criteria, most of them distinct but all of them related. I begin by describing what I believe to be the four major criteria. First, will the new form of organisation that the White Paper proposes provide the largest possible real choice to listeners and viewers? By "real choice" I mean more than television sets with more buttons to press than at present. Real choice requires that when different buttons are pressed programmes of quite different character appear on the screen and not, as could so easily be the case, programmes which are indistinguishable from one another.

Secondly, will the new form of organisation that the White Paper proposes ensure that the British viewer and listener are offered a variety of high-quality programmes from which to choose? Will the British industry continue to enhance our national reputation and reduce our balance of payments deficit by exporting television programmes that are bought throughout the world? As "high quality" is a subjective description, I make it clear that I include in it "Bread" as well as "Brideshead Revisited," and "Coronation Street" no less than "Jewel in the Crown".

Thirdly, will the new form of organisation that the White Paper proposes prevent concentration of television ownership and thus ensure the competition of which the White Paper speaks in general terms? The argument against concentration has important democratic implications. In a free society, no individual or organisation should have massive or major control over a medium that is so influential in the formation of opinion. The problem of concentration is often described in language which suggest that the threat is from some multinational organisation. The concentration of ownership of British television in the hands of foreign conglomerates would, in our view, be intolerable. I should make it clear, however, that in our view the concentration of ownership in the hands of two or three British companies, particularly if they also had newspaper interests, would be almost as unacceptable.

My fourth question concerns one of the real criteria of public service broadcasting. Will the new form of organisation that the White Paper proposes ensure that the high quality broadcasts and diversity of choice that are its stated aim are generally available throughout the United Kingdom? One essential feature of public service broadcasting is that it is universally available to all men and women who want to take advantage of it.

Ensuring a wider choice and maintaining the highest possible standards of broadcasting are issues which cannot be separated. The method by which independent companies obtain their franchises will crucially influence the choice and quality of programmes which they offer. Independent television companies exist as profit-making

[Mr. Roy Hattersley]

organisations. Therefore, it is right and reasonable for those who run the programme companies to try to make a profit.

At present substantial profits are made without generally imperilling the production of high quality programmes. The programme makers are explicit as to why that is so. The present system of regulation requires them at the time of franchise negotiations to demonstrate the standards that they will maintain during the period of their franchise. We all know of programmes that are made to demonstrate a company's good intentions and commitment to quality. We all know jokes about programmes which have such a small viewing audience that they would not get on the air were they not regarded as underwriting the programme company's good intentions and prepared explicitly to show the company's concern for high standards.

The best companies want a continuous regime which has, since independent television began, obliged all their rivals to produce a proportion of high quality programmes. Granada has no doubt about that. I was told explicitly that without a system of franchise negotiation which requires detailed accounts to be given of the rival companies' programme proposals there would be a general reduction in standards. I have no doubt that Granada is right. The White Paper, however, proposes to abandon the present system in which companies must prove their intentions to maintain high standards. In its place there will be what the Home Secretary describes as a greater reliance on the viewer rather than on the regulator. That new system will not, as the Home Secretary suggests, inevitably, necessarily and unavoidably widen choice. The viewer, like any consumer of any other product, can only choose the goods on offer. If a wide varietyof high quality programmes is not available, the consumer—the viewer—will have no real choice.

The White Paper gives absolutely no assurance that real choice—a choice between genuinely different types of programme—will be more available under the new scheme than at present. Standards fall without choice, in any real sense, being increased. Companies bidding for franchises will be required to meet the minimum standards laid down by paragraphs 6.10 and 6.11 of the White Paper. Those standards used to be described by the Home Secretary as the threshold. Today I see that they have increased in height and become a hurdle. No doubt by the time we see the legislation they will be a fence, but whatever word the Home Secretary proposes or uses, no one would argue that they are a very substantial barrier. There is no obligation to broadcast drama, documentaries or religious programmes. Those are all examples of what took place during specific franchise negotiations between the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the programme companies under the present regime. If the system is introduced in the proposed form, I have no doubt that some companies will abandon high-cost drama and high-cost documentaries.

We believe that the documentary, and particularly the investigative documentary, has been one of the features of British television which has enhanced its international reputation. Investigative documentary is also a form of broadcasting which displeases authority, particularly authority that is intolerant of criticism. Perhaps the documentary makers are being punished in the White Paper for their willingness to say things of which the Government disapprove. The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) demonstrated in his intervention the bone-headed resentment of all opinions except his own which of is too much a feature of modern Conservatism.

Mr. Conway: The right hon. Gentleman should cast his mind back to the fact that I quoted "Panorama", which is noted for its bias, to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. In the recent programme in which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) took part, about the official secrets legislation, the right hon. Gentleman was interviewed three times, but at no stage did those so-called probing documentary makers put to him the points that I put to him in the debate on the Floor of the House, namely, that under the prevention of terrorism legislation a Labour Government had imprisoned four times as many people without trial as the Tory Government. The right hon. Gentleman likes documentaries only when they are biased towards Left-wing Socialism.

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman provides in terms, and quite literally, the confirmation of what I said. Unless the programmes are programmes that he would make and ask the questions that he would ask, they cannot be the right programmes.

I am sure that all my colleagues must have found things to complain about in television broadcasts. If the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham ever meets broadcasters from the BBC or from the independent channels, they will confirm that there are few people around with whom they have more private rows in green rooms or on the telephone than me. However, the fact that broadcasters do things of which we disapprove is no argument for limiting their freedom or suppressing their rights. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that—I fear that this may sound slightly pretentious—he does not understand democracy.

I have speculated about one reason why investigative documentaries may be less a feature of the White Paper proposals than some of us might like. Whatever the reasons, if the obligation to provide such programmes were altered in such a way as to result in their reduction, that would be a tragedy, not just because the standards in television would be reduced. For the sake of democracy, we need a high output of current affairs material which acts as an antidote to the often biased and even more trivial newspapers. No one doubts that if the proposals go forward in their present form the expensive, probing documentary will be less a feature of television in the future. We know that to be true because of the cost of high quality programmes compared with the cost of broadcasting quiz shows, cartoons and imported soap operas, which are being produced in America and Australia in ever-increasing numbers and to ever-decreasing standards and are so much cheaper to show than having original programmes made by a contract company.

London Weekend Television has told me that old movies are bought for prices ranging between £500 and £5,000. For the median price of £2,500 it is possible to fill 90 minutes of television time. "Coronation Street" costs £120,000 per hour, and "Bread" costs almost £225,000 per hour. Unless companies are obliged by some form of

regulation to include a proportion of original high-cost material within their schedules, there will be more cheap imports. That will produce an overall reduction—not an increase—in real choice. The extra buttons will be there to press, but they will produce an unvarying diet of cheap rubbish.

The Government intend to award each franchise to the company which, having skipped over the minimum threshold, hurdle or fence—or whatever the Home Secretary cares to call it—makes the highest bid in each prescribed area. In short, thanks to the insistence of the Department of Trade and Industry, television is to be used as a method of raising Government revenue. Nobody should be surprised if quality and choice are reduced as a consequence. London Weekend Television tells me that its judgment of the best way to win a contract is to plan to broadcast as little original material as possible and, in anticipation of years of low-cost broadcasting, make a bid that companies committed to transmitting high-cost original material cannot match.

Much of the inspiration for the White Paper, as the Home Secretary keeps telling us, was the Peacock report —prepared by a committee hand-picked to provide a private enterprise answer to all broadcasting questions. The White Paper states that the Peacock committee first proposed competitive tendering, but Peacock has now recanted and publicly urges the Government to recognise the danger of the tender or auction and to accept that there may be times when the highest bidder should not win the franchise. Only doctrinaire philistinism could induce the Government to reject that advice.

Thames Television, which knows something about the industry, has no doubts about the likely results of the Government's tendering proposals, which it describes as follows:

"If the franchises were auctioned to the bidder offering most money, the new owner would be bound to spend the franchise years recouping his investment with cheaper mass appeal programmes of the kind that are likely to be transmitted by the satellite broadcasters and Channel Five. There would be little room if any for expensive drama, or innovative, experimental programmes."

Mr. Conway: The right hon. Gentleman takes no account of advertising standards and how such a company would attract advertising. If the programmes were so appalling that nobody wanted to watch them, which is the black hole picture that the right hon. Gentleman paints, they would not attract advertising revenue.

Mr. Hattersley: I will try to explain the matter to the hon. Gentleman in simple terms. I urge him to concentrate his mind on the figures that I give and to see whether he can understand them.

If a company broadcasts 90 minutes of programming for £2,500, it does not need to raise so much advertising revenue as it would if it broadcast programmes costing £500,000 per hour. Cost, as well as advertising income, is a crucial factor in the equation. I will allow the hon. Gentleman to cogitate on that point while I move on to another that he will not understand.

Thames Television made, albeit in passing, the following interesting observation about satellite television:

"If things go on like this, Channel 3 will be broadcasting the sort of material we see on satellite—cheaper material."

By referring to satellite television in those terms, Thames means cheaper in quality as well as cheaper in cost. The Government claim to give quality and diversity the highest priority, but their claim is undermined by the White Paper's proposals for Channel 4. The way in which it is proposed to finance Channel 4 can only have the effect of making it more like Channel 3. Paragraph 6.23 of the White Paper asserts the importance of Channel 4 catering

"for tastes and interests not served . . . by other parts of the independent television sector."

But by forcing Channel 4 into direct competition for advertising with Channel 3, the Government will reduce the prospect of preserving Channel 4's distinctive character. When television is directly financed by advertising, its programmes and programme schedules, inevitably, are in part advertising-led. At present, because Channel 4 obtains its revenue from other independent companies, it does not need to concern itself with the type of programmes particularly favoured by dog food manufacturers and by junk food producers, but once Channel 4 is out on its own in the advertising market it will be forced to listen to their views—as Channel 3 openly admits that it is forced to do now. The result will be a Channel 4 which is more like Channel 3. Once again, there will be less choice, not more.

On 18 January, the Home Secretary made a speech which dealt directly with my third criterion—the concentration of ownership. His press office entitled that address,

"Tight limits on TV and radio stations are crucial."

I suppose that they meant "essential", but we can all agree with the sentiment if not with the syntax. Few outside observers see much evidence that tight rules are to be imposed as a result of the White Paper. Paragraph 6.48 comments:

"But clear rules will also be needed which impose limits on concentration of ownership and on excessive cross-media ownership."

Paragraph 6.53 adds that

"no licence holder for a particular area should control other broadcast media for that area."

I assume that "cross-media ownership" is White Paper patois for simultaneous ownership of television companies and newspapers. The sentiments expressed in both paragraphs are impeccable, but paragraph 6.48, while stressing the undesirability of concentration, concludes with a pathetic anti-climax:

"The Government would welcome comments on the scope and formulation of such rules."

The suspicion that the sub-text is the Government's unwillingness or inability to formulate effective safeguards is confirmed by events—particularly the comments of the Minister of State, Home Office, in a Channel 4 broadcast on 13 November last year. I understand that this afternoon the Home Secretary expressly repudiated his hon. Friend's comments, but as it is important to make the situation clear I will take the Home Secretary through them. Fortunately, I have a transcript of the programme which the Home Secretary may care to examine as the evening wears on.

When the Minister of State appeared on Channel 4 on 13 November to discuss the White Paper, he was asked whether Mr. Robert Maxwell would be eligible under the proposals to buy Central Television—an aim that Mr. Maxwell had stated earlier that evening. At first, the Minister said that paragraph 6.48 would prevent that, but then he changed his mind and said:

"National newspaper ownership is incompatible with a national television channel but not with the ownership of a local television channel."

[Mr. Hattersley]

He designated Central Television as a local television company, saying that Mr. Maxwell would only be prevented from owning it if he also owned a local newspaper in the midlands. The absurdity of that judgment is self-evident. If Central Television, with guaranteed network access, is not a national channel then what, according to the White Paper, is a national channel? If Mr. Maxwell—who owns two national daily newspapers and one national Sunday newspaper—can buy Central Television, who cannot buy it? According to the Minister, the owner of the "Solihull Weekly Gazette". I hope that the hon. Gentleman was simply talking gibberish, because if what he said is true there can be no limit at all on "cross-media ownership". I ask the Home Secretary in terms whether page 90 of the transcript of the Channel 4 broadcast of 13 November represents Government policy. Perhaps he will instruct his hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office how to reply at the end of the debate.

I want to ask the Home Secretary three further questions. First, what rules govern the extent of television ownership—that is, the number of companies under the control of one individual or organisation? Secondly, what rules govern the ownership by foreign companies, to which paragraph 6.50 so loosely refers? Thirdly, what rules cover overlapping ownership of television companies and newspapers? I make our position clear. No Channel 3 company should be registered by a company outside the European Community. No one individual or organisation should own or control more than one Channel 3 company. The powers of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to prevent the concentration of newspaper ownership should be extended to embrace television. If it is against the national interest for one individual to own six newspapers, it must be against the national interest for an individual to own five newspapers and one television company.

I noted the hon. Secretary's comments concerning the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and the right hon. Gentleman's usual defence that it is for the Director General of Fair Trading to refer specific cases and complaints to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. While that is true, the Home Secretary surely knows that the Government have the power to make general references to the commission, to consider whole sectors of particular concern. The time has come for the Government to make such a general reference, asking the commission to examine the implications of overlapping ownership of newspapers and television broadcasting companies.

Mr. Buchan: My right hon. Friend will note in paragraph 10.5 that certain questions of possible restrictive labour practices had already been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Such justice is hardly even-handed.

Mr. Hattersley: That confirms my judgment that the Government can, if they wish, make a general reference. Clearly, if there was ever a case of industrial patterns changing in a way that made a general monopoly reference necessary, the circumstances brought about by new technology in television and the problems of overlapping ownership are such a case.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I think that that point would command some support on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Hattersley: I am most grateful. Perhaps we shall hear that support articulated throughout the Conservative ranks as the debate continues.

The fourth general criterion by which the White Paper should be judged is the extent to which its proposals make a choice of high-quality television available to the whole country. That leads inevitably to the question of future financing for the BBC. The Home Secretary told the House on 7 November:

"The Government look forward to the gradual introduction of subscription on the BBC's television services and to the eventual replacement of the licence fee".—[*Official Report*, 7 November 1988; Vol. 140, c. 30.]

We consider that prospect incompatible with what the White Paper describes as the BBC's central role—the provision of

"high quality programming across the full range of public tastes and interests, including both programmes of popular appeal and programmes of minority interest"

combined with

"education, information and cultural material as well as entertainment".

Producing those "demanding programmes" is what the Peacock report says that the BBC should do, and what the Peacock report says is not available even in a perfectly constructed broadcasting market.

The BBC has already announced the introduction of a subscription service, which it predicts will,

"in the long run, make a significant contribution to the funding of the BBC".

The BBC, however, has made it clear—I hope that the Government will be equally positive—that a subscription service cannot be an alternative to a comprehensive BBC 1 and BBC 2, and that subscription cannot fund the BBC in the absence of a licence fee.

The licence fee is a second proposal on which members of the Peacock committee have recanted. The Home Secretary, describing the committee's report as "admirable", told the House when he introduced the White Paper two months ago how much the Government had been influenced by its thinking. Now that the members of that committee favour retaining the value of the licence fee after 1991 I hope that the Government will continue to respect their logic and judgment. The Government's present intention is to index the licence fee until—but only until—1991. The Peacock committee members now judge that a reduction in the real value of the licence fee would have

"damaging effects both on BBC Television and BBC Radio".

The Home Secretary is in part responsible for the confusion over the licence fee and its proper role in financing broadcasting. There was a great deal of speculation about its future before the White Paper was published, and the Home Secretary encouraged the nation with the delphic, indeed mystical, comment that the licence fee was "not immortal". As things now stand, the fee is not to have its throat cut suddenly but is to be slowly strangled. We have no doubt that the end of the fee would mark the end of public broadcasting.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I share much of the right hon. Gentleman's concern about the future of the BBC without a licence fee and about how it would maintain its public service commitment, but there is one point with which I have a good deal of difficulty. In five or

six years' time we may be able to watch 14 television stations. We might get 10 of them free and be able to choose whether to pay for two of them, but what can we say to people when they are told by the Government that they must pay for the remaining two whether they want them or not?

Mr. Hattersley: We say what Peacock said—that even in a perfect broadcasting market, which none of us thinks can be achieved, although there will be more of a broadcasting market in the future than there is now, there will be some exacting programmes that only the BBC will be able to provide. I believe that it is in the interests of the country as a whole that those programmes should be provided. I may be watching cricket on the cricket channel all day, or Hollywood musicals 1925-40 on some other channel all evening, but I believe that it would be in the interests of the community, including me, if I made a small contribution towards something better for other people to watch.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): My right hon. Friend said that the Home Secretary was not the only person to blame for the undermining of the concept of the licence fee. It is a two-way process and I share part of the guilt, for one of the things that have led to the undermining of that concept is the sometimes hysterical outburst from both sides of the House every time the fee changes. At the margin there will always be problems, but that undermining of the concept of the licence fee has in turn undermined the concept of the BBC and of public service broadcasting.

Mr. Hattersley: I entirely agree, and I go a step further. I do not believe that the BBC will ever have the licence fee that it needs and deserves until we devise some method of absolving those least able to pay from paying the full fee. I have always argued that the case for helping the pensioner is based not simply on compassion but on ensuring that the fee is high enough to meet the BBC's needs, which it never would be while particular deserving groups excited the feelings to which my hon. Friend has properly drawn attention.

As I understand it, the White Paper proposed to put in place of the licence fee what the Home Secretary describes as

"a direct relationship between the viewer and the provider".

That is a euphemism for the market mechanism operating in television. The viewer gets what the viewer pays for, and the viewer pays for what the viewer can afford. If that happens there will be a two-tier television system, with a superior service supplied to those who can take constant advantage of the subscripton channels and an inferior service for the rest. That is a negation of public service broadcasting.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I think that I must follow the Home Secretary's example and get on with my speech because many other hon. Members wish to speak. Like the Home Secretary, I gave way a good deal at the beginning.

All that being said, we believe that opportunities still exist for the Government to adjust their proposals in such a way as to ensure that the inevitable revolution in television ownership and organisation produces the high-quality programmes and greater choice that the British viewer is entitled to expect. There are already some elements in the White Paper that can be built on. The proposed powers for the new Independent Television Commission are—for all the Home Secretary's derision of regulation—in some ways far more extensive than those enjoyed by the IBA. Certainly the ability to give a formal warning to defaulting companies and the right to revoke a franchise are powers much to be welcomed, but for those powers to have any real effect the ITC must measure the performance of companies against real criteria of quality.

Similarly, I very much welcome the obligation of Channel 3 companies to provide regional programmes—including programmes produced in the regions—but on the basis of the present tendering arrangements those programmes might well be of the minimum stipulated number and the minimum specified quality. If the Home Secretary doubts that, he may care to know of a letter received recently by midlands Members of Parliament from Central Television's current affairs programme "Central Lobby". It told us that the company had discovered that it was making more local programmes than were required by its franchise, and that the number of current affairs programmes was consequently to be reduced. That phenomenon will be multiplied and duplicated when the threshold is lower than it is today.

The obsession with regulation and the determination to deregulate even undermines the White Paper's otherwise generally sensible proposals on radio broadcasting. The growing popularity of radio presented the Government with an excellent opportunity to broaden the scope of the entertainment and information that radio can provide. As with television, however, the nature of the expansion will be adversely affected by the accompanying deregulation. The introduction of the three new commercial channels is to be welcomed, but in paragraph 8.4 of the White Paper the Home Secretary insists that those stations must all provide a general service. Indeed, they are specifically and specially absolved from the requirement to make public service provision. That single-minded pursuit of deregulation can only have an adverse effect on the overall quality of radio broadcasting.

There is one area in which the Government propose to extend regulation. I refer, of course, to the Broadcasting Standards Council. In this morning's press Professor Alan Peacock—who I hope remains the figure of veneration sanctified in the White Paper—is explicit on the subject. He says:

"The Broadcasting Standards Council has no function in a free society".

All we know about the Broadcasting Standards Council is the people or the person who will run it. Its full role has yet to be vouchsafed to us. We know that Lord Rees-Mogg wants to acquire the power to vet and veto individual programmes, but we do not know how his censorship will operate. The Home Secretary told us in November that he was working out an agreement on standards with the new chairman and that the new chairman would soon tell the Home Secretary how he would operate. Lord Rees-Mogg becomes one of the few public servants ever to be offered a job and then told that he can decide what it is after he has been appointed. I am fundamentally opposed to Lord Rees-Mogg telling me or anyone else what we can or cannot see. Such matters should be decided not by the subjective judgment of an individual but by general standards enshrined in legislation.

[Mr. Hattersley]

While I am worried about Lord Rees-Mogg's potential role, I am horrified by the thought of what Lord Chalfont will do—given the chance—to the IBA. I accept, with due deference to the other place, that Lord Chalfont is a bit of a joke. He is the only man in history to become a peer, a Privy Councillor, one of Her Majesty's Ministers and a member of the Labour party all on the same afternoon. Although he is a joke, he is a dangerous joke. *[Interruption.]* Throughout the whole debate on broadcasting there have been Conservative Back Benchers—we have heard from them today and they are shouting out now—who have argued that a body should be established with a power to make judgments about the national interest and the impartiality of programme makers. By "national interest" they mean the Government's interest and by "impartiality" they mean bias in favour of their own ideological prejudices. I have no doubt that Lord Chalfont shares their view. It might be worth asking whether, had he been at the IBA last year, he would have banned "Death on the Rock" and whether he would have sympathised with the previous Home Secretary's authoritarian insistence that the BBC should abandon the broadcasting of "Real Lives". The best that can be said about Lord Chalfont's appointment is that the Prime Minister was issuing an official warning to independent-minded broadcasters. The worst that can be said about his appointment is that he will behave in the repressive way that the Prime Minister hopes he will behave.

We shall vote for a number of principles that we have set out in the amendment. We believe that they must be the basis of broadcasting reform. The White Paper proclaims its own principles. They are different from the principles with which the Home Secretary entertained us today, and the Government are specific about a principle that the Home Secretary passed over lightly. The White Paper says:

"Wherever possible the Government's approach to broadcasting should be consistent with its overall deregulation policy."

I suspect that secretly the Home Secretary has very little sympathy with the notion that broadcasting should be governed by the rules that Lord Young thinks are appropriate to rural bus services and private employment agencies. The dogma, we suspect, is not the Home Secretary's. The dogma is Lord Young's. He regards broadcasting as a commodity, to be bought and sold like any other commodity or, more appropriately perhaps, like property from which there might be a quick profit by means of quick, cheap development.

To use a cliché, we believe that British broadcasting is among the best in the world. The White Paper was a chance to provide a framework that would ensure that it maintained that status. The Government have missed the opportunity. I hope that they will improve between now and the introduction of the legislation.

6.13 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I am pleased to be called and to give a general welcome on behalf of the Select Committee on Home Affairs to the Government's White Paper on broadcasting. The House will have seen on the Order Paper the reference to the reports of the Committee. Our major report was published some four months before the White Paper, and the Committee must be gratified by the extent to which its recommendations and conclusions have been adopted by the Government, even if the emphasis of the White Paper is not always the same as our own. Our second special report includes a table setting out the detailed response of the Government to our proposals.

Some of the criticisms of the White Paper reflect a wish to retain a broadcasting system which has been admired throughout the world, as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has just said. For good or ill, the status quo is not an option in the 1990s. Under existing legislation, three British Satellite Broadcasting channels are to start broadcasting later this year. No one can have missed the publicity concerning the launch of Sky television on the Astra satellite, even if they have no means of seeing the programmes. The changes in broadcasting are borne out of technological advance. In this situation, the Government's priority must be to maintain standards in the face of the new competition.

The White Paper quotes our report in agreeing that the BBC is still and will remain for the foreseeable future

"the cornerstone of public service broadcasting."

The Committee is concerned—as, I note from the press, are the members of the Peacock committee—that the income and structure of the BBC should be preserved in the medium term while the world of broadcasting is changing. The Committee's report stressed that in the new broadcasting environment there should be competition for quality as well as quantity in television programming. There will be real choice for viewers only if there is a sufficient amount of quality programming from which to choose. The White Paper looks to the BBC to provide such quality across the whole range of television programmes.

It is in the context of diverse and quality programmes that we welcome the affirmation of the remit of Channel 4, which we unanimously supported in our report. The ability of Channel 4 to fulfil its remit may be vitally affected by the eventual decision on its organisation and funding. This part of the White Paper is "green edged" and my Committee is undertaking a short inquiry to establish which, if any, of the options given in the White Paper would best secure the twin aims of preserving the remit of Channel 4 and enhancing competition between channels.

At present, the bulk of our memoranda support the second option: that Channel 4 should be a subsidiary of the new Independent Television Commission, selling its own advertising, but with a guaranteed level of income. The main problem with that approach is how to maintain some necessary linkage with Channel 3 while the two services compete for advertising revenue. As our inquiry began only on Monday of this week, I am not yet able to offer any guidance to the House.

It is right, as we recommended, that one authority should oversee all commercial television, however transmitted, but with a lighter touch than the IBA. It will be important that the ITC should have sufficient powers to enforce separation of ownership of television services from ownership of other media enterprises. I welcome the recent Home Office statements on that aspect, but they must be given force in the Bill. It will be essential, too, that the qualifying standards to enter the competitive tender for Channel 3 franchises should be a proper test of quality and commitment, and if its promised standards are not kept the ITC should have the power and the resolve, after appropriate warning, to end the contract.

My Committee welcomes the research role of the Broadcasting Standards Council. Too many of the criticisms of broadcasting and broadcasters are based on reporting of television rather than on actual viewing. Pressure groups can play on exaggerated fears of declining standards. The council will be able to set such fears in the context of actual trends and genuine public reaction. In this context I am concerned that the Broadcasting Complaints Commission should retain its role so that arbitration of particular complaints does not become complicated or confused in the mind of the public with the important role that the Broadcasting Standards Council will play.

There are some matters to which the Government should perhaps give further thought before finalising their plans. In our report we supported the Eureka project for high definition television as the way to secure the benefits of HDTV as soon as possible for the viewing public and to support the future of the European electronics industry. The BBC, BSB and the IBA are keen to develop this system which is compatible with, but markedly improves upon, the present technology. I hope that the Government will press ahead with the draft European directive on HDTV and that the Department of Trade and Industry will make clear what action it will take to support the development of HDTV.

A particular matter in the White Paper which the Committee did not envisage was the proposed allocation to a commercial contractor of night time hours on one of the BBC channels. In our report we went as far as to say that this was "totally unrealistic". When we took concluding evidence in May from the Minister of State, no hint of this possibility was given to us. I am afraid that in this proposal the White Paper faces both ways at once. It exhorts the BBC to raise money through subscription and then proposes that one possible outlet for such services —the night hours on one channel—is to be removed. If we are serious about wishing the BBC to use subscription finance in support of its income and to become financially more efficient, we should allow the BBC to retain its night hours to develop subscription services such as British medical television and a "BBC Nature Club". Three other terrestrial and countless satellite channels will be available to advertisers.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the hon. Gentleman go further and ask the Minister to say categorically that the evidence that he gave to the Committee in May that the BBC will be allowed to keep its night-hour channels and to develop them as it sees fit still stands?

Mr. Wheeler: The hon. Gentleman is a fine ornament in the Committee. I am confident that when the Minister replies to the debate he will note the force of the argument advanced by the hon. Gentleman and by the Committee as a whole and will, perhaps, respond accordingly.

On the proposals relating to transmission, I remind the House of the excellent and reliable service that the BBC and IBA have provided for many years to a higher technical standard than that in many countries. In framing the new arrangements it will be important for the Government to establish a workable structure for competition in that area. The BBC and ITC should be able to compete for the contracts to run transmission systems. The White Paper does not envisage immediate steps in transmission, as the BBC's responsibilities are rooted in its charter which lasts until the end of 1996. I hope that the Government will allow the ITC and the new commercial services to develop before final decisions are taken.

Finally, I wish to refer to the future of the new Independent Television Commission. In the remaining period of the IBA's life many decisions affecting the role and work of the ITC will have to be taken. These decisions must not be taken in a vacuum. The Home Secretary has already appointed Mr. George Russell as chairman of the IBA and chairman-designate of the ITC. I applaud that appointment, because Mr. Russell combines business experience and acumen with a working knowledge of the world of television, having been involved in Channel 4 and ITN.

It is important that the change from the IBA to the ITC should be a watershed marking the change from detailed regulation to a looser licensing arrangement. The change is now clear. For the interim I note what the Home Secretary has said about the transition from the IBA to the ITC after the enactment of the Broadcasting Bill. A successful transition is vital if those involved are to plan properly for the future control of the independent sector. I hope that in his reply the Minister of State will take on board the issues that I have raised. They are essential to the future of broadcasting in this country.

6.25 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Although the ten-minute rule does not come into force until 7 o'clock, I shall try to abide by it now. I shall speak about two matters—public service broadcasting and the development of the IBA companies and the new commission.

I was glad to hear the Select Committee speaking out in favour of the principles of public service broadcasting and recommending that such principles should be an integral part of the new broadcasting environment. I am worried about the future of the BBC. Although that has been said before, it is worth impressing on the Government, because they said that they would listen—breaking the habit of a lifetime—so perhaps they will listen to all hon. Members who are worried about the BBC.

The BBC often makes me angry because it never reports well on Ireland. The other night it was caught out about the Duisberg conference on developments in Ireland, and since then people in Ireland have not stopped laughing. When newspapers do such things they do not cause much worry, but the BBC screen is in many homes. Its management is not very good. Its television and radio drama, its orchestral concerts and the way that it subsidises orchestras in the interests of the public service are excellent. Whatever my views about the BBC, I have always seen it as a lantern to the world and the world's best broadcasting service. That view stems from my feelings during the war, but that was a long time ago. The BBC has maintained its standards, but it will not be able to continue to do so unless it has sufficient money.

I hope that the Government will not allow the Treasury to decide the future or size of the licence fee. I used to think that the University Grants Committee approach would be the best way to deal with the licence fee. One could compute the total amount of money likely to come in by way of licence fees, a UGC approach could be used to give a view to the Government and the money could be raised

[Mr. Merlyn Rees]

by taxation. However, I have gone off that idea because I know from being on the court of London university how the University Grants Committee works. I still feel that there is a better way to raise money, but in the meantime the licence fee must be maintained.

By itself subscription television can mean only that the BBC will have to cut its wider services. A weaker BBC will have an effect on the IBA and ITC sectors of broadcasting. Inevitably, if the BBC does not have enough money and if the Government of the day—I am looking to the foreseeable future and 1991—do not give the BBC sufficient money, we shall end up talking about having advertising on the BBC, which would change the nature of the BBC.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the instruction given to those producing programme links on the BBC is to make them look as much like advertising as possible? What would be the difference if the BBC had advertisements?

Mr. Buchan: That is not advertising.

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend is right. I do not wish to rehearse the arguments of 25 years ago, but the nature of the BBC, which has an assured income and a charter that guides it, would be irrevocably altered if it had to depend on money from advertising.

I do not wish to develop my worry about the nature of appointments to the IBA and the BBC. I understand the balance that has been maintained, but what is important is that the men and women appointed to the IBA should be people of substance with an influential place in society resulting from their experience. It is not the job of a Government to appoint people because of their political sympathies or because their general views accord with those of the Government. I had to consider the appointment of a chairman of the BBC in 1979 and in the end I decided not to make a change because an election was imminent, so we asked Lord Swann to stay on. However, I did ask Edward Boyle, of Leeds university in my city, to take the job—not because of his political views but because I thought that he would be an admirable man to have in the BBC. He declined my invitation because of his health and because he valued being in university life.

Regional televison companies matter. I can see the hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who is my neighbour in Leeds, agreeing to that. Yorkshire Television, Granada and the Welsh television companies matter in the regions. I want to be sure that we do nothing that will weaken such companies. I am a bit worried when I read the White Paper. Although there is talk about regional programmes, I should like to see more mention of regional companies because they ought to make the programmes in the regions in which they are based.

A number of companies have told me of their anxieties about cross-subsidy. Now the IBA has sent most Members of Parliament a paper on the subject. A particular point is summed up by the IBA document. It says:

"The twin principles of regional service and universality have hitherto been preserved by the significant cross-subsidies which underpin the ITV system. Currently at least £20 million is transferred annually from the major companies to the small regional companies in order to support and enhance the service to the viewers. These cross-subsidies operate via the transmission system"—

there has also been great concern about the problems of the transmission system and the worry that the small companies would not be able to afford the cost of it—

"subscription to Channel 4 and the networking-arrangements, and all will disappear under Government's plans."

What is the point of the Government talking about regional television if the cross-subsidisation is not available?

I sit on the Select Committee that is considering the televising of Parliament, and we have not yet come to any conclusions. I speak for myself to make a point. What will happen with televising the Chamber and the Committees is that we shall provide not a programme but a feed. Once the feed—an electronic *Hansard*—is out, the companies outside will decide how to make a programme out of it. What goes on in the House will be transmitted in regionally based programmes, as well as nationally based programmes afterwards, so the Select Committee has to take into account the new mode that the Government have recommended in the White Paper. There is a desire and a need for regional political programmes, and the IBA document that I have quoted points out that it will be more difficult to deal with such programmes. That is a serious problem.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and other hon. Members have raised a number of issues. The Government will have to apply their mind to the purpose of competitive tendering. What did the Peacock committee believe that competitive tendering would achieve? I know that, in the Marks and Spencer analogy, competition means that one can get clothes and shoes that are better than they would be if they were publicly provided. But what would competitive tendering in broadcasting achieve? I have studied the White Paper carefully. It sets out two procedures for the licensing body, the ITC. What is "quality threshold"? Paragraph 6.17 guides the reader back a page or two to where it says:

"news should be impartial and accurate".

That is probably taken from the legislation setting up the IBA and from the BBC charter. I say to hon. Members representing Northern Ireland that that reminds me of that wonderful newspaper in Tyrone, the *Impartial Reporter*. That made me realise that "impartial" has different definitions in different dictionaries.

What will the words "impartial and accurate" mean in practice? The White Paper links them to the "quality threshold", which is the first stage of the licence application. Will the companies write on a bit of paper what they will do, or put a price alongside each of the qualities that they have picked up from the earlier part of the White Paper? I do not understand, but I am given hope by the White Paper's reference to public scrutiny. We live in an age of open government. Once the sealed bids, from both existing and new companies are in, why should they not be published? Why should they not be of general knowledge to the community as a whole? They can be analysed in the newspapers with that objectivity for which the British press is famous. They can be analysed, too, in the television programmes which do that so well late at night, especially for Members of Parliament who get home at half-past 10.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I am listening with care to what the right hon. Gentleman is saying. In para 6.17 of the White Paper he will read that it is intended that

"Both stages of the procedure will be open to public scrutiny."

Mr. Rees: That is excellent. That has not been apparent in the discussions that I have had. Will it be clear that when Mr. X, with his associates, puts in his quality programme he will refer to the number of programmes that he will make in his studio and how much he will import films with stars such as the Three Stooges from the 1920s? Such films are not of great intellectual value, but I watch them avidly because they take me back to my youth. They are a great antidote to some debates in the House.

If it is all to be spelt out, that is an aspect of open government which cheers me. We will know what the companies propose and whether they are falling down on the job in the months and years ahead. When the proposals are published, the Select Committee on broadcasting can question Mr. X and Mr. Y. It is right that the Select Committee should be able to question them quickly before they are given contracts. That opens a vista that I had not thought of before.

I promised not to speak for too long. I wanted to mention the BBC and its licence fee, which I regard as important, and competitive tendering, which must be set out much more clearly than it is in the White Paper. The Government have said that they will listen. I hope that they listen sympathetically to the concern of both sides of the House on those two issues.

6.41 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): I think all of us realise the importance of the need for change in broadcasting. We realise also that the real thrust for that change comes because of the technological advances that we have seen in recent years. I did not agree with a great deal of the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) but one thing which struck me most was that at least he said that change is not a response to failure. It is important to start from that position. It is not that what we have is bad; indeed, there is a great deal of good in it. My anxiety relates to the need to be careful so that we do not lose many of the good things in the present system.

I want specifically to follow what the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said. I should like to go into it much more widely, but time does not allow. I intend to stick to the importance of the regional character of our television and particularly of Channel 3. This importance is emphasised by Peacock, by the Select Committee report and by the White Paper. When everyone pays lip service to something, I am worried that it may be overlooked in the outcome. We all pay lip service to the importance of the regional character of television. If I make no other point, I want to emphasise that we do not just pay lip service to it but that we carry it through into whatever legislation and new arrangements we make. Let us remember also that in the legislation which follows the White Paper we will set the pattern of broadcasting for many years. That is why it is so important that we get it right.

On regional broadcasting, I make no apology for speaking particularly from the Scottish viewpoint. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister of State to consider Scotland not as a whole but as a number of different parts which are not homogeneous, and which have different characteristics, different backgrounds and different histories. In Scotland we have Grampian television in the north, Border television in the south and Scottish television in the central belt. I would be bitterly disappointed to see that regional structure within Scotland destroyed or hurt in any way.

This point has been very much emphasised in Scotland. In my part of Scotland, a survey was commissioned by Grampian television, following other surveys in recent years. The survey showed that the independent channel, with its regional content, has the broadest support. Investigations showed that that was because of the regional content of its programmes, particularly the news programmes. That we must maintain. The result of the investigation is borne out by my own experience and that of others in the area. Therefore, my first point is that we must retain the regional franchise map not only in the United Kingdom as a whole but within Scotland.

My second point also follows what the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South said. If we are to have regional Channel 3 companies, and particularly if we are to maintain, as I believe we should, the small companies in the big geographic areas, transmission costs will be critical if they are to survive. One transmitter at Crystal palace serves many millions of people in London. The Grampian area in the north of Scotland has 1·13 million inhabitants and is as large as Switzerland. Eight main transmitters and 68 relay transmitters are required to reach the population.

In his opening remarks my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary paid respect to the need for the universality of our television and broadcasting. Indeed, the White Paper acknowledges the need for continuing universal coverage. Because of cross-subsidy in our national transmission, coverage is available to everyone at the same cost. That must not be undermined. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to elaborate in his reply to the debate on the proposals for a privatised, regionally based transmission system. What precisely is meant by that? What will the effect be? Can he please give the House and me in particular the assurance that there will be the same cost for transmission to every person throughout the country?

My third point relates to the granting of the franchise, which is part of the amendment before us. I understand the Government's desire to use a price mechanism. I understand why they wish to avoid statutory authorities making final decisions on awards. I appreciate also the quality test proposal of which my right hon. Friend made so much in his speech. However, a pricing test is recommended by Peacock; but let us also remind ourselves that it was only by a majority of four to three. As has already been said in the debate, there has been subsequent qualification of exactly what it should be. It was questioned in the House of Lords debate. It has been strongly questioned by Lord Thomson of Monifieth, for whose experience I have great respect.

I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends that we have to watch the danger of putting profit before quality, particularly in regard to some of the smaller franchises. For example, when the cable service in Aberdeen faced financial difficulties, the first thing it axed was the local channel. That worries many of us who have had good

[Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith]

services from small local television companies. Care has to be given to that point. If we make price the main priority, we may create financial pressures which endanger programme quality, attract outside predators and reduce the service to regional viewers and advertisers.

The White Paper acknowledges the success of the present system. Therefore, we have to be careful in case we throw out many of the good things that we have in it. If the present proposals are proceeded with and they prove to be wrong—if my fears are justified—given the fixed term of 10 years and a review in another 10 years, we could land ourselves in considerable difficulties.

I was encouraged by what my right hon. Friend said about the dual franchise, and I hope that he will take a fresh look at it. Considering the proposal from a regional viewpoint, many of us are anxious about it. It could concentrate the control of Channel 3 among seven or eight operators. When one considers the small franchise operators, one can see that that could lead to the closing down of regional stations and the loss of local identity.

If a large central and a small regional franchise were held in the same hands, I believe that there would be the greatest risk of that small regional franchise being subordinated. That would affect the quality and the regional nature of the programmes initiated from that region, and would affect, too, the staff employed, and the quality of the staff which a small regional company can attract to its area. I certainly hope that that proposal will be dropped.

I would like finally to make three important points. I am anxious about the separation of Channel 4 from Channel 3. I am again speaking about regional considerations. I believe that that would create the danger of a loss of advertising revenue and the loss of some of the access which local advertisers currently have. At the same time, it would create dangers by inhibiting the commissioning of programmes from the small regional companies. Those are points that my right hon. Friend must take into account.

I believe that there are also broader issues. Channels 3 and 4 being linked and working together provide a balance, because of a similar link between Chanels 1 and 2 of the BBC. I believe that to have Channels 3 and 4 in the commercial sector and Channels 1 and 2 of the BBC linked not only provides a better balance but, if they are not linked, we shall lose the advantages of the complementary programming in the commercial sector which I believe helps viewers' choice.

Secondly, I should like to pay tribute to the success of S4C in Wales in relation to the Welsh language. I do not want to belittle what has been done elsewhere, but a company such as Grampian must provide Gaelic programmes and also contribute financially and directly to S4C in Wales. Why can we not have the same funding for Gaelic programmes as does S4C, which the White paper has acknowledged has been a proven success? The suggestion of cable or MVDS for Gaelic programmes is highly dubious, given the scattered nature of the Gaelic communities and the topography of the west coast and the islands of Scotland.

Thirdly, I am anxious that, in the White Paper, Channel 3 is not given specifically public service responsibility, as it has at present. Public service responsibility means that there must be a proper place for, for example, religious and children's programmes, programmes for minority groups and for the disabled. Therefore, my last plea—once more I make no apology for casting all these matters in a regional context—is that the importance of public service responsibility is written into, and not just implied in, the final proposal for Channel 3.

6.53 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), especially because I agreed with every word he said and not having to repeat and re-emphasise those points will make my task easier. All hon. Members who, like the right hon. Gentleman, represent constituents who live in some of the more peripheral parts of our country and in the less-densely populated areas will agree with what he said about the importance of regional broadcasting.

The Home Secretary brought his proposals for the future of broadcasting before Parliament under pressure from two external quarters. The first impulse—which is very welcome—is the global revolution in communications technology, which will offer further possibilities of greater consumer diversity of programme choice. The second question, which has unfortunately dominated the Home Secretary's responses to the first, is ideological and entirely unwelcome. It is the simple belief that the commercialism of the market place should determine broadcasting output —terrestrial as well as by satellite. It should not be necessary to emphasise that broadcasting is for the benefit of the viewer. However, the White Paper rarely refers to the viewer and appears transfixed by two financial objectives of marginal benefit to the viewer. The first is to raise the maximum revenue for the Treasury by the sale of franchises and a levy based on income. The second is how to reduce costs to advertisers through extended competition.

In the past, there have been indefensible industrial practices in television. Substantial profits cushioned the companies from the need to change. But change was coming, and some of it was in response to the Government's pressure and nudging. For example, there was the proposal that independent producers should produce 25 per cent. of original programming. The new pressures of scarcely regulated competition and increased Government financial exaction appear unrelated to the viewers' interests. They are calculated to reduce funds for programme making and are designed to produce the result, "You simply get what you pay for".

At the heart of this debate is the question of how far both the BBC and independent television could continue under the Government's proposals to promote, through the 1990s, quality broadcasting as we have known it. Undoubtedly, most viewers have their gripe about some aspect of television. However, in comparison with other countries, a high proportion of the population watches television for many hours each week. The figures suggest a fair amount of audience satisfaction. It is hard to envisage much scope for further viewing—which I believe the Home Secretary admitted—and it is more likely that the increase in the number of channels will in time reduce the numbers watching the existing channels.

What is special about British broadcasting and what is now at risk is the universal accessibility of the rich and balanced mixture of programmes to everyone who—over 12 months—pays a still modest licence fee of £1·20 a week.

That mix will not be provided by satellite television or by the other channels. I shall use advertisements for two television channels to make my point about quality. One was an advertisement for a cable television channel called BRA, which said:

"Round-the-clock classic film channel showing movies from the 30s to the 70s. Titles are scheduled several times during the year, so you can't possibly miss your favourites."

Another interesting example is provided by the description of a channel called LAN, which said:

"A totally new concept in television. Music from the world's greatest composers fused with visual images showing the beauty of the natural world."

That sounds rather like the old BBC intermissions which some of us remember seeing as children.

The mix of entertainment, information and education, of popular and minority programmes, has been the hallmark of the BBC. ITV eventually followed its lead. That it did so was due less to competition than to the threat by the IBA—sometimes made good—that, if it only chased ratings, it would lose its licence.

That quality is threatened principally by the Government's attitude to the financing of the BBC. The current linkage of the licence to the retail prices index is already squeezing out more than inefficiency. The Home Secretary's statement that the licence fee is not immortal indicates that he looks to subscription not—as he should—as a useful additional source of income to invest in programme making for the viewers, but as an alternative. The guarantee that the fee will last in its present form only until 1991 is a threat, the full consequence of which the right hon. Gentleman is plainly unwilling to reveal to the viewers.

It is hard to accept that the Home Secretary is speaking in good faith when he says that the BBC is the "cornerstone" of broadcasting, because, by his actions, he clearly intends to demolish it. He must know the limits of subscription as a means of revenue raising. Only two subscription services in the world make money—Home Box in the United States and Canal Plus in France, and both depend on feature films. British Satellite Broadcasting and Rupert Murdoch have announced their intention to go into that market. Even in respect of subscription the good faith of the Home Secretary is in doubt, because his proposal to hive off from the BBC one of its night channels will deprive it of an effective opportunity to develop what it has pioneered with its downloading night programme for doctors.

If the BBC is to rely on subscription—all the evidence suggests that it has a limited capacity as a source of revenue raising—it will have no choice but to chase ratings. In that case there is a slim prospect for the survival of documentaries, investigative current affairs, classic serials, single plays, music and visual arts programmes and children's series, not to mention religious programmes. What would happen to the great orchestras of London, Cardiff, Glasgow and Manchester which the BBC support? Under a subscription system the BBC would disappear as the country's greatest patron of the arts.

The scope for revenue earning by BBC Enterprises is real and growing, but the Home Secretary should acknowledge that sales and subscription can never be more than a useful top-up of revenues if the BBC's role as the "cornerstone" of broadcasting is to be secured.

If the range and quality of the BBC are reduced, that will, of course, diminish the competition faced currently by ITV. Viewers do not want to watch trivial programmes all the time. Current viewing patterns show people's desire to have a mixture of what is relaxing and what is more demanding. That mix is not offered by multiplying channels. Nor do the promised schedules and expected costs of satellite channels such as Sky suggest that it will be possible cheaply to purchase a combination of programmes to match the spread of our present terrestrial channels. The White Paper does not offer real choice.

On competition, too, the White Paper is gravely defective. The Government appear to be bull-headed in their determination to stick to a tendering system of franchise allocation. I think that at best that is daft and at worst it is sinister. The Government have allowed a dangerous concentration of newspaper ownership in this country, but at least in that case there is always some possibility of a new entrant spotting a new market. As television franchises will be granted for many years the dangers of cross-ownership are far more serious. Television is also a much more pervasive medium than newspapers.

The White Paper that the Government ask us to endorse contains no adequate safeguards to prevent the domination of the networks by those with deep pockets and shallow concerns for freedom of expression and the virtues of diversity. The prospect that those who pay the piper in the press will also pay the piper across the airwaves induces revulsion and fear. The impact of the tendering arrangements and the role of the proposed licensing authority on the quality of programming will not be benign, even if the Home Secretary prevents the ownership of television channels by the press moguls. I believe that such ownership should be prevented.

We are asked not to underrate the significance of the quality hurdles in the way of franchise bidders. If consideration of quality has any meaning in the process, the Home Secretary must realise the force of the plea from the reconvened Peacock committee that the new licensing authority should have the right to reject the highest bid if another company offers more value for money in terms of the public interest.

It is a sad reflection of the Government's philistine intentions that almost the only deliberate obeisance which the Home Secretary makes to programme quality in his proposals is the enthronement of Lord Rees-Mogg as a censor and to extend, probably impracticably, the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 to broadcasting.

The Home Secretary tells us that the one section of the White Paper that has green edges relates to Channel 4. The Government reject the current arrangements for that channel, offer three suggestions of their own and ask for others. The endorsement of the White Paper by a vote tonight will leave Channel 4 in limbo. I am glad that the Government are at least open to suggestion and that we will have the benefit of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs before decisions are taken.

Channel 4 is a success story—in part the Government's success story. With clever scheduling and as a national channel, unlike the proposed Channel 5, which will reach only 70 per cent. of the population, it could have

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

considerable power to draw in advertising revenue from other companies. Without some entrenched arrangements on complementary programming and without the promotion from the other channels enjoyed at present, it will be difficult for Channel 4 to draw in advertising revenue and to fulfil its remit. That remit to provide innovative programmes and cater for interests not served on other channels has not turned Channel 4 into a ghetto channel. It offers news, 15 hours of education, religious and multiracial programmes, American football, "The Business Programme" and the "Right to Reply". If Channel 4 has to compete for revenue without a concordat on scheduling with the other channels, it will have difficulty in surviving as we know it.

Most of the new channels will be national, even international, in their coverage. Regional television is largely the creation of ITV and the regional strength of the new Channel 3 must, therefore, be underpinned. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside drew attention to the fact that the White Paper's proposals on regional television are singularly deficient. Regional television must serve regional interests and it is not just news and current affairs programmes that are required.

Regional television is seen at its best with fine programmes of broad interest that have been networked around the country but which have been made by talented production teams that enrich the lives of the many communities where they work. The White Paper pays some lip service to the importance of regionalism, but does not offer safeguards on the quantity and quality of regional programming. It offers no definition of what a "regional" programme is likely to entail and no protection from the media bandits. Such companies could easily become the shadows of their satellite owners. I agree with the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside that cross-financing is vital for the small companies.

The present transmitter arrangements have sustained regional broadcasting in the less populous and geographically remoter areas by cross-subsidy. I hope that the Minister will fill in a blank in the White Paper concerning transmission costs. If there is no recognition in the legislation of companies' ability to pay to sustain the regional system, those remote places will not receive cable, Channel 5 or MVDS, and they will suffer the loss of access to regional broadcasting.

The prospects for broadcasting, which are again being widened by technology, could be immensely enriching for our national life, but the White Paper is singularly deficient in pointing up those possibilities. That is demonstrated by, for example, its suggestions about fibre-optics and cable. The White Paper is inadequate because it fails to recognise that cable regulation is in a mess. I think that, however, politicians should be as wary of over-reacting as of under-reacting to the opportunities.

There are many interests and enthusiasms that pay television can satisfy, but most of us have wide-ranging and general interests that are not simply the sum of particular pre-identified tastes. It is those broad requirements for which our system has provided so well, step by step, as talent has been harnessed to technology. That is in the Home Secretary's trust, but he has given almost no evidence of his awareness of that fact either today or in the White Paper. For that reason we shall not vote to endorse his proposals.

7.8 pm

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I have followed debates on this subject in this House since the 1950s. What is most remarkable about today's debate so far is that, although there is plenty of room for argument and disagreement, there is an enormous amount of common ground, which is evident on both sides of the House. That is a reflection on, and a compliment to, the fact that not only is our system well regarded abroad, but it is one in which we take considerable pride at home. Just as Parliament has never been keen on the divine right of kings, however, it should equally look askance at a divine right of commercial broadcasters.

While I accept a hereditary monarchy, I do not necessarily extend that to a hereditary ownership of the media. If there is to be any divinity around, it should belong not to the suppliers of programmes but to the consumers of them. Suppliers, after all, should retain their franchises on merit, and so as long as there is a quality threshold—which I welcome in the Home Secretary's proposals—I do not share the alarmist views of those who have spoken like Jeremiahs over the years since commercial television began.

This White Paper—indeed, any White Paper on broadcasting—must be judged against certain abiding criteria, and they have been forcefully spelt out by the Home Secretary as independence, choice, viability and, above all, quality. In this context, I mean by quality whatever is judged to be the best of its kind, be it sport, chat shows, drama, comedy or anything else.

But there are other considerations, and the range of programming, diversity and balance are among them. Account must also be taken of efficiency and cost-effectiveness. And somewhere in the system there must be a place for what I would call the culturally literate aspect —something that is both edifying and enhancing, not only from the past but from the contemporary scene. Without those elements, broadcasting could quickly become mediocre and ultimately sterile, and Britain's achievements, by our own or by world standards, have been prodigious.

I wish to concentrate on what a true Conservative approach should consider to be of paramount importance; and in saying that I do not claim any exclusive monopoly on these Benches. It is just that on this side of the House we place a great deal of emphasis on preserving what has been learnt from the past and not destroying the good that has been created.

Thus, when we are thinking about innovations, we must do more than pay lip service to such notions, and in this context I shall concentrate my remarks on the position of the BBC. In many ways it is the repository of much that is best in British broadcasting. When I listen to spokesmen of the BBC speaking about the White Paper I have a strong sense of deja vu.

I am reminded of what the American Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, said in the aftermath of the Suez crisis, about Britain having lost an empire and not yet found a role. The BBC may not be said to have lost an empire, but it has lost its exclusivity over the years. Its funding is in jeopardy, and the basis of its funding must cause concern.

Just as, in the 1960s, Britain's role was not clear in the new order of things, so in the present new order the BBC's role is not clear. For example, the BBC's role rests at the end of the day not only on what Parliament wills but on what resources it has available. In this context, I find the White Paper disingenous. According to paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 on page 7, great things are expected of the BBC. We read that it has

"a special role. It will continue to be expected to provide high quality programming across the full range of public tastes and interests"

and so on. How is that to be achieved? Even if the BBC holds its ground, it is naive to think that it could hold it beyond 1996 on the basis of what it is trying to do now.

Equally disingenous is the BBC's response to the White Paper's disingenuousness. The BBC tells us—I am guided by a note which other hon. Members will also have received from the BBC—that its main function will be to improve efficiency, to broaden its revenue base, to make subscription television work and to generate interest in sponsorship.

Unfortunately, that begs the real question. What can the BBC achieve with the resources it has and will have? The BBC admits that subscription and sponsorship will do little more than cover the cost of those innovations. There still remains the cost of running the BBC, of paying for worldwide news networks and of other important activities that it has. Meanwhile, as each year passes and 1996 gets nearer, the licence fee will buy less and less and I question whether it will go up and up. However, it is certain that competition will get more and more expensive.

Something will have to give. Will it be the range of the BBC's services, its standards or both? On its dwindling income, it will have to redefine its scope of activities and therefore its role. Parliament should have a say in this, and we should be facing up to that now. The role of the bastion of public service broadcasting is not an issue to be left to market forces. If we leave it in that way, we may have left matters too late. What we should have preserved may have been dissipated and what remains may not be what we would value most. In short, we may have to face in 1996 a fait accompli.

If these questions must be faced now, I hope the Government will think again about what is said in the White Paper on page 10, where at the end of the section on the BBC we are told baldly:

"It will be necessary to review the role of the BBC when the present Charter expires at the end of 1996 . . . Experience needs to be gained first of the progress and impact of the reforms".

I fear that that could be addressing the matter too late.

I have a suggestion about what the role of the BBC should be. I do not share the view of Professor Peacock as expressed in *The Times* today:

"the major purpose we saw behind the move to subscription was to prepare the BBC for the day when it would compete on equal terms with the present independent sector."

He goes on:

"When the BBC's charter expires in 1996 . . . the case for a special relationship between the BBC and the Government would disappear. It could become an independent company like any other".

I do not accept that. A free market can only result in the uncommercial being bypassed and buried. But that burial does not prove what it may seem to prove; it does not follow that what the free market has killed off was worthless. Something which is unprofitable is not necessarily unrewarding or without merit and we should not be so undiscerning as to think it is. The premise on which I started is that there are and always will be——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Will the hon. Member please bring his remarks to a close?

Mr. Gorst: There are and always will be programmes that commercial enterprises cannot or will not undertake. The BBC should become a forum for excellence—not a broadcasting ghetto but a jewel in the crown of the British media.

7.20 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I agree with the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) that the funding of the BBC is a matter for concern. It is one of the two issues that I want to raise today. I think that we all accept the need for change because of technological, international and other developments. However, the changes proposed in the White Paper would damage the BBC. Rather than opening doors, some of them will close doors and I am strongly opposed to them.

I was a television producer with the BBC for eight years and I have some experience of the problems that it faces. I have great admiration for the values, quality and output of the BBC. However, those qualities will be jeopardised by the proposals in the White Paper to end the licence fee and replace it with subscription television—that is the essence of the proposals.

The BBC has made an outstanding contribution to Britain and to the world with its quality, expertise, experience and public service standards, but those would all be slowly suffocated if the proposals in the White Paper became law. The danger signals are flying high and clear, and despite the euphemisms in the White Paper the menace is glaringly obvious. All the fine words in the White Paper about the BBC's special role and its high quality programmes cannot disguise the harsh fact that the BBC will be deprived of the cash that it needs to continue. The licence fee will be squeezed until 1991, and after that the Government clearly want to replace it with subscription television. That is like trying to run a Chieftain tank on lighter fuel—it simply will not work.

The House should be in no doubt that if the BBC is compelled to exist on money from subscriptions, sponsorship and other entrepreneurial activities, the BBC as we know it will not survive. Not only is the quality of the BBC jeopardised—its very existence is threatened by the White Paper. We should be under no illusion about that. Subscription television would devastate the BBC's finances. Anyone who doubts that should calculate how many old age pensioners could afford it, especially as 80 per cent. of old age pensioners live on or around the poverty line. How many of our millions of unemployed people or one-parent families would be able to afford subscription television? A glance at the financial problems of the many millions of poor people in Britain reveals that it is absurd to suppose that subscription television will permit the BBC to survive. It would reduce the BBC to a ghetto—a refuge for minorities—and would mean the destruction of the BBC as we know it. I urge the Government to continue to provide the BBC with an adequate licence fee so that it can continue its admirable service.

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

As president of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, my second point is that deaf viewers' needs are often overlooked. Television is crucial to our way of living and thinking, and to social intercourse. It does not merely provide entertainment—it plays a crucial role in society. Deaf people can easily become isolated because of their handicap. Television provides them with a means of integration by virtue of its coverage of virtually every aspect of our lives, but many deaf people cannot follow television without the help of subtitling or signing. Subtitling can be provided on a teletext service which can be watched by deaf people so it does not interfere with the picture seen by the general public. In the long term, so-called "open" subtitling or signing could be considered but I favour subtitling on teletext for deaf people so that it does not interfere with the viewing of the general public.

The technical facilities for full participation by deaf people in television are available, but the television authorities fail to provide the necessary coverage. There are 70 hours of television per day and 490 hours per week for hearing people, but deaf viewers have only 30 hours of subtitling on BBC and 25 hours on ITV. Those figures are shocking. Deaf people are being let down by both the BBC and ITV. That must change. Ministers must appreciate that deaf people will receive properly subtitled programmes only if the Government will it. There is no substitute for the will of the Government. No one can doubt that deaf people will be ignored if television is seen merely as a marketable product. It is essential for deaf people that legislation should specify that franchises be given only—I repeat only—to companies which provide an adequate number of hours of subtitled and signed programmes. The number of such programmes should be increased and a higher standard set. The cost of subtitling is now about £300 to £400 per hour—a tiny cost to television and one that could be reduced by improved methods and greater use of live subtitling.

Those who insist on perfect subtitling before it is permitted on the screen are damaging the interests of deaf people. Whatever the spelling errors, or the minor delays in subtitling, the service constitutues a phenomenal advantage for deaf people. ITN deserves the warmest congratulations from the House for pioneering live subtitling on the 6·45 pm and 7 pm news, which provides a godsend to deaf people and is warmly appreciated. The BBC's attitude of seeking perfection before providing live subtitles is lamentable and it must catch up with ITV, which has left it standing. The Government, the BBC and ITV must change their attitude towards subtitling, which is a lifeline for deaf people. The rewards for deaf people are enormous. I make a special plea for Ministers, the BBC and ITV to expand subtitling and to open television to millions of deaf people all over Britain.

7.30 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): I am sure that the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) will forgive me if I do not follow him into that area of debate. No one is more qualified than he to speak on those matters and I am sure that every hon. Member has admired his courage and fortitude for many years and has noted with regret and sadness his announcement that he will retire at the next general election.

I declare an interest as a non-executive director of Collett, Dickenson, Pearce advertising agency. When I read the White Paper for the first time, I was amused to see that it proposed a levy because, apparently, no self-respecting White Paper is worth its salt unless it contains a levy. One must, of course, recall that the levy was introduced originally because the use of air time was deemed to be

"a monopoly exploitation of a scarce public resource".

Now we have an infinitely wider availability of that previously scarce public resource and there will no longer be a monopoly because competition is the name of the game and we shall have lots of it. One cannot help noticing that this time the levy will be exacted on the income rather than the profits of the independent companies, which will put great pressure on them.

I believe that there is one central proposal in the White Paper that is dangerous and one major omission. Much of the criticism of the White Paper centres on the method of allocating the franchises by auction, especially when it is stated that the ITC will be required to accept the highest bid. The Government recognise that they cannot simply invite bids from all and sundry without regard to the companies' suitability and, therefore, certain pre-conditions are imposed, so already, at the first stage, we are moving away from the purest market force form. Pure market forces would require no screening or filtering process before the auction. There is to be a quality threshold. The question is how high the qualifying bar will be set. Will it be set at a height of 1 ft 9 in, thus enabling most to qualify, or will it be a stiffer test but one that, none the less, depends on the companies honouring their promises in later years to provide, for example, a diverse range of programmes and also to take national news networks, as they have to at present?

Once the quality threshold has been crossed, companies will proceed to the auction. The White Paper says that the ITC will be required to accept the highest bid. That cannot be sensible. If the ITC is required to accept the highest bid it can, by definition, take no notice of the fact that, for example, one company triumphantly met the quality threshold criteria and a rival company just scraped through.

I was for some considerable time the Minister in charge of procurement in the Ministry of Defence, operating a policy of competition. We were after the best price that we could obtain, but we never circumscribed ourselves by insisting that we took the lowest price—which is the same principle that we are addressing here—regardless of any other consideration that might apply. The same applies here when we are talking about the highest bid regardless of other considerations. The widespread concern is that the higher the bid, the greater the pressure on the winner to cut costs and corners and the supreme short-cut is the route being demonstrated now by Sky, with American and Australian game shows and tabloid style news services.

There is much that is good on our television. Some of the more imaginative and expensive series such as the various wildlife programmes would be under pressure if costs had to be held down. Could the wildlife programmes themselves become endangered species? There is a danger that, in the desire for choice, the Government are confusing qualitative choice with a mere proliferation in

the number of channels. A large number of channels putting out American and Australian chat shows, which are largely indistinguishable from each other, do not meet my criteria for genuine choice. The provision—or at least the possibility of provision—of quality on our televisions is essential and that is much more likely to come from the selection of franchisees who meet the criteria and put in a good bid, but not necessarily the highest bid. We must remind ourselves that we and the Government act as trustees as much of our culture as of our physical environment.

There are other difficulties attached to the question of the highest bid. It is conceivable that in the first round of the auction some of the bigger players might hold back from the bidding process and wait to see whether one of the successful companies had overreached itself and had therefore made itself commercially vulnerable to a takeover. I suspect that the Home Office may already be considering some kind of moratorium on takeovers, which would be a good move and another restriction on market forces in their purest form. Perhaps when my hon. Friend the Minister of State replies he will tell us whether it is possible that if a would-be franchisee put in a bid that happened to be more than 25 per cent. of the net asset value of that company that would constitute a class I transaction which would require all the shareholders to be notified, thereby making a company's bid public at that stage—which might produce many problems.

The one major omission of the White Paper concerns training. It is one of the critically important subjects about which one does not need to say a great deal because all hon. Members apparently recognise it when we see it. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in November 1988:

"effective investment in training is crucial to business success."

It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of training. Training must be provided by the employers, but to be absolutely blunt about it, it will be provided only if the employers are required to provide it. Such a requirement should be inserted in the process at the quality threshold stage when would-be franchisees are running about making all the appropriate noises. At that stage, some mechanism must be inserted to ensure that adequate training is made available. It will not be satisfactory to rely on the BBC to provide all the technicians and producers for the whole industry and it would be extremely unfair and unrealistic to expect that to happen.

In the White Paper, the Government correctly recognise the challenge and opportunity of new technology and they also, rightly, emphasise the importance of choice. I do not believe that the real implications of choice for the independent television companies and for the BBC licence fee have been fully thought through. There is certainly no reason to have a levy and a mandatory highest bidder auction. That is illogical. It is also somewhat disingenuous to suggest that regulation, including the Broadcasting Standards Council, will be a light touch. I give the Government five out of 10 for effort on this White Paper, adding the rider "more thought needed."

7.39 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Ornament I may be, according to the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), but in an excellent speech the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) gave the Government a score of five out of 10. I am not so generous. The history of this Government and broadcasting can best be described as one of missed opportunities. They have failed to realise that there is a broadening base in the entertainment world and a difference in taste which is not based on socio-economic groupings.

In his recent surveys, Professor Arenburg found that a certain percentage of the best paid watched a certain percentage of serious programmes and another percentage of what might be called comedy programmes. The only trouble is that throughout the socio-economic scale the percentage watching serious programmes remained exactly the same and the percentage watching game shows and other amusing programmes was exactly the same. So it appears that human beings watch a variety of television.

Some years ago the start of new technology, new ideas and the new broadening of the entertainment media gave the Government a wonderful opportunity. We had the Cable and Broadcasting Bill. The Minister of State was not the Minister in those days. I cannot remember which Department he was in. That Bill was run by the Department of Trade and Industry. As it quietly proceeded, the then hon. Member for Gravesham, Mr. Tim Brinton—a man for whom I have infinite respect—tabled an amendment in Committee which I supported. It deregulated cable. The Department of Trade and Industry took five years to wake up to what we had done. In those five years the Department made certain that the British cable industry was strangled and did not expand.

We then had the Films Bill to get rid of the old National Film Finance Corporation. We fought against it in Committee because, in effect, it was to begin to throttle the film industry.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Oh.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman says, "Oh". If we had had some of the tax and investment incentives that exist in other countries, the actors, technicians and talent that we have in this land of ours could have mass produced films which could have been made available on television and in cinemas throughout the world. We have a mass of talent and expertise which we have singularly failed to develop and use.

We should look at the television world of tomorrow and say, "This is an opportunity. It is not something to run from like scared rats leaving a sinking ship." We should face the real world and realise that there is a subtle difference between terrestrial and Sky channels. We should not seek to apply to terrestrial broadcasting what we seek to apply to Sky broadcasting. To put it bluntly, there is no way that we can stop Sky coming down. If we think that it is going to be rubbish, we must ensure that terrestrial programmes are so much better and easily available that people will choose them.

Choice is interesting. It has taken nearly eight years for Channel 4 to penetrate to 9 or 14 per cent of the market. There is a terrific market loyalty. Let us not be scared of this thing called Sky—this thing that is to come from the heavens. There are only about 1,000 dishes and the Government have ensured that we have not even started to cable anywhere yet. Therefore, Sky cannot link with cable, so most people cannot watch it for many years. Market penetration will take time.

[Mr. Bermingham]

Let us put to one side this notion about Sky and take out of broadcasting the cold claw that seems to grip the Home Office from time to time as the DTI stretches its dirty little arm into the heart of the broadcasting industry. The DTI does not understand a fig about broadcasting, and the sooner we accept that and the sooner Home Office Ministers say to their DTI colleagues, "Off boys, broadcasting is our patch and we are keeping it that way", the better. The minute the Home Office starts to do that, we may begin to get some sense.

I am all in favour of the fifth and sixth channels. I accept that the fifth channel must be commercial. As I said earlier to the hon. Member for Westminster, North, I hope that the Government will keep their hands off BBC1 and BBC2 night hours. I wait with great expectancy for the Minister's confirmation of that later. If those two channels are to develop a 24-hour system, they must be left their night-time hours. Those channels must be left to the BBC to develop in its own way.

The Government intend to re-franchise the ITV stations. My constituency is in Granada's territory and we have an excellent television service. If the Government are to set up a franchising system that goes to the lowest common denominator and sacrifices standards in the interests of an extra buck or two in the fee, I have to say, "For goodness' sake—don't." In effect, they will destroy local programming, local interest and local programme making. Existing ITV franchise holders have served the industry well. Let us not be frightened of saying that. Expertise and talent have been built up and should be protected.

I would not be unhappy to see existing franchise holders offered further contracts. The Government may wish to increase the amount that they pay on the contracts, but at least the companies—the nuclei, the talent teams, the production teams, the technicians and other staff—would be kept together. I do not mind if the new regulatory channels have a yellow card and red card system. If a company falls down on its quality standards, let it be shown the yellow card and make the regulatory authority strong enough to give it the red card if it continually falls down—the red card that would send it out of the business and let someone else in. There will be other franchise areas to develop in the fifth channel, for which new companies can tender, but let us not, merely for the sake of change and new ideas, throw away nearly 20 years of talent and development. That is the risk that we run.

I do not propose to take long today because what I have to say I have said many times in the past. Once upon a time we thought and it was argued that the development of the entertainment industry via the cables of the land would be the way in which this land was to be cabled. I said then, I say now, and I say to the Minister once again, that cable—the development of fibre optics and the various junction systems that come with it—is not just a march down the path to further choice in entertainment, but the basic structure for the future of an industry which is yet to be born and developed. It is an industry by which information transfer can be made readily available throughout this land. It is a way in which we can pass ideas and products. It is the industry of tomorrow.

By restricting cable, because it was tied to the concept of its being entertainment-led, the Government may well have cost us our place in that market. But it is not too late. I appeal to the Minister to look again at cable, give it a chance, give it the incentives, get the lines in and the system set up. They will find that it is not people who want to use it to watch television, but business men who want to use it to transmit information and technology. Let us not miss that boat.

7.48 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I agree with the last comments of the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). As a non-executive director of London Weekend Television and a superannuated, somewhat faded television interviewer—[HON. MEMBERS: "Never."]. I am most grateful for that disagreement with my immodest statement. It was long ago and I must face reality, as others will in due course. I am sometimes asked for my views on television. On this subject I am often asked, "Why on earth are you mucking about with it?"

On the whole, people are reasonably content with the limited choice that we have. It is more limited than we sometimes realise. Nevertheless, people are content with such choice and quality as they have. Although I believe that we are capable of doing greater things, I have some sympathy for them. Why dig it all up again? One of the reasons why I welcome the White Paper is that it recognises the reality that television is technology-driven and it makes clear, most excellently I think, that changes in technology—satellite broadcasting in particular—change the environment, which means that the existing framework must change, too.

So we have got to make a good job of this, and I believe that it is perfectly possible to give a reasonably warm welcome to the White Paper for making a good fist of it. I am not going to say whether it deserves five, six or seven out of 10, but my hon. Friend the Minister of State and the Home Secretary have done as good a job as any lot I can think of around the Palace of Westminster.

Unhappily—and here comes the rub for my hon. Friend—the White Paper does not fully recognise the financial impact of its proposals on the existing ITV channels. It makes much of the need for programmes of high quality and for choice. However, in three ways, the Government, by the introduction of the new levy in 1990 and by at least two of the proposals in the White Paper, could frustrate those worthwhile objectives. It could do so, first, through the tendering system, which has some of the characteristics of an auction; secondly, through the introduction of the new levy, which comes into force in 1990 and will penalise the ITV programme-making companies; and thirdly—and this has already been referred to—by completely separating Channel 4 from the ITV companies, and thus breaking an association that has done much to ensure the success of Channel 4. Breaking up that association will further fragment the television audience.

I should like to deal with that last point first. Fragmentation will arise anyway through the creation of new advertising-financed channels such as Channel 5, as well as the numerous satellite channels, and these alone will shrink the revenue of the present terrestrial TV companies—a point that is considerably underestimated in the White Paper. So, Channel 4, which we must prize, will be on its own and will have to compete with the other channels for advertising revenue, the acquisition of

programmes, artists and writers, without any further support from ITV. Its costs will go up, and separation will also end complementary scheduling of programmes, which provides the quality and the choice that are such central features of the White Paper.

I hope that the Government will, as they suggest in the White Paper that they might, look again at the future financial status of Channel 4, as well as its relationship with other companies.

On tendering, it is only right that a private company should expect to pay a price for a 10-year franchise. I do not think anyone should quarrel with that, and I do not think that anyone in the ITV world quarrels with it. However, the method proposed in the White Paper will, I have little doubt, encourage unrealistic bids, and I hope that the new ITC will be given the power to exercise its discretion to award the franchise not to the highest bidder but to the bidder offering the best value for money. I will not develop the point any further because it was most ably made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie).

The levy, which will be introduced in 1990—three years before the new franchises—will, in fact, impose an additional financial burden on the ITV companies, a burden much heavier than that imposed by the present levy. It will be imposed at a progressive rate on turnover instead of profits as it is now. Certainly it will hit the larger companies which make most of the programmes that are networked on ITV. Furthermore, it will hit them disproportionately—and at a time when they should be making more, not fewer, programmes to face the new competition from the other channels.

Of course, a levy was originally introduced—and quite rightly so—to siphon off the excess profits made by ITV companies operating in monopoly conditions. But after 1993 the situation will change radically, and the levy should be abandoned if the Government want the ITV companies to compete with programmes that provide genuine choice and genuine quality. The ITV companies themselves do, however, have a choice to make if the Government do not heed the warnings that they have had from outside the Chamber as well as from many hon. Members who have spoken in the debate. If they do not modify the levy or the proposals in the White Paper to which I have alluded, the alternative is a simple one: the ITV companies could simply fly away, and they could take out a licence to transmit their programmes from one of the international satellites' transponders.

At a stroke, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State knows, those ITV companies—well-known companies—will not have to pay any levy, there will be no tendering costs, there will be no need to subsidise the Welsh television channel, there will be no residual public service obligation, no transmitter subsidies which would be necessary if they stayed on the ground, and no control over the time spent on advertising. Of course, with the companies would go their talent and ability to make programmes that are still of quality and are widely accepted and viewed by the British public—programmes which, as one sees from the top ten any week, beat American production hollow.

The commercial attractiveness of that option, although obviously dependent on satellite dish technology and the costs over the next four years, should not be underestimated by the Government. I hope, therefore, that when the Minister replies he will take into account the points that I have made, which I am glad to say put me in good company because they have been made from both sides of the House.

7.57 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I was deeply depressed by the White Paper, but I am very encouraged by some of the things that I have heard from both sides of the House in this debate.

I urge the Government, if they are in any doubt, to appreciate the tremendous significance of the course on which they are now embarking. I probably speak for most people when I say that I am almost in awe—perhaps "fear" is a better word—of the potential power of television in our lives. Let us look at the penetration of television—"penetration", I think, is an advertiser's word. Virtually every household in this country has access to television. Indeed, more than half of them now have at least two sets. The viewing figures show that the average individual watches television for between 25 and 30 hours a week, which is longer than we spend doing anything other than sleeping—or working, in the case of those lucky enough to have a job. That is an indication.

It is not just the viewing time that is significant. It is also the time that we spend discussing, in pubs and clubs and amongst ourselves, what we have seen the night before. The potential impact of television cuts across social classes and age groups. It is absolutely enormous, and the audience sizes are staggering. At peak times the audience can be 20 million. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will understand when I say that, like most politicians, I am well used to addressing mass audiences of 20 in village halls. The idea of speaking to 20 million people is quite mind-bending.

I look in vain when I try to see what kind of philosophy lies behind the Home Secretary's proposals. It was a great indication of how mistaken his present view is, and of how distorted is his picture of the future, when he described his philosophy in a speech on 18 January this year in these words:

> "Increasingly, the viewer and listener should feel like someone browsing in a good bookshop rather than someone kicking their heels in a ration queue."

All I can say is that if his image of the 20 million who watch at peak times is an image of people kicking their heels in a ration queue he has a profoundly distorted picture of the present situation. If the Home Secretary's view of what he has in store for us is browsing in a good bookshop, he must go into very different book shops from those that I visit. Hon. Members should not take my speculative word for this. As the great saying goes, we should look not in the crystal ball, but in the history books.

Let us consider what the deregulated system is providing at the moment. In *The Independent* on 1 February, Michael Grade referred to Sky's entertainment channel as follows:

> "Sky's Entertainment channel looks like yet more re-runs and failed American and Australian series . . . It looks like endless cheap buy-ins from abroad . . . I don't see where the new choice is. So much of their schedules are junk, fast-food takeaway telly which programmers put on in the hope that viewers will not notice . . . This is less a broadcasting revolution than all our yesterdays."

Mr. Grade was talking about the system that operates now.

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

We know what is in store for us. We are in store for deregulated television on the American model. The Home Secretary is becoming sensitive about that. I have not heard anyone from the United States say, "My word, I wish our television was like your television." Our television is incomparably better than American television and I will explain why.

We have regulation in our system and we should not fall for the idea that regulation means restriction. Anyone who has worked in commercial television will confirm that the regulatory powers of the Independent Broadcasting Authority extend programme choice. The IBA constantly tells programme makers to do this or that. There is no dead hand of bureaucracy present. Lord Ferrers may refer in the other place to the bureaucratic control of the IBA, but that is not the experience of people working in the system. A degree of regulation extends programme quality.

The same is true of news coverage. Can we really say that the IBA's programme guidelines restrict the quality of news coverage in broadcasting? My goodness, I wish that there were some programme guidelines for newspapers in their news rooms which would put sense into the way in which they cover the news. Regulations of various kinds can extend quality and choice.

Our system is programme-maker-led. It is not led by advertisers. The depressing philosophy of the White Paper is that somehow the advertisers must lead the way. By and large, people work in television because they like making programmes. The Government should ask themselves why people working in the industry object to the White Paper. We would think that everyone would be in favour of it because it extends job opportunities, provides more channels and there will be no shortage of work, but people in the industry oppose it because they know that it will mean a lower standard of programme.

An extremely important factor about our television system is its universality. At a very simple level for people who, like me, are interested in sport the great national sporting events such as test matches, cup finals, snooker finals and the Grand National are available to all nation wide. They are not on subscription or available only to the few. We should be taking a terrible step in the wrong direction if we made those sporting events available only on subscription channels so that they were not available universally.

I strongly welcome more channels, but they should be subject to regulation to guarantee more choice than we risk having under this proposal. It is ironic that the title of the White Paper is:

"Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality.'

If the Government are honest with themsleves, they will accept that the competition is phoney, the choice will increasingly be choice for a few—it will be restricted—and quality will deteriorate.

The Home Secretary believes that the new system will be like browsing through a good book shop. We shall refer to that phrase again and again as the new system evolves, but I fear that it will be far less like browsing through a good book shop and more like browsing through a tatty newsagent's.

8.4 pm

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Anyone reading this debate in five years' time is likely to be struck by the small amount of attention that has been devoted to cable. I am glad that the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) did something to put that right, and I am sorry to see that he is not in the Chamber at the moment.

I declare an interest as I am the chairman of a cable television company which has a franchise. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister of State replies he will refer to cable; in particular I hope that he will say that those parts of the White Paper which deal with cable are particularly green.

I believe that there should be two changes in the White Paper. First, it is odd that there should be a proposal for a levy for cable and microwave, or MVDS as it is called. Cable does not use a scarce resource and it is not making a profit. It is not a monopoly. The more sensible approach for the Government would be to wait and see whether it makes the super profits which might justify a levy.

I surmise that the reason for the proposal is that the Government are suffering from a misconception about what the operators of those technology-neutral franchises will do. Cable operators want to construct cable. They regard microwave as an adjunct which can be useful in less populated areas. The same misconception may account for the reference in the White Paper to the separation of the functions of delivery and retailing.

If separation is put into force, it will damage the success of the cable television industry. I favour cable because it can do anything that any other system can do, do more and do it as well, if not better. It can provide a virtually unlimited number of entertainment channels and the interactive services to which the hon. Member for St. Helens, South referred, and competitive telecommunications, which are very important for Britain's technological and industrial future. It can also provide local programming to which the Government used, a few years ago at any rate, to attach a great deal of importance.

Cable can do all those things at an economic cost that is competitive with other systems. It also does away with aerials, "squarials", dishes and any other impedimenta that we may otherwise see on our roofs in great abundance. The White Paper states that delivery and retailing must be separated and that the same company may not conduct both functions. What is more, the White Paper appears to contemplate that there will be several retailers.

That proposal appears to have been put forward for fear of a monopoly. I believe that the cable television industry is not a monopoly. It is competing with BBC and ITV. It will be competing with the fifth channel and the video recorder. Anyone can hire a tape for a night for £1 or less, and that is certainly competition for cable. There is also competition from satellite television.

So it is entirely unrealistic to refer to cable as a monopoly. I wonder whether hon. Members have any idea of the cost of constructing a cable system. We know the estimated cost of constructing the cable system in Birmingham for which a franchise was awarded recently. For 450,000 homes, the cost is estimated to be £160 million. Companies will not apply for cable franchises or the new technology-neutral franchises unless they are

fairly confident of getting a fair return on their investment. They will not be confident unless they have a sufficient degree of control over the marketing and retailing process.

Suppose that, when our railways were being built 150 years ago, the Government had said, "Gentlemen, you may lay the tracks and build railway stations, but you cannot run any trains or sell any tickets." Would that have been an attractive or sensible proposition to put before people who wanted to build railways and thus carry Britain forward into the new industrial age? There is an analogy to be drawn between that and the White Paper's proposals. The Government are asking potential applicants for technology-neutral franchises to buy a pig in a poke, and they thus risk losing the technological and industrial advantages that they sought a few years ago.

Separation between the service providers and retailers of the kind contemplated was tried by the cable industry in recent years in respect of three franchises obtained by British Telecom. In the two cases in which British Telecom was able to move away from separation and merge the delivery and retailing functions, it did so very quickly, because it was found that separation did not work. In France, those systems that have separation achieve a penetration of 6 per cent. of homes passed, whereas those that merge the two functions have a penetration of about 15 per cent.—more than double. That confirms the argument I make. The White Paper has gone astray because it assumes that operators will go heavily for microwave transmission and not cable. Microwave is much less expensive to build, so the disincentive effect of compulsory separation is less onerous.

We must also consider matters from the customer's point of view, as well as from that of the potential operator. The viewer will be offered about 32 channels, with several retailers going to knock on potential customers' doors. As I read the proposal, it is possible that a customer will have a retailer knocking on his door on Monday, offering a sports channel; on Tuesday, offering an arts channel; on Wednesday, offering a pop music channel—and so on. That cannot be good for customers, and certainly not for the marketing and retailing of the product.

I hope that my hon. Friend will say something about the management of the marketing and retailing function. How will it be seen from the customer's point of view? How many bills will the viewer receive every month—particularly if he subscribes to a series of channels or channel packages? How will the customer make complaints about the service he receives? Will he address the retailer, who provides the programming, when the person who must put right any faults is the deliverer—yet there is no contractual link between the deliverer and the customer that I can see. Who will provide local channels? Where they are provided by cable, it is done by cross-subsidy, because the operator realises that local channels do not make a profit.

I hope that the Government will re-examine the problems I have explained, and especially the question of separation. It is essential that the system gives confidence to those who will be expected to invest large sums of money. The consumer, for whose benefit the White Paper was presumably prepared, requires a coherent, convenient and simple system of retailing. I hope that the Government will make the changes necessary to give cable an opportunity to achieve success.

8.13 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Television in Britain has developed much more slowly than in many other countries. We know from experience that the result is acknowledged superiority in transmission quality and production standards. Can that record be maintained and improved in the coming era of television? It is acknowledged by the Government, albeit reluctantly, that, left entirely to the mercy of the free market, quality and standards will suffer.

Television's basic public service obligation should remain a prominent and integral part of the new television environment. That was the view of the Select Committee on Home Affairs of which I was a member, together with my hon. and ornamental Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). The White Paper seeks to remove or dilute public service obligations in respect of all but the BBC, drastically reducing quality and standards in order to open the door to profiteers and mind-manipulators. That is the wrong way, and the White Paper is flawed on that ground alone.

As to the introduction of new services and technology, if the public want satellite television, I have no objection. I might even avail myself of it eventually, when its quality and standards are better. However, that option should not be at the expense of viewers who prefer a broader choice of programmes than will be available if the White Paper is translated as an Act of Parliament. It makes much of the increased choice envisaged in the new environment, but we know from experience of other countries, where the choice of the number of buttons to press often greatly exceeds our own, that the variation of programmes across 20 channels is seldom as wide ranging as that available from our four channels. Choice is not about the number of channels but about the variety of programmes available. Without sensible regulation, the free market will be compelled to go for viewing numbers to accommodate advertisers. It is a sad fact of life that the viewing figures for "Panorama" of about 3·7 million will never compete with the 10·5 million for "The Price is Right".

If there are to be new services—to which I have no objection—while preserving the best of what we already have, we must find a way of ensuring that the new does not damage the old. That can be achieved, but the White Paper does not offer the solution. It is neither necessary nor desirable that all services should carry full public service obligations. There is scope for some specialist channels covering interests such as movies, sport and perhaps even full coverage of the House in session—which might remove the objections that some right hon. and hon. Members have to the current proposals. Such specialist channels could be financed by subscription, advertising, or by other means.

I agree that the BBC's principal source of finance should be, at least in the medium term, the licence fee. I agree with Professor Peacock that the White Paper envisages too early a move away from that fee, but I part company with him, and with the White Paper, over the suggested alternative. If the BBC had to rely entirely or mostly on subscriptions, that would be disastrous, and would inevitably lead to reduced standards in competing for audiences. And if the BBC had to continue carrying full public service obligations, as I believe it should, it would be placed in an impossible situation.

[Mr. David Clelland]

Despite the fact that the licence fee is low, it is unpopular. Certainly it is a burden on many pensioners and on the low paid. Nevertheless, subscription would be worse, as it could certainly amount to much more than the present annual licence fee of £62. A better method must be found in the long term. Meanwhile, perhaps a levy can be imposed on all the new television companies established under the new system, and instead of that money being paid to the Exchequer, it could be given to companies carrying statutory public service obligations. That would provide some additional finance for BBC1 and BBC2 and some subsidy for ITV. If the 20 or more commercial channels are as successful as they expect to be, such an arrangement could facilitate a reduction in the licence fee or even its eventual abolition. That would also offset the cost of the new systems to the consumer, so everyone could benefit. That might mean, ironically perhaps, that the new 20-plus channel environment would help to protect our public service broadcasting and the high standards associated with it.

While the White Paper acknowledges the importance of continuing the regional basis of ITV 1 or Channel 3, there is no stipulation that the contractors should be regionally based. That leaves the door open for carpetbaggers whose only interest is profit—with no obligation to regional programming and no real connection with or commitment to the regions concerned—and I hope that the Minister will address that glaring anomaly when he replies. There is also no definition in the White Paper of what a region actually is.

I am concerned about the content and quality of programming on ITV. The White Paper lays much emphasis on market forces and on the consumer influencing diversity and quality, but how will that be measured? If it is to be measured purely by viewer numbers or by product sales as a result of advertising, what will be the effect on religious, drama and children's programming under a lighter-touch regime?

I am also anxious about the control of television and the way in which standards and impartiality can be protected. The Home Secretary said that the Government would legislate to prevent the concentration of ownership —although it was difficult to determine from what he said whether Mr. Rupert Murdoch is in conflict with the principles set out in paragraph 6.48 of the White Paper. I believe that the Broadcasting Standards Council should be abolished and Lord Rees-Mogg sent off to do missionary work in the offices of News International, where his particular talents would no doubt be appreciated. It should be the duty and responsibility of the BBC board and the Independent Television Commission to monitor and regulate standards, and to ensure quality and political impartiality on television. Given the present constitution of the BBC and IBA, however, it is, to say the least, unlikely that they could match up to the task.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) suggested a system of election for the boards. While I applaud the principle of his suggestion, I remain unconvinced of the practicalities. I am also unconvinced that a satisfactory outcome would be guaranteed, given the power of the press to influence voting and to blacken character.

What we must do, however, is take the power of patronage currently with, and abused by, the Government off the scene altogether. I am not of the school that says that when we have the power we should do as the Tories now do and, having sacked all their appointments, replace them with ours. To do that would be to show ourselves as corrupt as they are. If the broadcasting media are to be as impartial as possible, the first thing to do is to remove from the Government the power to pick and choose board members.

I propose, perhaps as a stepping stone to what my right hon. Friend wants in the long term, that the board should be made up of people nominated by identifiable groups within society—business, trade unions, consumers, political parties and so forth. If the resulting BBC and ITC boards were then to elect their own chairpersons, it would be a great improvement on the current system, providing boards representative—to some degree at least—of society as a whole, as well as ensuring at least a degree more impartiality than the existing system can guarantee or, indeed, deliver.

8.23 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My sparring partner, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), said recently in *The House Magazine:*

"British TV ain't broke—so why fix it?"

In saying that, he managed, as many have, to miss the entire point of the debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) said earlier, to do nothing is not an option. The Astra satellite is flying, Sky Television is with us, British Satellite Broadcasting is coming and transfrontier broadcasting is with us now. The four-channel cartel is over, and we need a new framework for new circumstances.

It saddens me that so many see those new circumstances as a threat. I see them as a tremendous opportunity for programme makers—as a programme maker myself—and for specialist channels showing education, religion, children's programmes, sport and films. The faint-hearted say that there is not the revenue to support all that—that we have an audience of only 50 million people—but we are looking at a potential audience for tomorrow's television companies of more than 500 million people throughout Europe. That is the audience that we should pitch at.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State has done a great deal of work in seeking to secure a European transfrontier broadcasting convention. He will, I hope, have noticed that at last week's parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe—of which I happen to be a member—a unanimous desire was expressed and a unanimous decision made, across parties and nationalities, that such a convention should be put in place. We need that convention now: we must not let the Italians, the French or the Luxembourgeois delay it any longer by reopening old arguments. The Minister should tell his deputies to get on with it.

I welcome the White Paper as a formidable piece of work. I believe, and am delighted, that it reflects much of the unanimous report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs, and much of the sterling work done by Professor Sir Alan Peacock. I particularly welcome the commitment to public service broadcasting which I believe the White Paper contains.

In the short time available, I should like to raise a few relatively minor matters that have not yet been touched

on. First, there is the subject of programme listings. The Government have said that they must pay attention to domestic copyright law and to international copyright obligations, and behind that smokescreen hides the BBC-ITV duopoly of programme listing. We have imposed on cable a "must carry" clause. Cable must carry ITV 1, ITV 2, BBC 1 and BBC 2, but it is not allowed in its own programme magazine to tell its potential viewers what they can watch. In December, the European Commission described that as an abuse of article 88 of the treaty of Rome. It is time that we opened the doors and let some fresh air into the dusty world of *Radio Times* and *TV Times*.

I hope that the BBC will be allowed to collect its own licence fee, and that the Government will address very seriously the possibility of failure to pay the fee becoming a civil debt and not a criminal offence. I do not believe that a magistrates court in the country will not heave a sigh of relief if that happens.

I believe that the franchise auction has been widely misunderstood and deliberately misrepresented. It is clear that, before any company is allowed into the auction rooms, it will have to make a commitment to regional programmes, high-quality news and current affairs programmes, and news coverage in the main viewing periods. There is an omission: local news is not mentioned specifically in the White Paper, and I hope that that will be rectified.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) said that in Yorkshire, as in all the regions, very few independent companies were making programmes. The reason is the historic agreements between the union to which I belong, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, and management. Those in-house agreements have kept the independent companies out, but happily the position is now changing, and I believe that those companies can thrive.

I should like a strong franchise charter and a free market in shares, but if we are wedded to the franchise auction I hope that we shall give the authority the right to refuse the highest bidder if—as Sir Alan Peacock suggested today—it is prepared to show public cause why it is doing so. I hope that my right hon. Friend will write that into the Bill. If he does so, he may save us much late-at-night grief next year.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) referred to the separation between carrier and retailer in cable television. It looks as though we are about to impose on cable television the cumbersome machinery of licence per service. It is like saying that Sainsbury's can build shops but that it cannot sell own-brand groceries in them. That does not make sense, and I gravely fear that it will deter investment.

The Government say that they will consider the ownership of local delivery operators and they are considering allowing non-EEC companies to invest. That finance is needed now. United States investors are queuing up. Please let them in. I hope that my right hon. Friend will reconsider what appears in the White Paper to be a decision not to allow MVDS to be used by cable companies to pull through cable.

The most important aspect of the White Paper—in a sense, it is an aspect by omission—concerns what the Select Committee saw as possibilities for cable systems to carry voice telephony, and for British Telecom and Mercury to carry programmes. It also called for the introduction of closed user groups to allow for data services in broadcast television. The White Paper said:

> "The Government will examine telecommunications matters, including the use of optical fibre as a means of transmission of entertainment as well as telephony and data . . . at the time of the review of the telecommunications duopoly policy."

That, as we all know, is in November 1990. The White Paper continued:

> "The Government proposes to put in place a contingent provision which would permit services to be offered without prejudice to decisions of the review."

That reflects the difficulty of having two cooks—the Home Office and the Department of Trade and Industry—in the same kitchen. The Select Committee said:

> "It is vital that industry in the United Kingdom is well placed to take advantage of the development of digital television as it occurs."

The development of digital television transmission will be the most important factor in the development of communications in the 21st century. To prevent British Telecom from carrying entertainment, to prevent cable from carrying voice or to prevent the BBC from carrying closed user data is absolutely ridiculous. We are moving into a no-turnstile world. From the moment that we have digital television transmission, television entertainment and telephony and data will speak the same language. When that happens, the potential for home education, home medicine, home shopping, home entertainment and other inter-active services will be tremendous.

The White Paper has created a framework that is all right for terrestrial broadcasting. It meets some of the needs for transfrontier satellite entertainment and news. However, the White Paper falls short of creating a framework for total communications systems in the 21st century. I urge the Government to reconsider their decision to introduce a television authority and instead to introduce a total telecommunications authority that would embrace every sector. If we had that, I believe that we could beat the world.

8.32 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I reassure the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) that those who have expressed reservations about the contents of the White Paper have not done so because they are afraid of the changes in broadcasting but because they are concerned about the framework within which those changes will take place. Many views have been expressed in this House and in the other place and by many organisations who are about to submit a response to the White Paper, or who have already done so, about that framework.

Centralisation, control and the recognition of the needs of minority groups are key aspects that we must address if we are to ensure that broadcasting takes account of the needs of society. A number of hon. Members have already referred to centralisation. There is genuine concern about the definition of a region. Many Scottish Members are offended when Scotland is referred to as a region. Scotland is a nation. However, it contains regional variations, stretching from the Shetlands in the far north to the Borders in the south. It would be wrong to assume that the interests of all communities in Scotland are exactly the same.

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

Scotland is served by three ITV companies—Grampian, Scottish and Border. They reflect regional interests. There is deep concern that we may lose the opportunity to have a genuinely home-based industry in Scotland that would not just serve specialist needs and industries but would ensure that Scotland is outward looking. We want to be able to produce our own material that can be sold abroad and that can therefore become a dollar earner. It is interesting to note that Scottish Television's briefing refers to the fact that it has moved from almost total dependence on advertising revenue to obtaining income from the sale of programmes—£15 million in 1989 compared with £2 million in 1986. The money earned by our television companies can help to generate the income that is necessary to ensure that we meet regional needs. Scotland wants to speak to the rest of Britain, Europe and the world and not to be inward looking. We want to maintain our home-based industry.

I was disappointed when the Home Secretary referred only vaguely to the requirement to produce programmes within the regions. Channel 4 has 10 per cent. of Scottish viewers, but it gives us only 2 per cent. of the production. We are worried that that trend may continue because of the White Paper's proposals. There are many television production jobs in Scotland, but they are under threat. That applies, too, to production centres in Birmingham, Norwich, Manchester and elsewhere. If production centres are abolished, job opportunities will be lost. The talented men and women who work in production may find other opportunities in London or elsewhere. However, many of the people who are involved in network production at regional centres are committed to living and working there. They wish to stay in the regions. We do not want local skills to be lost. The ability to produce programmes locally means that Scottish actors are employed. That is important for repertory theatres. Local productions also employ musicians, which is important. It would be very sad if, at best, Scotland retained only one independent company and if, at worst, all control were to be removed from Scotland. I hope that the Home Office will respond positively to what I have said.

That leads me to one of the defined minority interests—the Gaelic language. I do not speak Gaelic but I regard it as part of my Scottish heritage. I do not want the language to die. The White Paper makes scant reference to the Gaelic language. In paragraph 6.37 the Government claim to recognise the importance of broadcasts in the Gaelic language and the importance of the Gaelic culture and its future development. However, all that the White Paper does is to offer the prospect of a new local franchise through cable or MVDS. It admits in paragraph 5.9 that within each area covered a substantial majority of households will be unable to receive the signal. In those areas where the Gaelic language is thriving—the Highlands and Islands—we need desperately to ensure that people do not have to rely on cable or MVDS. The equipment required to receive the services would cost much more than the terrestrial channels that are referred to in paragraph 5.13. There is a great deal of contradiction in the Government's commitment to the Gaelic population. The Scottish National party looks with envy on S4C in Wales and at what that has achieved for the Welsh language. If we had even a fraction of the money that is allocated to that channel, we could lay a sound foundation for our language and culture in Scotland.

Perhaps I could point the Minister to an article in *Scotland on Sunday* on 22 January. It deals with the problems of satellite television which has been suggested as a possible franchise area for the Gaelic language. The Sky television dishes of 60 cm in diameter are offered for sale at about £199 and will be suitable in Scotland as far north as Glasgow. Beyond that range a 75 cm dish would be needed and would cost £260. In Orkney and Shetland the dish required would probably cost about £350. I hope that we will have some discussion about how the Government see the Gaelic language being served in areas where it is live and vibrant.

At a recent meeting, the Scottish Association for the Deaf passed a unanimous resolution calling on the Government to introduce a clause to a broadcasting Bill

"to make it mandatory and enforceable to provide services for Scottish viewers who are deaf or hard of hearing, providing them with equal opportunity of access to television on all Channels, whether cable, satellite or terrestrial."

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) dealt with the issue of the deaf. I hope that we will get a commitment from the Government, because if the highest bidder and the profit motive are to define our broadcasting services, minority interests, such as those of the deaf, may well be left out because it is costly to provide subtitles and sign language. Like many people, I should be upset if cost denied the deaf access to broadcasts.

What is meant by night hours? The White Paper seems to suggest the separation of night hours and a separate franchise. That means that we would lose the control or availability of minority programmes that can be recorded and used for education purposes, especially in our schools. Scottish Television is forward-looking and has included programmes on Scottish books, poetry, paintings, traditional music, Gaelic, minority sports and other subjects. Those programmes are used effectively by our schools. I hope that we will see keen recognition by the Government before the production of a Bill of the issue of universality of access and assurances that production will not be centralised and that full account will be taken of all minority interests in the United Kingdom. Those are vital matters.

8.42 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Listening to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), I had a nasty turn because I found myself nodding at some of the things that he said. I am a little unhappy to see him in his place now as he may give me another nasty turn by nodding at some of the things that I say.

I am a relatively new Member, having been here just six years. During that time I have voted for most if not all of the Government's major legislation—for some with enthusiasm and for some with a twinge of doubt. But I feel neither doubt nor enthusiasm in relation to the White Paper. I cannot support it. It is usually thought that anyone who is critical of the Government's views on the BBC must be some sort of stooge of the comfortable duopoly. I do not suffer from that problem. If one judges the BBC by the volume of its own self-congratulation there is obviously something wrong with the organisation.

Clearly, much mediocrity masquerading as quality is put out by the BBC, so I do not start from the premise that everything is fine as it is.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary talked about the amount of viewing in Britain and I shall put that in perspective. We are talking about average viewing of 22 hours per week. In the case of children, the average may be higher—perhaps five hours per day. That means that children spend about as much time watching television as they spend in the classroom. We are not dealing with purely mechanistic factors, such as the raising or lowering of the tax rate or the management of water resources, but with something far more important—the minds of the population. What we do in this debate will have a significant impact in one way or another on the way in which people think, and especially on education.

I begin from the premise that there will be a decline in the standards of broadcasting almost—and this is important—irrespective of what the Government do. That is an important assumption on my part and it will not be shared by many hon. Members. Nevertheless, it is realistic and stems from a combination of "technological progress" and commercial imperatives. If we put those two together with all the bland and rather tinny assumptions in the White Paper we shall get an accelerated decline of television.

Important implications flow from that. The White Paper shows a total lack of social imagination, of what it means to be faced in one of our inner cities with a combination of low education provision and expectations and bad to mediocre teachers. On top of that, we propose to give people low expectations in broadcasting. Children who spend five hours a day in school with low expectations from teachers will go home to another five hours of low expectations from television. I hope that those expectations will not be lowered, but evidence from the Government suggests otherwise.

What sort of incentive is that for people trapped in cultural poverty to climb out of it? I see some Opposition Members nodding. People used to climb out of cultural poverty by way of local libraries but, sadly, those facilities no longer exist or are unused. The White Paper runs the risk of hastening the inevitable. Because of a whole series of circumstances too complicated to discuss in 10 minutes, decline is inevitable. I say that for technological and commercial reasons. That is sad. It will be a domino effect. Satellite broadcasting will put pressure on ITV and, through the rating system, that will put pressure on the BBC. The decline may be slow but it will come. There will be a downward spiral in standards. The pace may be sedate or almost imperceptible, but standards will go down.

If we start from that realistic premise, certain conclusions follow. If we have such a decline in standards —I am willing to bet that we shall—we must think radically. The White Paper pretends to be radical, but in fact it is conventional. It thinks conventionally about market forces, it is simple-minded and goes with the air of the time. It is not really thinking at all. One cannot compare market forces in the car industry and in shipbuilding, which we all favour—God knows we make so many speeches about it that I bore myself silly with them—with market forces in broadcasting. We cannot make a simple-minded transfer from industrial considerations to broadcasting. We cannot have an indiscriminate application of the idea.

There is a great danger in this country that when we get an idea we go on and on with it. We did that with egalitarianism and caused the damage that we now all know about. Now we have a new idea called market forces, and like children with a pot of paint we daub it all over the damned place. If we do that in broadcasting or in education, we shall cause infinite damage to the people least well placed to support it.

If anyone feels tempted, as I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary may be, to think that this is an elitist or patronising approach, he should bear in mind that real elitism is a good thing. The worst sort of elitism and the most patronising attitude is taken by those who are well educated and well placed in society, but who feel that they can swill cultural bilgewater through the homes of those less educated than they are, which will prevent those people from making their way up the social ladder. I have no time for that form of elitism, which seems to dominate the thinking, or non-thinking, behind this White Paper.

It is not good enough to stand here and say that things will get worse and that there is nothing that we can do about it. We need radical thinking, so in the few minutes that I have left I will set out what I would so. The Government should think about this. Unfortunately, they will not, but I wish that they would.

We should think about the future role of the BBC. The answer to this difficult problem is to say to the BBC, "Times are changing, the whole thing is going to wind down and you will have to wind down with it almost irrespective of what we do, so we must do everything possible not just to preserve but to improve your public service broadcasting." In the real world, that means stopping competition for audiences. The BBC should give up its pop function. There is no reason why old ladies and gentlemen should pay through the licence fee for pop on television. That pop will be provided adequately by the commercial sector—Sky and the rest—where there will be oodles of it. The BBC should not retreat, but retrench and concentrate on public service broadcasting, raising its standards and going for the biggest market that it can get, but not through the ratings game.

Such a policy would give people real choice because they would be able to choose between old-fashioned British quality at its best—although much improved by these means—or the satellite stuff, which we cannot stop unless we import some of the old disused Soviet jammers, which I do not recommend. We cannot stop it coming down from the sky. The heavens will open, and the drivel will pour forth. Mr. Murdoch has told us that his news programmes will be pitched at the level of a 10-year-old Martian. That is where we shall start. If people want to watch that, they will be able to do so. There will also be choice through the commercial terrestrial sector.

I am suggesting that quality be included in this choice, quality for ordinary people—the sort of people who, 30 or 50 years ago, had the chance to go a to grammar school, but who now do not have that chance.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Yes, they do.

Mr. Walden: There are only 130 or so grammar schools left. Fifty years ago, people had the chance to climb out of the Welsh valleys because there were libraries there, many of which have now been sold off. Children in such areas now spend five hours a day watching television.

[Mr. Walden]

I could say a great deal more, but I will finish on one important point. After all the struggles to improve our economic and material welfare, in 10 years' time people may look back and say that while the standard of living has improved the cultural level is lower. I do not care if that sounds pompous. I see hon. Members nodding. They know what I mean. There may be a sort of "Clockwork Orange" society, which will have been brought about unnecessarily by the Government. It would be a dismal comment on a liberal Home Secretary to be seen in 10 years' time as the man who introduced this tawdry debasement of our broadcasting system, with all the impact that it may have on social values of every kind.

8.53 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I have waited all day, and perhaps for the past three years, to hear a speech like that given by the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden). It should be both applauded and burned in gold letters on the Government Front Bench. We are faced with a tawdry White Paper reflecting a seriously dangerous situation, and the hon. Member has said what many of us have been feeling for a long time but have often had to couch in a partisan fashion. He has managed to broaden it out by removing himself from a politically partisan attitude.

I prepared the Labour party evidence given to the Peacock committee, so I have lived with the Peacock report, and all the controversy and discussions after its publication, for the past three years. Sometimes, as we ventured on to these arguments, we were seen as attacking the policy, merely because it was "capitalist", but the truth is that the problem is a great deal more universal. Major human problems are involved and this tawdry White Paper shows that we have failed to understand, to take on board and to learn from one of the most important advances in the expanding of the human experience.

It is rather as if somebody had invented writing and then said, "How can we sell off the letter A?", or somebody had invented the alphabet and said, "How can we make money out of it?" The purpose of the White Paper concerns the messenger rather than the message. What techniques shall we use? Is it to be cable or satellite? What is the profit direction? It is almost as if we sat down and asked ourselves how we can produce a form of television in which Murdoch and Murdochism can succeed. Partly, it is because the Tory party detests and even fears public service broadcasting as it detests, distrusts and fears the public sector generally. That is the basis of its attitude.

These issues are too important for narrow market concepts. The Government had a glorious chance with the White Paper, and they have blown it. They have failed to understand what we are dealing with. They have ushered in the crippling exigencies of the market economy as if this is the solution to the techniques that we have been handed for expanding human experiences, for communicating with one another and for teaching. We never thought when we started schools that they would be narrowed and crippled or that facilities would always have to be paid for.

The problem with subscription is not merely the payment aspect. The Government have got the payment aspect wrong. Ironically, subscription arose because Government supporters wanted free television and so suggested getting rid of the licence. I agree that we should get rid of the licence. Television, like the alphabet and writing, should be free. It should be paid for out of national resources. Every time I say this I am accused of seeking to put television under the control of Government by allowing the money for it to come out of taxation, but that is not so. Education is free in that sense, but it is paid for from national resources.

Ironically, those who have said that we should have free television, by which they have meant advertising revenue supporting television, are now pushing subscription. I was looking at some of the figures for subscription. We are told that specialist services such as children's programmes, sports, film coverage and minority languages, could be privatised for no more than between £10 and £20 a month. But that is between double and four times the present licence fee. So the irony is that subscription will mean that television will be even dearer. The hon. Member for Buckingham understands better than most hon. Members that that is not the problem. Thank heavens he spoke, because he salved the soul of the Conservative party.

The problem with subscription television is that we cannot through that expand people's understanding and experience. If a television company had proposed 10 years ago subscription broadcasting for a programme showing beetles on the water, insects in British grasses or bats in caves, no one would have subscribed to see such a programme. But now David Attenborough and David Bellamy have created mass audiences for nature programmes. The point is that as soon as we remove the possibility of people viewing something accidentally or merely on a whim, we compress people; we shove kids into a narrow cell and say, "You will stay there." It is only when there is straightforward universality of access that viewing such programmes can be triggered.

For none of us knows how young people's ideas are triggered. It is the same as charging an entrance fee to museums and art galleries. I remember Lord Eccles—Lord Shekels as Lord Crawford used to call him—complaining that I would be happy for people simply to go into art galleries to get out of the rain. "Too bloody true," I said, "I cannot think of any better place for people to shelter." As soon as there are charges, only those who are already educated towards it and who understand art go into galleries, and the people who have not been introduced to art are not touched by it accidentally. Therefore, we are compressing human experience with the very tool that could enlarge and expand that experience.

Peacock understood that. I love Alan Peacock dearly, but I have to say that although he recognised that his proposals would have that effect he still went ahead with his report. He thought that because we could not control satellites we had to lie back, close our eyes and think of England. He made clear what he expected to be missing from the generality of television programmes under his committee's proposals. He expected that certain things would not happen unless there were special precautions. The committee suggested that the omissions would be covered by four key words—knowledge, culture, criticism and experiment. Therefore, the committee had to create a public patronage sector. One reason why Peacock objects to the Government White Paper is that this minority ghetto patronage is missing. The Peacock committee said:

> "(i) There should be news, current affairs, documentaries, programmes about science, nature and other parts of the world, as well as avowedly educational

programmes, all of which require active and not passive attention and which may also contribute to responsible citizenship.

(ii) There should be high quality programmes on the Arts (music, drama, literature etc.) covering not only performance but also presentation of and comment on the process of artistic creation.

(iii) There should be critical and controversial programmes, covering everything from the appraisal of commercial products to politics ideology, philosophy and religion."

But all those are now missing from this White Paper. Hon. Members may wonder what is left of good broadcasting when all that goes. It is only the generality of television that the White Paper will produce.

Who produced the White Paper? It has been produced by civil servants and Ministers, all of whom have had the opportunity of the highest education. The hon. Member for Buckingham was right when he said that this was another kind of patronising. They have got their little niche. They will create a minority ghetto for themselves but the universality of the rest of mankind will not be touched by it. By definition, subscription broadcasting will compress the possibility of expanding human consciousness and experience. That is why the White Paper is nasty, reactionary and tawdry; that is why it should be withdrawn.

The hon. Member for Buckingham used the word "culture". It is a hell of a long time since I have heard that word from the Conservative Benches. Every time Goering heard the word "culture" he reached for his revolver. The same is true of the Government Front Bench. We know what the hon. Gentleman meant by culture; it is not only high culture but general civilisation. That is what we should be trying to achieve, but we are not. We are discussing profit, competition, money making and methods of delivery. There is not a word about what is actually to be shown on television.

It is not true that it is only a small group who want so-called culture. All the figures show the opposite. If we examine the viewing figures for light entertainment, light drama, films, sport, dramatic art, information, news, children's and miscellaneous programmes, we find that all classes, high and low alike, look at serious programmes and at light programmes. Viewing is not based on class concepts, but it will be if we introduce subscription television. We do not need to read a crystal ball therefore; we can read the book.

Let us consider what has happened in other countries. I shall cite as an example what has happened to Italian television—which I know well—since deregulation. If one compares the RAI, the public service station, with the new fifth channel, Canale 5, one sees that 84 per cent. of the fifth channel's programming is light entertainment, serials and advertisements. Indeed, advertising accounts for 27 per cent. of its broadcasts. The fifth channel is missing in art, religion, education, news, current affairs and documentary programmes, which presents a terrible picture.

We already know what happened in America. Sixty six per cent. of the programmes on ABC consist of advertisements and serials. Again, art, religion, education, plays, films, current affairs and documentaries are missing.

We know what will happen. We have a tawdry document in front of us. I hope that it will get its come-uppance from some other bored souls in the Opposition. It is a prescription not for progress, but for narrow vicious reaction.

9.5 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): What we have just heard from the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) is the frustration of the elitist, who simply cannot bear to think that people will have a choice and that they will be able to make that choice for themselves. Elitists believe that they are so clever that they can make everybody's choices for them. They cannot cope in a modern world. It is not the Government who are deregulating broadcasting or the White Paper that is deregulating television; it is the technology and the choices that will be freely made by the people. Surely the purpose of taking part in this debate—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen had the courtesy to listen, they would understand the argument.

Surely the purpose of taking part in this debate is to understand the fundamentals that we want to preserve in television and to bring forward into the new era. I feel genuine disappointment with the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), because he talked about the problems—I did not disagree with some of what he said—but he did not say a word about what he and his party would do and what he believed were the important matters to bring forward.

There are two stages in the auctioning of franchises. It is important that we go through the quality threshold, but is it seriously suggested—as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did—that the current system of franchise allocation works well? I do not believe it does.

We should look at the successful application which was originally made by Harlech Television and what happened in the outturn. One could hardly say that that was a success for the current system, because Harlech Television's application never transpired. It made promises that it knew it could not fulfill. The same happened with the original London Weekend Television. I believe that London Weekend Television was baled out by Rupert Murdoch. I am not saying that that is a good thing, but the fact is that London Weekend Television could not keep its promises. Then, of course, there was TV-am Limited run by the "famous five". Anybody working in television, as I was at that time, knew that putting presenters in charge of a television station was like putting lunatics in charge of an asylum. They knew that it would not work, and it did not work. The old system must stand condemned for some of the situations it has created. A new system is needed, and I welcome the auctioning of franchises.

The BBC circulated a briefing on the White Paper which is extremely good. One line, which is important, says:

"The BBC will need to adapt within this more competitive environment. But we are also the fixed point in an expanding market."

I agree with that. The solid attacks that were made on the BBC by Rupert Murdoch's newspapers, notably *The Times*, represented a deliberate pre-emptive strike against it. Rupert Murdoch recognised that without the BBC and its standards of quality, Sky would not have to offer anything like the same quality or spend similar sums as the BBC on its programmes.

The BBC is important and we must ensure that it continues to be a high-quality source of programming and, as has been said, the cornerstone of broadcasting. It must, of course, adapt, but it must remain the benchmark of quality. It must widen its source of funding, however,

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

because there will be a genuine difficulty as the licence fee becomes less and less acceptable to people. If there is a broad range of satellite channels, cable and MVDS, people will not want to pay a licence fee for channels that they may not watch often.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The set, not the BBC.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman may agree with my next argument so he should be cautious of heckling. We need a new lease of life for the licence fee, because I believe that it is important to continue it. I urge the Minister to consider what we should do to ensure that quality and diversity are offered by the new multi-market and to ensure that the BBC continues to offer quality programmes.

We should consider a proposal that was originally made by Alan Peacock in his report—we should have an arts council of the air. When the proceeds of the licence fee start to be phased away from the BBC, a substantial proportion of it should be paid to a new body that would act in the same way as the Arts Council. We cannot second guess how good or bad television programmes will be, but that new council would be able to consider the available programmes across the broad range of broadcasting. That council could have a productive role by highlighting the shortage of experimental comedy, certain drama or the type of social programming that we want at peak times. Such programmes could be paid for out of the substantial sums available from the licence fee. That would give us an absolute guarantee of the choice and diversity that is genuinely desired by all hon. Members.

It is easy to lampoon the Broadcasting Standards Council as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did when he discussed the chairman, but I suspect that he would be rather uncomfortable if he sought to lampoon the deputy chairman of that council. Anyone who knows Jocelyn Barrow knows that she is fiercely independent, hardly a poodle of the Government—she is a black educationist who is respected by both sides of the House—and that she is doing a magnificent job to ensure that the BSC is able to make a contribution.

I believe that Jocelyn Barrow recognises, as we all should, that parents think that there is something wrong with some television programmes. Parents know what is needed. When one goes to the cinema the certificate of the film gives a guarantee of the broad content of it. If the film carries a U certificate one knows that it is reasonable and safe for children to see. Why not have a certification system for television? I accept that it should not involve previewing, as that would give far too much power to the BSC and it would be too cumbersome to operate. I believe that the television companies should operate a self-certification system. Therefore, parents and others, need only look at the newspaper to know what sort of programmes will be on and whether they want to watch them. I believe that the system, in common with the system in Canada, should also include a guide to the sort of language used in the programmes. I urge the Minister to consider such a system.

The system could be enforced and policed by the Broadcasting Standards Council, which in addition could consider the watersheds of when programmes should be shown. The BBC 9 o'clock watershed—although it is breached on many occasions—is important and is taken seriously by the BBC. We need watersheds to ensure that programmes with an entirely family content are shown until 7, 8 or perhaps 9 o'clock in the evening so that parents may know that what is on television at certain times is suitable for their children to watch.

The chairman of the BBC said on 24 February last year:

> "I have given the Home Secretary an undertaking that the BBC will take firm steps to eradicate unnecessary and gratuitous violence, sex and bad language."

It is unfortunate that he celebrated almost the anniversary of making that statement with last night's edition of EastEnders, which was peppered with unnecessary and gratuitous bad language. One of the main characters carried a knife and threatened violence—gratuitous violence, one might say—against people, and I am not sure whether I use an unparliamentary expression when I say that the programme ended with an unnecessary and gratuitous gang bang that, in my view, added hardly at all to the story.

It is important to protect people who want family viewing but who at present do not have any idea of what will appear on television. That is not to say that adult programming and various types of wide-ranging programmes should not be shown late at night. But at family viewing times people have a right to be protected and to be given some information about what will appear on their screens.

The White Paper makes sense of the changes that will take place. It will make the future work in a way that Labour Members have not even comprehended, because they have not looked seriously at the problems involved. One cannot pick winners with certainty in this business. It is not clear who the winners will be.

The paranoid fantasies that we have heard have a long tradition. People said that Edison's light would not work and would never be popular and that Stevenson's Rocket would have people suffocating at over 20 mph. Labour Members are saying much the same today about television. Indeed, one need only recall the speeches that they made when ITV and local radio were introduced to realise that they are as wrong now as they were then. I congratulate the Government on the White Paper.

9.17 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It is a privilege for me to wind up the debate on behalf of the Opposition. We have had an exceptionally intelligent debate and I hope that as well as listening the Government will learn from what has been said by hon. Members in all parts of the House.

There has been a great measure of cross-party agreement on subjects such as the future quality of programmes and the need to ensure the preservation of regional programmes, and doubts have been expressed about the system of tendering. My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) referred to the need for better levels of sub-titling throughout television programming. The level of cross-party support is such that it is almost guaranteed that when the Bill comes before the House in the next Session the Government will impose the guillotine on our discussions.

When the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) was advancing the proposition that in the next few years the licence fee would become less acceptable as,

by his thesis, the popularity of satellite viewing grew, I wanted to remind him that the set, not the BBC, was licensed. The BBC gets the licence money, and it would be most surprising if the Government did anything which resulted in their forgoing that money in their coffers.

I repeat our welcome for the chance of a greater real choice of diverse and quality television and radio programmes which advancing technology makes possible, nationally, within the regions and in Scotland and Wales. Used sensibly, change can widen access for citizens, including those in our ethnic communities who now have only a small voice. It can also open eyes and ears to worlds as yet unknown. The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) took us in an exceptionally able way into that important matter. The White Paper, however, will not achieve this.

This issue is simple—will more broadcasting mean better broadcasting which expands the standards set by the BBC and ITV companies, or will it, as many inside and beyond broadcasting fear, lead to financial pressures which will push down quality, limit diversity and lead to the sameness that typifies most of our tabloid press?

There has, at least, been a frankness about the free market future that the Government aim to establish. Mr. Leslie Hill, managing director of Central Television, told me in reply to a complaint about a cut of one third in the number of "Central Lobby" current affairs programmes:

"Programme-making decisions will increasingly be commercially led. I believe this to be the inevitable result of the enormous financial and, ultimately, competitive pressures to be applied to ITV."

There was another dreadful warning from Mr. Andrew Neil, executive chairman of Mr. Murdoch's Sky television and sometime editor of his *Sunday Times*. On 15 January Mr. Neil told *The Observer:*

"The entertainment channel will be like ITV without the public service broadcasting bits."

The bits of which Mr. Neil was so scornful are those that form the foundations of our present broadcasting system. They lay down an obligation to broadcast "information, education and entertainment" and to

"maintain a high general standard"

together with

"a proper balance and wide range in their subject matter."

No wonder that Mr. Murdoch wants nothing to do with them.

Those clear obligations are replaced in the White Paper with a mealy-mouthed

"requirement to show regional programming"

and to show

"high quality news and current affairs"

and, as an afterthought,

"possibly also current affairs in the main viewing periods."

In the White Paper, any specific obligation of public service goes out of the window. That is because the Government simply want to hand over ITV to the men with the deepest pockets who will meet a so-called quality threshold no higher than a pile of £50 notes.

Why do the Government not learn? Do they not remember that a previous Conservative Home Secretary, Lord Whitelaw, recognised when Channel 4 began that, while financial resources without talent cannot provide quality television, neither can talent without financial resources? Lord Whitelaw built upon what was already in place. The present Home Secretary wants to do a demolition job.

It is not just the broadcasters who are apprehensive. What about the viewers and listeners whom the Government claim are at the centre of their broadcasting policy? What has happened to their views and voices in this debate? As Mrs. Jocelyn Hay, chairman of the Voice of the Listener, said in the winter edition of *Airwaves*, the IBA's magazine:

"When the Government wants to involve Sid in its privatisation plans it begins years in advance and embarks upon advertising campaigns costing tens of millions of pounds. It offers financial lures and free telephone calls so that Sid can learn how a shareholding democracy works. But what has it done when planning to change the nature and structure of our broadcasting services?"

She goes on to recall that the Government's contribution has been a Green Paper on radio at £5 a time, the White Paper that we are discussing today at £7·20 and—wait for it—a free 12-page summary of the main proposals of the White Paper, stocks of which, incidentally, were exhausted in less than three weeks. That is how much viewers and listeners have been involved.

Mrs. Hay goes on to make the following points, upon which I hope the Minister of State will comment. She says: "the Green and White Papers are full of references to the Government's desire to serve the consumer, but neither contains any sign of any actual intent to strengthen the position of listeners and viewers. There is no mention, for example, of the new 'light touch' authorities having advisory councils, the one means by which listeners and viewers can currently make a positive input to broadcasting policy. Nor is there any sign that the Government intends to rectify the situation in which broadcasting is the only national service without a statutory consumer body positively charged with supporting the public interest."

The White Paper also threatens the Home Secretary's personal drive to encourage active citizens. As Community Service Volunteers say:

"Every year approximately 10,000 hours of air time are devoted to community programming. 30,000 voluntary or charitable organisations are involved. As many as five million people phone the helplines for information and advice. Three million volunteers are recruited annually. Vital information on issues like health, education and employment opportunities is conveyed to the public."

But the Government plan to destroy that essential public service. On behalf of nine charities, Miss Viv Taylor Gee, the producer of the Thames Television "Help" programme, warns:

"The many educational and community programmes to which large and small charities have access now will have little chance of survival. ITV companies are to be auctioned off to the highest bidder, and the massive explosion of new channels will make it very unlikely that educational and community broadcasting can compete in companies that have to go flat out for high ratings and advertising revenue."

When talking of the rights of viewers and listeners, the White Paper floats the idea of merging the Broadcasting Complaints Commission, which deals with complaints about unfair treatment and the invasion of privacy, with the preposterous Broadcasting Standards Council. The House will remember that Professor Alan Peacock said in *The Times* today that the council

"has no function in a free society."

If that merger takes place, it is important that matters of unfair treatment and privacy should be dealt with separately from complaints about sex, violence and standards of taste and decency. It is important, in the upheaval, that viewers and listeners who feel wronged and whose privacy has been invaded can know that there is an independent body which can handle their complaints properly. The Government might see virtue in encouraging and enabling the present commission to make its work more widely known as these are important rights for viewers and listeners.

[Mr. Robin Corbett]

The community programmes are some of the "bits" that Mr. Neil may be glad to see the back of, but their absence demonstrates that for all the Government's fine words it will be the men with money who decide what we shall see or not see. It reminds me of an ITV programme some years ago called "Never mind the quality, feel the width". With the so-called "positive programme requirements," how is the proposed ITC to apply the Government's threshold? If the intention was serious, bidders would first have to put money on the table conditionally until they had demonstrated exactly in terms of the proposed budget how the quality of programmes and variety would be ensured. If the Government were prudent in selling off this powerful national asset, they would insist that those making bids should have to specify the number of hours that they planned to make and show for the arts, education, religion, drama, documentaries, children's programmess and current affairs and they would be required to identify in the budget how much they proposed to spend on each of those categories. I hope that the Minister and the Government will think about that. Otherwise, the so-called "quality threshold" will be meaningless. Bidders must have money for the assurances given at the time of bidding to be brought into reality. As the Campaign for Quality Television argues, that is the only way in which the ITC can properly assess how franchise promises are to be carried out.

With regard to Channel 4, I hope that the Government have been impressed by the evidence given to the Select Committee by Mr. Michael Grade, who called for an income safety net to guarantee the future and independence of Channel 4. He said:

"The greatest threat would be shareholder pressure, an economic downturn in advertising revenues and an all-out full frontal attack from ITV on our audiences and revenue."

Even this Government agree that Channel 4 has been a big success. Yet in the White Paper they toy with the idea of threatening that very success.

Under direct threat are some of our smaller regional stations, as the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) mentioned. S4C, which provides a Welsh language service, has a doubtful financial base after 1992 although, again, the White Paper says that it is a striking success. As the Campaign for Quality Television warns, that has implications both for independent producers and for the ITV company in Wales. S4C is now funded through a subscription on all 15 ITV companies and its future must be in jeopardy.

It is exactly that sort of cross-subsidy which has expanded the base of our television network. Its ending would threaten small regional stations. When I told the Minister of State that this would put some stations at real risk, he replied in a letter of 1 February:

"It will, of course, be for the Independent Television Commission to draw the regional map and there might, as a result, be fewer or different regions than at present."

The Minister knows that to step aside from an insistence on proper regional television coverage is bound to mean fewer regional companies and fewer separate regions. The Home Secretary looks puzzled. I will explain the reason for that.

Who will bid for a regional television company which, because of its location and population, can make ends meet only through the present subsidy system? Who will buy a franchise which is guaranteed to lose money? Under the White Paper proposals, its only hope to continue in some form—[HON. MEMBERS: "Which one?"] I am not naming stations—is to be swallowed up into larger areas covering larger regions, thus losing much of the regional variety that we now have. That is what the market place will mean to millions of viewers in the regions. There is no way that the BBC can make that up.

Mr. Wilson: I fully appreciate why my hon. Friend is not mentioning names. Will he acknowledge the real fear that we shall be left with one commercial station for the whole of Scotland? Will he further acknowledge that if market forces are left to determine the interests of minorities, such as linguistic groups, there will be no place for Gaelic speakers on television?

Mr. Corbett: I absolutely accept what my hon. Friend has said. I do not want to mention names because it would be unfair to the companies concerned.

The Government's approach throughout the White Paper is careless. Not for them any attempt to build on the basis of success, as would have been sensible for terrestrial broadcasting faced with massive competition from satellites. Not for them a planned advance adding to our present mix. No—they prefer the bulldozer to the bricklayer. What they plan will turn broadcasting inside out for no better reason than that it is a way to make a few quid for the Treasury.

It is not the so-called market value of a franchise which should guide the Government if they have the genuine interests of viewers and listeners at heart. It should be the quality and diversity of the content, and the need to ensure that what happened in the United States of America, and lately in France and Italy, will not be allowed to happen here.

Do the Government want to run an even risk of millions of people having to rely for information on sewer sheets such as *The Sun*? Do they want what Murdoch has done to much of journalism to happen to television? That is the prospect of their proposals. This White Paper is all about the Prime Minister's vendetta against certain broadcasters. From the smash-and-grab raid on BBC Scotland to the clumsy attempt to stop the showing of "Death on the Rock", she is a Prime Minister who brooks no dissent. She has a client press, with one daily exception. There is a huge deaf majority in this place. Now it is the turn of the broadcasters to be brought to heel, though not directly. The idea is to get the men with the money—those who get the knighthoods and the accolades from the Prime Minister—to sort them out. A Government who can dismiss as whitewash the report of the inquiry into "Death on the Rock", written by a former Conservative Cabinet Minister, and who can do so within 40 minutes of its publication and without having read it, are a Government who cannot be trusted to look after the real interests of viewers and listeners.

Perhaps the best comment on what the Government propose comes from the much-lauded Professor Alan Peacock who in *The Times* today said that the main aim of change should be

"ensuring that programmes of high quality which challenge the viewer and foster our national cultures continue to be produced."

He added:

"This hope is expressed in the White Paper but it offers precious little guidance on how this is to be achieved."

That says it all, and it encourages us to ask the House to decline to take note of this destructive White Paper.

9.36 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): What a lot of rubbish the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) talked in his last few sentences, and what a pity it was, because, that apart, I agree with him that this has been a fascinating debate, ranging from culture, through distribution systems, to Gaelic broadcasts. Points have been made by Members on both sides —by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden)—with which I profoundly disagree, but there have also been contributions from both sides that I found fascinating and interesting and with which I had a lot of agreement. I could gladly take two hours to answer this debate, but as I have only 24 minutes I will save the polemics and get straight down to answering some of the many points that have been raised.

First, I can assure the hon. Member for Erdington that the stocks of our leaflet—the small-size version of the White Paper on broadcasting—are not exhausted. They have never been exhausted. We are still sending them out. Indeed, we have sent out several thousand, including those sent to the Voice of the Listener organisation, to which he referred.

I think that we should all like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and all the other members of the Home Affairs Select Committee for the excellent report they produced on the future of broadcasting.

In his concise and excellent speech my hon. Friend raised a number of points, two or three of which I should like to deal with straightaway. I join him in applauding and endorsing the appointment of George Russell as the new chairman of the IBA. We hope that George Russell will continue as the chairman of the ITC. I agree that it is very important that he presides over the transition between the IBA and the ITC. Indeed, the White Paper stresses the importance of a smooth transition to the new regulative structure, and I should like to tell the House that, after discussion with the IBA and the Cable Authority, we envisage——

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): What about Chalfont?

Mr. Renton: I should be delighted to tell the hon. Gentleman about Lord Chalfont. In fact, his name was not raised in this debate, but it was an excellent appointment and the deputy chairman of the IBA has very wide knowledge of broadcasting, apart, of course, from his recommendation of being an ex-Labour Minister.

We envisage, subject to parliamentary approval, that the responsibilities of the IBA and the Cable Authority during the transition period should be merged within the proposed new Independent Television Commission at the earliest opportunity, and that the proposed Radio Authority should take over the responsibilities of the IBA radio division on broadly the same time scale. Such an approach, as the House will appreciate, will give the staff greater certainty about what future options will be open to them and will ensure continued effective regulation of the ITV system, independent radio and cable in the period before the new regulatory regimes come into force.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North that it is our intention, and I am sure it will be the intention of the ITC, that if the quality standards are not observed by the independent television companies, the winners of either the Channel 3 or the Channel 5 franchise, the franchise can, and indeed must, be ended after the issue of appropriate warnings.

I hope that I can have the attention of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North that it is essential for our policies against the concentration of ownership to be in the broadcasting Bill that we will bring before the House. I remind the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that we said clearly in the White Paper that we were laying down principles on which the full set of rules would be based. We invited consultation and comment on how more flesh should be put on those principles as we formulate the clear rules.

Mr. Hattersley: Can we have the clear answer that we were promised to a very simple question? Was the Minister right when he said on television that Mr. Robert Maxwell, the owner of three national papers, would be free to buy Central Television, because the Minister did not regard it as a national set-up?

Mr. Renton: I have the text before me. That is precisely not what I said.

Mr. Hattersley: Yes, it is.

Mr. Renton: No, it is not. I have the text here. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made it absolutely plain earlier and I will repeat this point for the right hon. Gentleman who seems to have difficulty getting it into his head, I am not quite certain why. People should not be too quick to assume that there will be no limit on newspaper interests in regional Channel 3 licences. That is the position.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) said—*[Interruption.]* It is a great pity that Opposition Members are having such problems about this issue. We have said clearly, and this is in the White Paper, that we welcome comments on the forming of the full set of rules.

Mr. Wilson: That is not what the Minister said.

Mr. Renton: That is precisely what I said. I was very pleased that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook gave me a copy of the transcript because it endorses what I said.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside raised particular points about the regional basis of privatised transmission. He will be aware that we recently appointed Price Waterhouse to carry out a study of transmission once it has been privatised. It is clear that the different costs of transmission in different areas of the United Kingdom will be taken into account in the tender price. I shall be visiting Grampian, Border and Scottish Television in the next few weeks and I will listen very carefully to what they have to say about the differential costs for transmission once privatisation has taken place.

Mr. Rees: The independent companies as a group met us and have given us information. They say that unless something is done, transmission will have an effect on the smaller companies. Surely it is not a matter for Price Waterhouse. If the figures are shown to be right, something should be done.

Mr. Renton: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman has not misunderstood what I said. We all accept that Grampian is heavily subsidised in its transmission costs at the moment. That is a well-known fact. Price Waterhouse's terms of reference include looking at the means of effecting privatisation most effectively and the likely effect of that on transmission costs.

I make the point to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside that if transmission costs increase in a non-subsidised situation for one particular regional company, that will be taken into account by the bidders for that franchise. They will know that future transmission costs will be considerably more.

Mr. Buchan: There may be no possibility of any profit in the Highlands of Scotland, and, therefore, the whole of the transmission costs will have to be subsidised by the Government.

Mr. Renton: I do not need the hon. Gentleman to tell me that. I read the submissions, and I know about the position of Grampian Television. That is why I decided to spend time talking personally to Grampian, Scottish Television, and Border Television. I wanted to learn first hand of their concerns.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) was one of the relatively few hon. Members who mentioned the BBC's situation. He made the interesting comment that the BBC will have to redefine its role because of dwindling resources. There is a lot of confidence in the BBC at the moment, and that is emphasised in its submissions to the Government in the response to the White Paper. No doubt the BBC is re-examining its role for the 1990s, when there will be a possibility that, as subscriptions grow, the licence fee after 1991 will increase by less than the rate of inflation. In four or five years' time, the Government of the day will have to consider what must happen to the licence fee, once the BBC's charter comes up for renewal at the end of 1996.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), that ever-young television star, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) asked about a final objective element for the Independent Television Commission in the competitive tendering process. I realise that there is much feeling on that subject, but I cannot do better than remind the House of the words of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who said that the new ITC chairman is looking carefully at the interaction between the two concepts of the quality hurdle and the competitive tender.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) apologised for not being present to hear the winding-up speeches. He and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) raised the question of cable and its relationship with microwave distribution systems, and of the separation of the delivery and retailing functions. We said in the White Paper that we welcome specific comments, and that we will present our proposals by the end of April.

The objective behind the separation of delivery and retailing is to provide scope for competition in local services. We regard that as being an important objective and one from which we shall not be deflected. We are receptive to advice and comments by the end of February on the best way of ensuring competition. That is a particularly green part of the White Paper. We aim to announce our proposals in firmer form by the end of April so that companies interested in bidding for further cable franchises—and there is much interest in them—may have a clearer picture of the ecology into which they will be bidding.

My hon. Friends the Members for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and for Thanet, North spoke of the Council of Europe's draft convention. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North for his kind remarks about the part that I played in that draft convention, and I also thank Home Office officials for the great deal of work that they did in that context. Successful completion of the convention is almost in sight. We hope that it will be concluded at the meeting of Ministers' deputies in Strasbourg at the end of February, and we shall do everything that we can to bring about that outcome.

My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester is particularly anxious about article 16 of the draft convention which, as he well knows, is expressly intended to avoid a situation where a broadcaster sets up outside the borders of a particular country specifically to circumvent that country's normal domestic rules. I understand my hon. Friend's concern that that provision is protectionist and is incompatible with our aim of promoting transfrontier services. As my hon. Friend knows, we argued at length against it, but we recognise that a number of countries attach great importance to it and would not have signed a convention that lacked that safeguard.

We believe that, on balance, the potential damage to British interests posed by that provision is not so serious as to outweigh the clear advantages that we see in securing the convention, which will provide minimal rules of regulation for the world of transfrontier broadcasting that is just about to burst upon us in this country.

Mr. Bermingham *rose*—

Mr. Renton: I shall give way, but this is the last time.

Mr. Bermingham: The Minister will recall that the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and I both raised with him the night hours on BBC2. Will he confirm that BBC1 and BBC2 night hours will remain with the BBC and will not be taken away into private franchise?

Mr. Renton: Of course I will not, and the hon. Gentleman does not expect me to. I have read the BBC submission. Obviously the BBC would like to be certain that it will have both night hours channels, but we have made it clear in the White Paper that we think it appropriate to consider giving others an opportunity to bid for that time.

Every hon. Member who has spoken has talked, rightly, about the need to maintain quality in British broadcasting. I assure the House that few, if any, issues have so exercised all the Ministers considering the White Paper over the past 18 months. That is why we decided to maintain the remit of Channel 4, and why we left the BBC precisely in place as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting. Quality, however, is subjective; it means different things to different people. To one it will mean more "EastEnders" or "Neighbours", to another more snooker, to a third more American football and to a fourth more opera or ballet. Arguably, a reasonable definition would be programmes that are better of their kind—good soap rather than bad soap; "Hamlet" rather than "Titus Andronicus."

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I have said that I will not give way again. I have quite a bit more to say and very little time in which to say it.

We started from the basic premise that the thesis of some Opposition Members as we have heard today—and certainly that of John Mortimer—that quality can be sustained only through a restriction in choice is essentially wrong—*[Interruption.]* I remember what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said when the White Paper was announced.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has already gone through the many detailed quality hurdles in the White Paper. It was said earlier that thresholds had already turned into hurdles and that soon it would be fences. There is no harm in that. In the White Paper we see a reinforcement of quality in carefully chosen areas, not a running away from it.

We could add almost indefinitely to the requirements of the White Paper—specific broadcasting for charities and social action, children's programmes, religious programmes and so on. Let me say to the right hon. Members for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), and to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), that that does not mean that we do not recognise the needs of particular groups in society and share the concerns expressed by them about provision for those with disabilities such as impairment of hearing. We shall consider carefully the comments of the Royal National Institute for the Blind and other societies representing such groups. We recognise, for example, the importance of teletext to those with hearing impairments, and we shall take full account of it as we work up paragraph 6.45 of the White Paper, which says:

"It will provide a regulatory structure designed to facilitate the development of new services."

Our proposals are essentially for an enabling framework that gives viewers and listeners a greater choice and a greater say, and gives broadcasters more freedom to respond to their wishes. New stations, be they radio or television, will add to listener choice. In community radio or local television they will be a dynamic and beneficial force, strengthening community ties and community values.

Jeremiahs such as the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) and for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) say that more must mean worse. My answer is that television will continue to change, be it towards high definition television on wide screens in the home or towards local microwave television. We cannot predict the ways in which it will change, but the public will certainly continue to demand a wide range of programmes—varied, different and good. If a channel does not produce such programmes, it will lose its audience, go out of business and somebody else will come along to fill the gap.

The gloomy messages that we have heard today were heard in 1953 and 1954 during the debate on the Bill that introduced commercial television for the first time, but the last 35 years have shown the gloomy prophecies of 1953 to be wrong. I suspect that the coming years will show that the prophecies of the Jeremiahs of today are wrong, too. The British public have shown an increasing appetite to enlarge their sphere of interest by watching wildlife, travel and American football in addition to "EastEnders", "Bread" and "Neighbours". That may be because they switched on the set to watch one programme and stayed to watch another. The halo of a very popular programme benefits succeeding offerings, but it is worth remembering the words of the Peacock committee:

"Do not think of consumers as having only known and static wants. The competitive market is a discovery mechanism for finding out what the consumer might be enticed to accept and for trying out new and challenging ideas."

That is surely the right approach to the birth of the new channels and of the new opportunities in broadcasting that lie ahead of us.

We shall listen very carefully to the observations that are made to us during the consultation period. We believe that we have got the mix about right in our White Paper. I remind the House of the words at a conference at London Weekend Television on 18 January of John Ranelagh, a member of the founding team that established Channel 4 and who worked with Channel 4 from 1981 to 1987. He said:

"The quality programme makers of the United Kingdom inside and outside the institutions are better placed than anyone else to succeed. The only obstacles to the British broadcasting industry's success are the negative attitude and assumptions of too many of its senior people about the future. They undervalue the viewers they claim to serve, they undervalue themselves and they undervalue their companies."

The Government do not make that undervaluation. The Labour party apparently does.

I found that there were moments at the beginning of the speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook when I was positively agreeing with him, but then it turned into the speech of what I can only call that most difficult of animals, an ambivalent dinosaur. He is unclear about whether more regulation is needed. In the early days he was all against change. There should be more soap, more quiz shows, more game shows. Now he is in a muddle. He does not want to have anything to do with the Broadcasting Standards Council, he does not want anyone to tell him what he is to see, yet he talked of the need for more regulation. He specifically called for high-cost, original drama. He is a dinosaur who has been fed on the briefs of the ITV companies and watered at their table. He harks back to the cosy monopoly of past entrenched interests when he, and not the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), was regularly interviewed. Those days are gone. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby has gone to Sky television. Doubtless he will be followed by many others who sit on the Opposition Front Bench.

Of course we shall listen carefully to what is said. More variety of channels means more variety of good programmes. Ownership should be spread over many companies and many people. At the heart of our philosophy is the clear message that people should be able to choose, for that is their right.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 203, Noes 275.

Division No. 86] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Beckett, Margaret
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Beggs, Roy
Allon, David	Beith, A. J.
Anderson, Donald	Bell, Stuart
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Armstrong, Hilary	Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Bermingham, Gerald
Ashton, Joe	Blair, Tony
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Blunkett, David
Barron, Kevin	Boateng, Paul
Battle, John	Boyes, Roland

Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Nigel Griffiths.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard

Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Renton, Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Michael Fallon.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper, Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality (Cm. 517), and endorses the Government's proposals for the future of broadcasting contained therein.

Inner London Education Authority

10.14 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I beg to move,

That the draft Precept Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Inner London Education Authority) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 27th January, be approved.

Today's debate concerns the financing of ILEA in 1989-90. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is an important debate for London. I do not mean any disrespect to the Minister, but she certainly cannot be heard. I would like to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to ask for quiet before she starts.

Mr. Speaker: Once again I say, order. Will hon. Members who do not wish to stay for this debate kindly leave quietly, especially those who are beyond the Gangway?

Mrs. Rumbold: Today's debate concerns the financing of the Inner London education authority in 1989-90. This order limits the precept which may be made by ILEA for 1989-90 to 78·42p in the pound, which on the latest information would raise £960 million.

The precept maximum set out in the draft order has been arrived at after careful consideration. It is the product of a process which has taken six months. During that process, we have taken full account of the representations put to us by ILEA, both in writing and in person. In a moment I shall outline briefly the process which has led to this draft order. Before I do so, it may be helpful to the House if I say a few words about the wider context.

In April 1990, ILEA's functions will transfer to the inner London boroughs; 1989-90 will therefore be the year in which a new structure for London's education service takes shape. The Government have been determined to play their part to ensure a smooth transfer of responsibilities in the interests of pupils, students, parents and teachers. To this end, we are providing a substantial sum by way of specific grant to the boroughs for preparation work in 1989-90. We have increased the £10 million originally announced to £25 million.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made a separate proposal in relation to the distribution of the capital money order next year in order to assist the inner London boroughs with their education department accommodation costs. As I shall explain, my right hon. Friend has had regard to ILEA's representations about the particular circumstances of 1989-90 in coming to his decisions on the financing of the authority in that year.

Over the past months, I have been struck by the enthusiasm with which the inner London boroughs have tackled the job of preparing for their education responsibilities. All have now made senior appointments to their education departments and carried out programmes of local consultation. Almost all have now published detailed draft development plans. All appear to be on target for publication of the final version of those plans at the end of February. So the foundations have been laid. Of course there is still much to be done. No one is guilty, I hope, of complacency. Some of the boroughs are making faster progress than others, and I believe that that pace of progress will have to accelerate over the coming months. However, so far the work done is encouraging.

The Government believe that the transfer of education to the boroughs is right both for the quality of delivery and value for money in education in inner London. As an example, I shall draw some comparisons of ILEA's unit costs with those of other metropolitan authorities in 1988-89 to illustrate the authority's continued excessive spending. According to figures fom the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the metropolitan authorities are spending on average £1,036 per primary pupil, excluding support service costs. The outer London boroughs are spending £1,141. ILEA is spending £1,510 on the same basis—32 per cent. more than the outer London boroughs and 46 per cent. more than the metropolitan districts. The metropolitan districts are spending £1,664 per secondary pupil, again excluding support service costs. The outer London boroughs are spending £1,787.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Before the Minister leaves this rather tedious list of statistics, will she add one to it? Will she add a statistic for the costs of building, running buildings and salaries and wages in inner London compared to those in outer London and the rest of the country? Will she give us a reasonable normal statistical base for her assertion, rather than this condemnation of the ILEA?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not like the truth revealed by the figures. If he listens carefully to what I am saying he will note that the comparisons I am making are perfectly right and relevant to my argument. I do not think that I need accept any judgment from him about how I present my figures to the House.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Surely the Minister is aware that inner-city costs are always higher for any kind of service—that is the case on the continent, in the United States and in Britain. Does she also agree that, because of housing costs for teachers and the prevailing salaries, we are faced with a crisis in primary education in ILEA? In the Walnut Tree Walk school in my constituency, classes are being sent home on alternate days because, despite advertisements, no teachers have come forward to take the posts. The Minister is simply not addressing this crisis. Will she do something about it?

Mrs. Rumbold: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I intend to quote figures that show that we are making comparisons with metropolitan authorities of similar character. All the development plans that we have seen from individual boroughs address the hon. Gentleman's concern about the recruitment and retention of teachers. I hope that those plans will make a difference to the recruitment of staff when the security and attraction of work in smaller authorities appeals to some teachers.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: No, I must get on.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: Very well.

Mr. Ashby: I find the statistics most interesting. Does my hon. Friend intend to tell us whether the examination results are in keeping with the high cost of education in inner London?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that the examination results from ILEA are, sadly, in no way related to the cost of running that authority. Those results are considerably worse than any other authority in the country.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: No, I will not give way.

The outer London boroughs are spending £1,141; ILEA is spending £1,510 on the same basis—32 per cent. more than the outer boroughs and 46 per cent. more than the metropolitan districts. *[Interruption.]* The metropolitan authorities are spending £1,664 per secondary pupil, again excluding the support service costs. The outer London boroughs are spending——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It appears that the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) is getting extremely excited and shouting abusive remarks at my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who has been behaving himself impeccably. Will you kindly call to order those Members who do not represent inner London constituencies and who are merely being abusive about a matter that many of us take seriously?

Mr. Ashby *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. There is some noise from both sides of the House and I think that it would be better if we had less noise and listened to the Minister.

Mr. Ashby: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was challenged by Opposition Members and it was suggested that I know nothing about inner London education. I should point out that I was a member of ILEA for a number of years, as were a number of my hon. Friends. No one on the Opposition Benches has ever been a member of ILEA. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): That is another lie.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let us call it 15-all and get on with the debate.

Mrs. Rumbold: The outer London boroughs are spending £1,787 on their secondary pupil costs, ILEA spends £2,279, which is 28 per cent. more than the outer London boroughs and 37 per cent. more than the metropolitan districts. Some of them, such as Leeds and Birmingham, have the same features of urban deprivation and high concentrations of ethnic population as ILEA.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister has not yet answered the two separate points made to demonstrate the invalidity of her figures. In London, the costs for the police, health and social services are substantially higher than in other areas, even though the police and the health services are run by Government Departments and the health authorities are appointed by the Government. We have the 10 most deprived authorities in Britain. There is no comparison, and the Minister should not waste the time and intelligence of the House going over an argument that has been proved time and again to be invalid.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman is not obliged to listen to my arguments.

Looking within those figures, the ILEA is spending twice as much per primary pupil on support staff as are other metropolitan authorities, and more than twice as much per secondary pupil. That is a staggering difference. Even transport costs are two and a half times as much. Almost two thirds of the budgets of metropolitan districts' secondary schools goes on teachers, compared with just over a half for ILEA. Other authorities apparently make their top priority having teaching staff in front of children. That does not seem to be the same case with ILEA.

Looking at other areas in the same set of statistics, ILEA spends three times as much on adult education per head of adult population as Leeds, four times as much as Birmingham and five times as much as Liverpool. However splendid this provision is, it need not be so expensive.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): As another former member of the ILEA—like my hon. Friends the Members for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) and for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden)—may I ask the Minister if she has seen the figures which were published in *Hansard* last year showing that ILEA came top on spending and 86th on examination results, yet in a parliamentary answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) it was made clear that Wigan, which has the same sort of problems as ILEA, came 27th in terms of spending and ninth in terms of exam results?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for providing that information.

ILEA's spending per head of population on administration and inspection is 1·9 times that of the outer London boroughs, 2·4 times that of the metropolitan districts and 2·9 times that of the counties. So much for economies of scale.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Can the Minister give me any reason why I should vote for 32 per cent. more spending on education in inner London compared with my constituency, when my area has just the same problems as inner London, and in some cases has problems which are even more difficult?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend makes the point well. There is no earthly reason why he should vote for additional expenditure when the problems in his constituency are similar to, if not the same as, those facing the inner London authorities.

I come to the events leading to the draft order. In July 1988, my right hon. Friend selected ILEA for precept limitation under the Rates Act 1984. He did so because of the authority's continued excessive spending. ILEA's budget for 1988-89 is £1,028 million. That is more than 60 per cent. above its assessed need to spend. It is £43 million more than the £985 million which the precept that my right hon. Friend set for it in that year was intended to raise. I acknowledge that ILEA has instituted a programme of some genuine savings in 1988-89, but that is only a start on what needs to be done.

At the same time as selecting ILEA for precept limitation, my right hon. Friend set an expenditure level

[Mrs. Rumbold]

for the authority in 1989-90 of £940 million. This was, in effect, a cash freeze on the £985 million level implied by the 1988-89 precept, once allowance of £45 million is made for spending on polytechnics and colleges transferring to the PCFC sector.

That £985 million was £30 million more than the spending level he originally set for ILEA in 1988-89. My right hon. Friend believed that the £940 million for 1989-90 represented a fair and reasonable level, given all the circumstances, including the prospective need to provide for smooth transfer of education functions to the inner London boroughs, and ILEA's budgeted spending in 1988-89. He made it clear, however, that he would consider further representations from ILEA as the process continued.

Since October, ILEA has sought redetermination of the expenditure level. It requested an addition of up to £100 million. My right hon. Friend took careful account of all the material put to him by ILEA. He met representatives of the authority to hear what they had to say. The authority's estimate of its spending needs assumed that the benefits of the cost controls introduced in 1988-89 would continue, but it did not envisage that any further action would be taken in 1989-90.

My right hon. Friend's view is that there remains real scope for new savings. He did, however, decide to add £10 million to the original expenditure level, in the light of ILEA's representations, including its representations about the particular circumstances of the authority's last year of operation, to which I referred earlier. He announced the redetermined level of £950 million on 19 December.

At the same time, my right hon. Friend proposed a precept maximum for ILEA in 1989-90 of 77·61p in the pound, which on the latest information available would enable it to raise £950 million. In January, the authority rejected the proposed precept maximum, and sought to raise an additional £56 million, £44 million less than the original increase it had sought, but nevertheless requiring a precept about 4·5p higher than the Secretary of State's proposal. The ILEA officers had drawn up a package of measures which would save £35 million in 1989-90, but the elected members had rejected that. The authority's revised estimate assumed only £20 million of new savings. The authority had also revised its estimate of its reserves position upwards to £20 million.

My right hon. Friend again considered carefully all the authority's arguments and again met representatives of the authority so that they could put those arguments to him in person. He remains convinced that the authority's estimates do not take account of the scope for greater efficiency and economy in the delivery of the service. He decided, however, to allow a small increase in the precept maximum, from 77·61p to 78·42p, in the light of ILEA's representations, including those relating to advice from the district auditor that ILEA should have regard to the meeting of liabilities under £15,000 when balancing its budget for 1989-90. The revised precept maximum would raise £960 million, £10 million more than the level set in December. The revised precept maximum is 3·38p, or 4 per cent., lower than this year's precept.

My right hon. Friend then laid before the House a draft order which would, if approved, enable him to prescribe a precept maximum of 78·42p. He did so because he is concerned to have the final outcome fixed by 15 February, the date set out in the Rates Act, to avoid the uncertainty associated with the use of interim procedures, and so that there is no cause for ILEA to delay implementing whatever measures are necessary to live within the precept income which the maximum would raise. He made it clear that he was prepared to withdraw the order if agreement on the precept could be reached. The authority has, however, rejected the revised figure.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Minister seems to be describing savings that she believes might be possible in ILEA's budget in a way that is wholly unrelated to the needs of children in inner London. What guarantees can she offer that the sums that she and her right hon. Friend propose can meet the urgent needs in my constituency? For example, the roof of Hungerford infants school is in urgent need of repair, and the school cannot be brought back into operation until that is done. ILEA wants to carry out the work. Will it be able to do so with the money the Minister has mentioned?

Mrs. Rumbold: I have said nothing that would prevent ILEA from using its capital allocations to meet the expenses that the hon. Gentleman has outlined. It is a matter on which the Inner London education authority should make decisions and is not a matter on which a Minister standing at the Dispatch Box should arbitrate.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am interested in what is being said, because one hears about ILEA gaining extra money from the Government by making representations. Is it possible for other authorities to do the same, and if extra money is given to ILEA, do other authorities lose?

Mrs. Rumbold: No. My right hon. Friend has taken seriously the representations made to him by the Inner London education authority at two points. As a result of that careful consideration, he has given £20 million extra.

Mr. Dobson: No, he has not.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the Minister clarify this point? The Secretary of State has given no money to the Inner London education authority. The order will increase the amount that the Inner London education authority can raise in rates. It is time that the Minister stopped misleading the House, understood the brief and made ILEA's position clear.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman clearly seeks to make a point. It is true that the limitation rates have been raised so that the Inner London education authority may raise £960 million. As a result of the moves my right hon. Friend has made, the precept maximum in the draft order will allow the authority to raise that sum. *[Interruption.]* I realise that it is difficult for Opposition Members to grasp these difficult figures. That is £20 million more than the original expenditure level.

The authority has said that that precept maximum will jeopardise the smooth transfer of education functions to the boroughs. I do not accept that. My right hon. Friend has responded positively to the authority's representations at each stage in the process. He has taken full account of the circumstances of the authority in its final year. We are satisfied that the precept maximum is reasonable and achievable, given responsible action by the authority.

We have also given thought to the effect of the precept maximum on ratepayers in inner London. The maximum is 4 per cent. lower than this year's precept. It will ease London rate bills. The authority's estimate of its needs implied an increase on the current year's precept, despite the fact that it will make automatic savings from the transfer of the polytechnics.

To allow such an increase would put additional pressure on rates bills. I do not believe that it would be right to do so, given the existing high level of rates in London, which can, in part, be laid at the door of ILEA's past overspending. That is why this draft order has been laid before the House. I ask the House to approve it.

10.38 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The order is bad news for the children of London and for education in inner London. Yet the Minister's speech did not relate to the seriousness of the problems and the reduction in opportunities facing inner London children. All that we had from the Minister, in a lengthy speech, was a repeat of last year's arguments and last year's statistics. One of the sad points about the Minister's speech is that she has clearly learnt nothing from last year's debates about the Inner London education authority. Had she done so, she would have realised that expenditure in London on the police, social services and all other services will be more expensive than in the metropolitan boroughs and district councils. She had not learnt that and all that she did tonight was to repeat the statistics that we dealt with so effectively last year.

Mr. Dobson: Some Conservative Members do not understand why that is. Will my hon. Friend explain to them?

Mr. Fatchett: There are several who fit that description on the Conservative Benches. The simple point is that it is more expensive to run services in London. That comes through in the figures, but the Minister and some of her hon. Friends have failed to understand that point.

It may be useful for the Minister to take her history lesson back not just one year to the debates about the abolition of ILEA but about 80 years to the debate about the London school boards. Given the nature of the Minister's speech, it has probably been recycled a few times in those 80 years. Had she been participating in those debates, she would have said exactly the same—that the London school boards' education was more expensive than in other parts of the country. She would have been right then because the London school boards were costing 50 per cent. more per child 80 years ago than their equivalents in other parts of the country. The argument related precisely to the cost of providing services in London, and it was as right then as it is now.

The Minister's argument is not about statistics, but about her dislike of ILEA and her opposition to spending money on inner London children, investing in their education and extending their opportunities. Her enthusiasm for making cuts is matched by her desire to spend taxpayers' money on assisting the private sector with fees and at levels of expenditure per child far greater than in ILEA. The Minister looks askance, but that is the real world. She approves of higher spending levels for the private sector and the assisted places scheme than for the youngsters in ILEA.

Mr. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: This is a short debate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Do not give way."]

Mr. Bennett: It is on this point.

Mr. Fatchett: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later. He can attend a Welsh debate and make his points then.

This order will undoubtedly hurt education provision and education standards in inner London. The fact that the Minister has the audacity to stand at the Dispatch Box and say that the Government are investing in inner London education shows how little she understands the brief and how little she knows about inner London education. The simple fact is that the Government are not helping with revenue expenditure on those children.

Mr. Bennett: It is correct that inner London costs must be higher than in any other education authority because of inner London weighting, but outer London boroughs also have weighting—it is slightly less than in inner London, but not dramatically different. Can the hon. Gentleman explain why the outer London borough of Bexley charges £900 per child less than ILEA? Or if he prefers to take a Labour-controlled borough as an example, why is Barking £800 per child cheaper than ILEA?

Mr. Fatchett: It was a mistake to give way to the hon. Gentleman. I should have learnt that. My hon. Friends were absolutely right. Perhaps I can throw some figures back at the hon. Gentleman. Can he explain why in Tory-controlled Westminster social services are more expensive than in outer London boroughs? Again, the argument comes down to the nature of provision in inner London. I am delighted that in his opening comments the hon. Gentleman ceded the argument and agreed with us on that point.

These cuts will undoubtedly hurt education, children and education standards. It is no good the Government saying that this happened last year and there was no proof of a reduction in education opportunities. There was indeed a reduction and in the coming year there will be an even greater reduction because ILEA will not have the opportunity to use reserves as it did last year. In this year's budget the cut of £60 million, or more than 6 per cent., will be a real cut which will be felt in the classroom, in the provision of teachers and in the number of books.

Mrs. Rumbold *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Fatchett: It is no good the Minister shaking her head. That is the real world of education in inner London and it is time that she understood those points.

No private-sector organisation would take nearly 7 per cent. out of its budget in one financial year without recognising that that would harm its product. The Government are expecting the Inner London education authority to do that, either without recognition of the harm or—nearer the truth, I suspect—without even bothering about the harm to education standards in London. There are real problems, not just in the cuts this year but in the fact that this is the final year of the Inner London education authority. There were Conservative Members who had just one purpose in seeking to abolish

[Mr. Fatchett]

the Inner London education authority, and it was not based on argument or logic but on spite and a desire to create chaos in inner London services.

The Minister in her contribution today recognised that Labour and the Labour-controlled Inner London education authority are doing their very best to provide an education service for the future. It is thanks not to the Government or their investment but to Labour London boroughs and Labour ILEA that children have something to look forward to in education. The House does not have to take my word for that. Hon. Members can consider the district auditor's words to the members of ILEA:

"I am very encouraged by the efforts being made by your officers to assist the successors of the London education authority."

Labour is working for London's children. It also recognises, as the district auditor recognises and the Government should recognise, that in the process of handover to the boroughs there will be additional charges and demands on resources. The Minister talks about providing £25 million to help the boroughs to take over the education responsibilities of inner London, but anyone with any knowledge of education in London can tell her that that is simply not sufficient to cover the transfer of responsibilities.

I am not arguing that because of the peculiar problem this year there will be a slippage in expenditure or poor management. We are asking the Government to recognise the scale of the problems that will be created and to help the boroughs and ILEA to ease the process of succession. The present Minister clearly has no interest in that process.

The targets—the maximum rate and level of expenditure—have clear implications for the successor authorities. The safety nets of the future must be related to the redetermined expenditure level set out in the order. This year's squeeze will clearly have a knock-on effect. We spent hours in Committee debating the future financing of ILEA but we have still not had any commitment from the Minister that the redistributive impact and mechanism of ILEA polices will work through in terms of future financing.

In view of the Minister's speech today, what hope is there for youngsters in Tower Hamlets, in Hackney, in the poorer inner London boroughs? What reason is there to believe that the Government will not further squeeze education expenditure in those boroughs? Perhaps when the Minister replies to the debate she can answer one question. I understand that these levels of expenditure do not satisfy the Tory boroughs of Wandsworth, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster. Will the Minister tell us what representations she has received from those authorities and what the Tories are saying to her privately? I suspect that they are saying that the money is not enough and that they want more to provide education in their own boroughs.

For the next few years education in inner London will face acute difficulties. The order deals neither with the immediate problems nor with those that will be forced on the boroughs, and faced at borough level, by the abolition of the Inner London education authority. That is why, for the sake of the children of inner London and their education, we shall vote against this order.

10.49 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Oh for the Bob Mellishes and Ron Browns of this world, the members of the London Labour party who cared for Londoners, and understood what London was about. The Opposition Members who now speak for London have no representation so far as the electors are concerned. Those Labour Members do not find themselves in the company of those who ran the London county council education committee.

We must remember that the Inner London education authority is a creation of very few years standing. The old LCC education committee had a good reputation. The trouble is that the people in ILEA were told six, seven and even eight years ago that they should rein in their expenditure, but they failed to do so. That is why these major reductions must be made, because they went on blindly in pursuit of their political objectives.

I compliment the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), the new Londoner who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, on producing some new quotations to enliven the same old dull theories. The Labour party cannot accept the independent figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy which show that ILEA is the most spendthrift education authority in the country, with some of the poorest results. It is no good Labour Members blaming the wicked Tories. In 12 months' time ILEA will have gone like a puff of smoke and will be as unlamented as the Greater London council. The public want education to be run by the boroughs. As my hon. Friend the Minister said——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Did the hon. Gentleman see the polls?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Yes, I saw the polls.

Mr. Sedgemore: Stop pointing.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Pointing is better than sitting and shouting from a sedentary position. That is all that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) seems capable of doing.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the position is clear. Ten days ago in Camden there was a by-election in Hampstead Town. We held that ward, although we have lost it in the past. The Conservative candidate increased her majority and the Labour candidate was pushed ignominiously into third place. The Labour candidate was the ILEA member for Camden. After all the nonsense that we have heard about polls and the public attitude, when it came to the vote, the Labour candidate was pushed into third place because the public know that what is being peddled about ILEA is utter rubbish. So long as the Labour party wants to rely on public opinion polls, I am content to rely on the view that electors record at the ballot box.

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No. I do not have much time. I could go on for a long time if I am nettled.

Perhaps I should refer to education in general as it applies to ILEA. We could consider the way in which ILEA has dealt with school meals. Similarly we could consider how, suddenly in the past 12 months, ILEA has discovered that there are bad teachers and has decided to move a bunch of them. Was it electorally difficult for the ILEA leadership to take action over those teachers before?

Perhaps we should consider the actions of ILEA nominees at the polytechnic of north London, which interestingly enough is in the news today. I spent 25 years as a governor of that polytechnic. Five years were spent under pretty grotty management, although before then the management was good. That polytechnic had been well run because the old LCC did not believe in peddling its philosophies ahead of education.

I ask the House to consider the situation in respect of repairs to inner London schools. To listen to the Labour party, one might imagine that all the repairs now needed have suddenly arisen. However, one recalls that ILEA and its predecessor, the London county council, were under Socialist control almost from the time of creation. It is they who must bear the main responsibility both for inadequate educational standards and for inadequate repairs. They were not prepared to do a proper job.

My hon. Friend the Minister told the House of the reductions proposed by ILEA officers to the members of that body. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central quoted the district auditor's report. I hope that it was not written by Mr. Skinner, because I should not believe much of anything that he writes. He said that he welcomed what the authority's officers are doing—yet they are the self-same officers who were repudiated by the ILEA leadership when, in attempting to meet a sensible target, they presented a package of savings.

Labour Members cannot have it both ways. If they acknowledge—as they have—that ILEA's officers are good and reliable, they must accept also that the officers' proposals are unlikely to be detrimental to the children affected. Basically, they present the most helpful proposals that they can devise. Occasionally, the officers do not choose to cut into their own empires—but other than that, they are helpful. Nevertheless, ILEA's leadership rejected many of their proposals. If they do that, there is little they can grumble about if my hon. Friend the Minister, having twice considered the ILEA figures, arrives at the increases that she has in the permissible amount that the authority can raise.

It is of course true that parents in London are not getting the best possible deal—but it is evident from the results of London local government by-elections that they realise where the blame lies. It does not lie at the door of this Government, but with those—*[Interruption.]* If the Opposition do not believe that, I am happy for them to continue deluding themselves. The fact remains that the average Londoner knows full well that it is the Government who are making possible a good education system at a realistic cost.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, under the order, ILEA expenditure per pupil will be substantially higher than in outer London boroughs—such as Brent—that are not renowned for their financial rectitude?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: My hon. Friend is right. It is interesting how suddenly the Labour party changes its tune. Fifteen months ago, its members flooded my constituency with allegations that the community charge, which will eventually be part of an education charge, will be more than £700. The Young Socialists have suddenly

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

revised that figure to more than £600, whereas the rest of the Labour party have changed their minds and altered it to about £500.

The Labour party attempts to scare people. We saw that tactic again this afternoon, when my hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts made his statement about library services. Labour put about the lie that there is to be a charge for those basic services, whereas my hon. Friend made it clear from the beginning that that is not true. Letters were sent out at the behest of local authorities such as Camden, trying to kid the public that charges would be made for the basic library service.

I believe that my hon. Friend is right and that the House should pass the order. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) is also right about why more money is being made available to ILEA. My hon. Friend the Minister has looked at its proposals on two occasions. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North asks whether the same would apply if his local authority also wanted more money. He should be grateful that his county is sensible and sane, and is not rate-capped. That is the difference between the two. I envy my hon. Friend, as, I believe, do many hon. Members.

My hon. Friend the Minister made a fair and clear case based on unimpeachable statistics and on London's education needs. Her comparisons were drawn from a source—the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy—that I do not believe to be Right-wing, and I think that her case is right.

11 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): This is a precept limitation order debate. It is also a debate about a cut of some £66 million in ILEA's budget this year, coming on top of a cut of some £90 million the year before. The effect of the cut must be seen against a background that I think all who are in touch with inner London will recognise—that of a growing and serious increase in the shortage of teachers available to ILEA and, indeed, to its successor authorities.

The reasons for that shortage are, I think, generally understood, although it may be worth pointing out that the ILEA area must compete not only with outer London boroughs but with other, perhaps more attractive, parts of the country for the same supply of teachers coming out of teacher training colleges. The shortage is, in my view, the most serious problem that the House should consider today, and I want to illustrate the difficulties in my own borough of Tower Hamlets.

We do not suffer simply from a shortage of teachers in the general sense. We do not merely have the shortage of maths, physics and chemistry teachers that is so familiar to most hon. Members. My local division 5 education officer told me in a letter only a few weeks ago that he could not recall a problem as acute as today's occurring at any time during the eleven and a half years in which he has occupied his present position. He mentioned a shortage of 102 teachers in the borough's secondary schools, 92 in the primary schools and more than four in the nursery schools. He goes on to say—and the House should think seriously about the implications:

"As far as the position of children out of school is concerned the number currently registered is about 470".

In other words, 470 counted kids are roaming the streets —or perhaps many are kept indoors with their parents —who should, under the law, be receiving education but who cannot find a place at school in the borough of Tower Hamlets.

There are two reasons for that. First, in the past there has not been an adequate supply of building for extended classes and new schools, although the present position has now been overtaken by the chronic teacher shortage. The letter to which I have referred itemises ILEA's plans to deal with the perceived and growing shortage of primary school places.

The Wessex street school was to be opened in January and was to provide initially for up to 60 children. The Halley street school was also to be opened early in January. That school was to take up to 150 children. A third school, at Hermitage wall, Wapping, was supposed to take up to 110 children.

The headmaster, his deputy and two supply teachers have been recruited for the Wessex street school. Only the headmaster has been appointed to the Halley street school, and only the headmaster and his deputy will arrive at the Hermitage wall school by Easter. The most recent information that I have from the borough is that the headmasters of those schools say that they will have to close classes and send children home because the teacher shortage is growing worse month by month. The primary schools in the borough depend almost entirely on Australian and New Zealand teachers who come to Europe for a few years.

Mr. Holland: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that both in his borough and in the borough of Lambeth, which covers my constituency, we cannot get even supply teachers for primary schools and that has caused a crisis? Children are being sent home from schools that are only a few hundred yards from here.

Mr. Shore: That is the nature of the crisis. It is not a question of the authority making and mending with supply teachers. They are not there. If anything goes wrong the class has to be sent home. Nobody is available to provide cover, either on a temporary or on a slightly longer-term basis. I have illustrated that point by referring to three new schools that cannot be opened to take pupils who should be in full-time education because teachers are not available to man them. In her astonishingly complacent and arithmetical speech the Minister of State showed no concern, but she does not have to cope with the problems that face children and their parents in inner London boroughs.

The crisis in my borough is likely to become even more serious. Population growth is rapid, almost explosive. It is expected to grow year by year and the demand for teachers will grow rather than diminish. The Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts is taking evidence on the matter. All the evidence points to the fact that the teacher supply problem, both nationally and in London in particular, will grow worse in the years ahead.

A few days ago ILEA passed a resolution that was addressed to the Secretary of State. It was an extraordinary statement for any authority to make. It says:

"The authority acknowledges that, despite its best endeavours, the crisis in education in Tower Hamlets continues to worsen. After consultation with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets an All-Party delegation should

make representations to the Secretary of State to seek to ensure that special attention be given to the educational needs of an area which are now beyond the resources available to either Authority or its successor Borough."

That is one of the gravest statements that any education authority can ever have made in the long history of public education. To be presented with an order that reduces by £66 million ILEA's spending ability—above all, its ability to recruit teachers—makes me absolutely sick.

11.8 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): Conservative Members have an advantage in the debate. Among our number are those who have served on ILEA. I served for seven years. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) also served during that time. He and I have an added advantage. We were both pupils at what were then London county council—the predecessor of ILEA—schools.

Mr. Corbyn: Until what age?

Mr. Bowden: Until the age of 18. If the hon. Gentleman will contain his impatience he will hear the full story.

My hon. Friend and I both taught in ILEA schools and were both governors of ILEA schools. Having served on ILEA, we feel that we have been through this budget debate before. When we hear the tired old arguments trotted out by the Opposition we both have a yawning sense of deja vu because we know that, although the problems of London may be greater than those in any other part of Britain, the financial problems are of ILEA's own making. Ten years ago we showed how savings could be made if there was a will to make them. They were not made and the harvest is now being reaped.

I shall deal briefly with one or two matters that are illustrative of the whole malaise. We recognise the education needs of London and know that they will require more than the expenditure in more prosperous parts of the country. However, extravagant expenditure is quite out of hand. ILEA spends a disproportionate amount on administration and on political initiatives and too little on the needs of education.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bowden: In a moment. The hon. Lady is rather impatient. I shall now deal with ways in which money could be saved.

Many years ago we said that the number of buildings was far in excess of what was required for the schooling of London. We suggested that some of the capital invested in those buildings could be realised and devoted to current expenditure. More important, the revenue consequences of retaining and maintaining those buildings meant that money was being spent on non-education needs. There was a need about 20 years ago, or at the latest 10 years ago, to look into how a cost-effective education service could be provided in London. That need was dismissed as being quite inappropriate in looking at future education provision in London.

ILEA has an expensive and inefficient method of providing the necessary transport for children in London to move from school to playing field and from home to school. Perhaps the greatest extravagance, the greatest profligacy, is to be seen in the direct labour force that maintains education buildings. Hardly a school that I visit does not have some complaint about delays in carrying out some fairly minor piece of work. Somebody comes to inspect the work and then somebody comes and measures it. Someone is then supposed to deliver the materials to do the work, but they are not there when the workmen arrive and the process has to be gone through again. A swift and efficient maintenance service cannot be provided using such methods. We need greater priority to education rather than to administration.

Ms. Abbott: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the real measure of Conservative concern for the education of children in inner London is that most inner London Conservative Members have chosen to boycott the debate?

Mr. Bowden: I wonder whether that comment is wholly justified. Perhaps those more numerate than I could calculate the number of Opposition Members who are present. I think that Conservative Members are in the majority, but we shall find out in the Division Lobbies whether there is support for the measure.

ILEA has been profligate and wanton in its extravagant expenditure. The money has been spent not on the education needs of London but on administrative overheads and services that are union-dominated and which the political leadership at county hall is frightened to disband.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Inner London schools have great difficulty in getting repairs done. I have some examples to illustrate the point that my hon. Friend made. Many schools have flat roofs, designed by the absurdly inefficient architects' department. If flat roofs were not built, there would not be so many leaking roofs—a major problem in many schools. To repair the roofs, it is first necessary to call in the architects' department, which in turn calls in consultants. They have to look at the job, and then see the contractors and put out a contract for tender. It took five years for one school to get its badly leaking roof repaired. This is a serious matter.

Mr. Bowden: In this sector, economies could be made and a more efficient service provided.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke about the shortage of teachers. This is a manifestation of the failure to give education needs proper priority. I speak to a number of teachers and ask why they do not apply for the vacant headship posts. I hear that when headships are advertised, the calibre of applicants is disappointing to those who are responsible for drawing up the short lists. The reasons given by the majority of those who could and should be appointed is that they find oppresive the political interference from county hall in education matters. They are not prepared to take this on. *[Interruption.]* That reaction from Labour Members makes it obvious why such people do not feel comfortable about making their thoughts known. In many cases, they are frightened to explain their fears, but these are made manifest in the fact that they do not apply for vacant posts.

11.17 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The fallacy of Tory arguments and the complacency shown by the Minister can easily be demonstrated. Throughout its history, voters have not voted for a Conservative ILEA administration. At the last general election, the majority of seats within inner London were not won by Conservatives.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

The last ILEA by-election, on 1 December, was in my constituency. The Labour party did not do very well, winning only 5 per cent. of the constituency vote, and the Tory party got only 1 per cent. of the electors of Southwark and Bermondsey to support it. That was out of a turnout of 17 per cent.

When ILEA was abolished last year, it produced more correspondence than any other matter in my six years in the House, and I have never had one letter asking for the rates in my constituency to be reduced so that the precept could be less. Substantial numbers pay, and the debate tonight is about whether the people of inner London should pay for ILEA. We are dealing not with taxpayers' money, or Government-distributed money, but ratepayers' money. It is about whether they should pay what they would wish to pay or have it reduced by 22p per head. The Minister did not give one example showing that the ratepayers of inner London want 22p a head deducted from their contribution for the future of their children's education.

As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said when speaking about Tower Hamlets, a cut of £150 million in two years, which is the implication of tonight's order, cannot be sustained by any authority, let alone with the demise of ILEA next year.

I am not defending ILEA's record on thrift. There are certainly areas which have been badly managed and areas where the service delivery has been poor. The results in many areas have not been good educationally. That is not a factor of its administration; it is caused by the amazing diversity and difficulty of the cumulative problems in inner London over many years.

In the last year, ILEA has made mammoth efforts to assimilate cuts of £90 million. The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) referred to the report of the district auditor, which was written by Mr. Skinner. The hon. Gentleman should have read the report. The district auditor is not critical of the way in which ILEA set about remedying the problem. The slack that has already been taken up has resulted in the pupil-teacher ratio being the same as the Department of Education and Science average. Maintenance costs have been substantially cut, and repairs are not being done.

ILEA did not say that it was unwilling to have restraint. It suggested a not unreasonable cut to 80·99p, more than the Government are allowing, but less than last year. The Government did not accept that. The precept will still be less than 2 per cent. higher than five years ago, even though general price inflation in the same period, irrespective of the increases which affect education provision, such as housing, was 27 per cent.

The Minister's argument that inner London has higher costs is completely invalidated. She should have done the House a greater courtesy than to try that on again. The Government recognised that just the other day. For the first time they have taken Z scores into account in assessing the needs of the National Health Service. With Z scores being taken into account in the country, the suggestion is that RAWP should be abolished. Under the Government's plans for the Health Service inner London will get more, because the Government recognise that it needs more. Yet when it comes to applying the same budgetary and accounting lessons to ILEA, the Government do not come to the same conclusion.

Exactly the same criteria affect educational provision in inner London. The poverty, the deprivation and the ethnicity—the factors which enable the Government to give more money to the Health Service in inner London—apply also to education. We need more language tuition and more special needs provision. The people who are most deprived and most in need will not get the resources that they need next year. The consequences will be larger class sizes, fewer support teachers, less time to spend on the educationally disadvantaged and less ability to cover the curricula.

Hon. Member after hon. Member has said that there is a desperate position because of teacher shortages. I have experience of classes being sent home. At Grange primary school in my constituency there is neither a regular teacher nor a supply teacher. There is not a word from the Minister about that. She is not bothered about whether the kids have a teacher or are getting education. All she is worried about are statistics. Government dogma is applied again and again. We have heard nothing about a broad and varied curriculum or about making sure that standards rise: we just get statistics rolled out to support the dogmatic argument.

The reality is that the cuts have already bitten too hard. Maintenance is not being done. The voluntary sector is being priced out. Scouts, guides and youth groups cannot use schools for the community activities which the Government say they applaud. Discretionary grants to students are being reduced. ILEA cannot fund services which the Government have always said they want to support. The Government argue for increased access to higher education, but they are reducing the number of students who can go on to higher education. Such is the contradiction in their policy.

Now the Government are asking ILEA to cut further in the very year when the boroughs have to take on the responsibility, when officers are leaving, when the finance department of ILEA is under most stress, and when the cost of transfer adds to the costs of ILEA.

The reality is that, when services are cut, they are unlikely to be restored. It is all very well to say that the boroughs can start again, but the reality is that they will not. It is clear that ILEA will be forced to leave a legacy of disadvantage in the years to come. Abolition is causing ILEA problems enough. Abolition, plus the Government's arbitrary imposition of a lower precept limit, at no penalty or advantage to themselves, is a sign of vindictiveness. In substantial measure, the Government do not represent inner London. They do not understand it and they do not care about it. They are clobbering it for the sake of 22p per ratepayer. It is disgraceful. The Minister and her colleagues should realise that they are doing education and their own credibility no service by the ridiculous and unjustified argument that they have advanced this evening.

11.26 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I represent inner London and I care about inner London. I have proved that by being elected to represent what was a Labour seat in inner London. That being so, I shall refute the absurd arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

Opposition Members have made much of what they have been told by their constituents. I was out last night in my constituency on the borders of Lambeth, in what is known as a divided street. I bumped into someone who I thought was one of my constituents but who happened to be a constituent of the neighbouring borough of Lambeth. The young gentleman said, "I'm sorry that I'm not one of your constituents." I replied, "That's your bad luck, isn't it?" He said, "That's right—I pay twice the rates that I would if I lived over the road in Wandsworth." I responded by saying, "You know why that is, don't you? There is the Lambeth element and the ILEA element." He agreed and said, "The worst is that, come the changeover, I shall still be in a Labour borough when across the road there will be good education run by Wandsworth. I wish I lived there." That is the truth. That is what is happening in inner London.

Mr. Holland: We have just heard an example of Tory party political propaganda based on the two-sides-of-the-street argument. We have heard such examples on many occasions. In the 10 years that I have been a Member of Parliament I have not heard one constituent in the borough of Lambeth make the complaint that the hon. Gentleman has described. I have travelled around the borough on many occasions—*[Interruption.]*—but I have heard the complaint only from Tory Members this evening, and then from a sedentary position.

Mr. Bowis: Perhaps that is why the hon. Gentleman's constituents keep coming to my surgery.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Should there be any vacancies in Wandsworth schools when Wandsworth children have been accommodated, will my hon. Friend reassure me that the borough would be prepared to accept Lambeth children who might wish to go to them?

Mr. Bowis: If it were in my gift, I should be happy to accede to my hon. Friend's request. I know that my colleagues who are members of Wandsworth council, and who will shortly be running education in the borough, will be opening the doors to the parents of children in Lambeth and elsewhere, and I have no doubt that they will be flooding through them.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the reasons why the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), a public school boy, has not been receiving any representations from his constituents about ILEA is that he went on 18 foreign trips last year?

Mr. Bowis: I have no answer to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Holland: Apart from the fact that my Opposition Front Bench responsibilities happen to involve international economic affairs—I am glad to be informed on such matters, unlike Conservative Members—I provide a surgery four Mondays a month in my constituency with few exceptions. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us how often he provides a surgery of his own?

Mr. Bowis: Perhaps I should not allow this debate to develop. It is plain that the hon. Gentleman's attendance at so many interesting international conferences throughout the world, including Florence, means that he is not present to hear the complaints of his constituents about the rates paid by Lambeth residents compared with those paid by Wandsworth residents. Now that the hon. Gentleman is back in London I am sure that he will find time to wander around the streets occasionally to pick up the message that I received yesterday.

We have had our standard debate on ILEA. Sadly, such debates are a diminishing pleasure because we shall shortly be considering the way in which education is organised in the boroughs. Apart from the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) who made some interesting comments about teachers, this has been a waffly debate. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about teacher shortages and I have some sympathy with that. My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) spoke about the cost management of ILEA, which has helped to cause the problem. The right hon. Gentleman opened up the debate on whether we should have national teacher pay negotiations and I believe that he also hinted at the possibility of attracting subject teachers according to the needs of the market. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will convince some of his hon. Friends of the good sense of that.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: I, too, am concerned about teacher shortage and supply. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) referred to that shortage, but does my hon. Friend agree that it is a bogus point? When teacher posts are advertised, the money has already been put aside. There are other ways to address the teacher shortage which have nothing to do with the order.

Mr. Bowis: I entirely agree.

Another important factor behind the teacher shortage in inner London is the teaching environment. Over the years, teaching in ILEA schools has become increasingly unpopular. That problem was illustrated by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), who sadly is no longer present. I believe that he described ILTA—the Inner London Teachers Association—as a bunch of warring Trots. That is why teachers do not want to teach in inner London. The blame must therefore lie with the Labour party and the Left in London rather than with the Government.

Synthetic rage has been expressed by Opposition Members. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey said that he had not received any letters calling for a reduction in the rates. I have had no letters from my constituents asking that the rates should be allowed to rise to cater for the increased expenditure and generosity of ILEA. The ratepayers of inner London are grateful to the Government for ensuring that costs are kept under control.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), accompanied by his sidekick the poet—the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), who sadly is no longer present—once again graced our debates on ILEA. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central referred to the complaints received from Wandsworth, Kensington and other boroughs about the level of spending. I must inform him that no such complaints have been received from Wandsworth—I cannot speak for the other boroughs. If the hon. Gentleman can give chapter and verse about complaints received from Wandsworth, I will give way.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that representations have been made to the Minister by his borough and other Conservative inner London boroughs to ask for a higher spending level for inner

[Mr. Fatchett]

London because of the future knock-on effect. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman got in touch with what is going on in his borough.

Mr. Bowis: That is complete nonsense. No complaint has been received from Wandsworth or, so far as I know, from any other borough. His comments are irrelevant to the debate.

The ILEA debate is over. The decision has been taken and the administration of education is to be transferred to the boroughs. That is good news. The problems, however, remain. Many right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the fact that ILEA costs twice as much as any other authority but produces half the results. We accept that it should cost more in inner London, but we cannot accept that it should cost more and not give adequate results in the schools. Yet that is what we have been suffering in inner London in general and in Wandsworth, in division No. 10, in particular.

Perhaps there is some apprehension in Labour inner London boroughs about the takeover of education. I appreciate that, but the ballot box will be available between now and the takeover. That will be the opportunity for people to express their views on the issue. In the borough of Wandsworth there is excitement and anticipation in the air. A great deal of planning is going on and people are getting together to discuss these issues. When one talks to the teachers, the head teachers and all concerned in the schools, one finds that they are looking forward to the education opportunities that will be coming their way. They have not had such opportunities for many years.

A degree of certainty is required as we move towards the changeover date, and this instrument will help to achieve that. As that date approaches, we do not want an inheritance of excessive and wrongful spending, so we must get the costs under control. It would be churlish to suggest that ILEA had not made some progress. It has made some effort to get its spending and priorities under control, but there is still a long way to go. Even in these dying ember days of ILEA, I beg those involved to examine their priorities to see whether some of their decisions are not harming education, students, teachers, schools and colleges prior to their being handed over to the boroughs. Many areas could be examined in terms of rationalisation. I will cite just a few areas where ILEA has got it wrong. One is the whole question of discretionary grants for students, which it seems to have more or less written off. The second is the absurd decision on Wolverstone hall, the boarding school which took children from disadvantaged areas and got far better than average results from them.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the silliest decisions taken by ILEA has been to put up the charges to voluntary organisations for the use of school halls? The charges have increased so much as to be self-defeating because voluntary organisations cannot afford to hire them, thus cutting school income rather than increasing it as ILEA presumably intended.

Mr. Bowis: That is an example of ILEA getting its priorities wrong. Another example is the Merchant Navy college. ILEA decided to close the college within a year and made three recommendations when taking that decision. They were that education provision should be preserved, that students should be guaranteed a means of completing their studies and that the interests of the staff should be safeguarded. Sixteen weeks remain before the demise of that college, and the college reports that none of those recommendations has been fulfilled. Attempts to transfer the education provision have failed, students do not know what will happen to them and the staff are uncertain about their future. Timetables for closure have been brought forward, changed, abandoned and brought forward again. Proposals introduced one day are dismissed as unsuitable the next, only to become authority policy the day after. No wonder those at the Merchant Navy college talk about an uncaring ILEA. That is the truth, and that is why we have these provisions before us. We contrast the uncaring ILEA—uncaring in its attitude towards the education of the children and students of London—with the caring attitude of the Government.

11.38 pm

Mrs. Rumbold: With the leave of the House, and within the time available, I will do my best to respond to the points that have been raised by hon. Members.

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister sought the leave of the House to speak again. I was not aware that you had put that question to the House. Many of us feel——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman objecting to the Minister having the leave of the House?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister does not need the leave of the House to speak again. Mrs. Rumbold.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am particularly grateful for your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I want to reply to some of the points made by Opposition Members and by my hon. Friends.

I was surprised, although I should not have been, by the lacklustre speech of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), who said that anyone on the ground would know that the £25 million allocated to the inner London boroughs for transfer costs next year was inadequate. Does he ever talk to his colleagues in the boroughs? I assure him that not one of them has complained about the level of the grant. Some have gone so far as to say that it has been generous. It is high time he started talking——

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Rumbold: I want to move on——

Mr. Fatchett: I thank the Minister for giving way with such reluctance. Which London boroughs have said that the grant is sufficient? I suspect that none has.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman questions what I said. It was perfectly true. Wandsworth has been one of the authorities—*[Interruption.]* I am not prepared to go into detail at this stage.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and his colleagues on a splendid result in the recent local election. He has realised that, although elected ILEA members behave on the surface as though they are trying to help as

best they can, they have left it rather late to start tackling the problem of poor teaching in schools—hardly persuasive evidence of a death-bed repentance.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) spoke about teacher shortages, and I do not deny that the difficulties in this area are a cause for concern. I have been discussing them with the council and its newly appointed chief education officer. The problem is one that ILEA has allowed to develop over time. I stress that division 5 is not typical in ILEA. HMI reports show schools in other parts of London with high levels of staffing. ILEA has been quite unable to deploy teachers effectively. Fortunately, the boroughs are determined to remedy that when they take over——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a short debate. Five speeches have been made by Conservative Members, two by Labour Members and one by a Social and Liberal Democrat Member——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that a number of hon. Members have not been able to get into the debate, but there is nothing I can do about that.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It appears that Conservative Members have had roughly twice as much speaking time as Labour Members, despite the fact that the latter overwhelmingly represent inner London——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have no power to control the length of speeches in the debate.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) made an important point about the slow and expensive direct labour organisation making an enormous difference to the authority's expenditure on repairs and maintenance of schools. That has certainly caused a great deal of delay and stress. Fortunately, again, when the boroughs take over education for themselves that will be remedied——

Mr. Fatchett: What representations has the Minister received from the Conservative boroughs about the level of expenditure on ILEA and its implications for the future?

Mrs. Rumbold: Wandsworth, for example, has said that the authority should not seek a redetermination of its expenditure limit——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

The House divided: Ayes 192, Noes 98.

Division No. 87] **[11.44 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Needham, Richard
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Steel, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John

Wells, Bowen	Yeo, Tim
Wheeler, John	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Whitney, Ray	
Widdecombe, Ann	Tellers for the Ayes:
Wood, Timothy	Mr. Alan Howarth and
Woodcock, Mike	Mr. Michael Fallon.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Alton, David	Lamond, James
Armstrong, Hilary	Lewis, Terry
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Battle, John	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Beckett, Margaret	McAllion, John
Beith, A. J.	McAvoy, Thomas
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Macdonald, Calum A.
Bermingham, Gerald	McFall, John
Blair, Tony	McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Boyes, Roland	McLeish, Henry
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	McWilliam, John
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*	Mahon, Mrs Alice
Buckley, George J.	Marek, Dr John
Caborn, Richard	Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Callaghan, Jim	Meale, Alan
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*	Michael, Alun
Campbell-Savours, D. N.	Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*	Morgan, Rhodri
Clay, Bob	Murphy, Paul
Clelland, David	Nellist, Dave
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	O'Brien, William
Cohen, Harry	Parry, Robert
Corbyn, Jeremy	Pike, Peter L.
Cryer, Bob	Quin, Ms Joyce
Cunliffe, Lawrence	Redmond, Martin
Dalyell, Tam	Reid, Dr John
Darling, Alistair	Ruddock, Joan
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*	Sedgemore, Brian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*	Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Dewar, Donald	Skinner, Dennis
Dixon, Don	Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Dobson, Frank	Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Doran, Frank	Snape, Peter
Fatchett, Derek	Soley, Clive
Fisher, Mark	Spearing, Nigel
Foster, Derek	Steel, Rt Hon David
Fraser, John	Stott, Roger
Godman, Dr Norman A.	Strang, Gavin
Gordon, Mildred	Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Graham, Thomas	Wall, Pat
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*	Walley, Joan
Hardy, Peter	Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*	Wareing, Robert N.
Holland, Stuart	Wise, Mrs Audrey
Home Robertson, John	Worthington, Tony
Hoyle, Doug	
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*	Tellers for the Noes:
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Mr. Frank Haynes and
Illsley, Eric	Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Precept Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Inner London Education Authority) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 27th January, be approved.

Mr. Alan Rees

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

11.56 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): This Adjournment debate is about Mr. Alan Rees, who is a British citizen and whose elderly mother is a constituent of mine.

Mr. Rees is in prison in Frankfurt, in the Federal Republic of Germany. He has been there since November 1986. Before then he was imprisoned in Britain for about two years. Indeed, Mr. Rees has now been in prison for a total of about four out of the last five years—two years in Britain, and almost two and a half years in the Federal Republic. Despite this four-year term of imprisonment, Mr. Rees has not been found guilty of any offence by any court, either here or in the Federal Republic. Not only has he not been found guilty of any offence; he has not even been tried in open court for any offence.

It was in the south American country of Bolivia that the events, the somewhat bizarre events, that led to Mr. Rees's predicament occurred. In 1974 he went there and married a Bolivian national. He lived in Bolivia and had a business there. On 14 November 1983, in La Paz, the capital, a German national, who was the local manager of the German airline Lufthansa, was kidnapped near his home. The kidnappers demanded a ransom of $\$1\frac{1}{2}$ million. The ransom money was subsequently paid, and the German national was released unharmed.

On 13 March 1984 Mr. Rees arrived at Gatwick—on a business trip, I believe—on a flight from the United States of America. He was immediately arrested. Almost a month after his arrest, the Government of the Federal Republic sought his extradition to West Germany, accusing him, I believe, of the crime of detaining, with others, a hostage —the German national, the manager of the Lufthansa office in La Paz, who had been kidnapped.

Four alleged accomplices of Mr. Rees had already been arrested in La Paz by the Bolivian authorities for the same offence. While they were in prison they made a statement to the effect that Mr. Rees had been involved in the kidnapping. The Federal Republic's case for extradition was based almost entirely—not entirely, but almost entirely—upon these statements. Of course, these were affidavit statements read out in the extradition proceedings in London. There was no cross-examination of the individuals concerned, because they were in prison in Bolivia.

Mr. Rees, through his lawyer, Mr. Michael Caplan of Kingsley Napley, challenged the extradition request in the British courts. There were a number of hearings, and the case actually went to the House of Lords on a technicality. I believe that during these proceedings it was learnt that the four alleged accomplices in La Paz had retracted their previous statement and now denied that Mr. Rees was involved in the kidnapping. Eventually, however, Mr. Rees, on the basis of the prima facie evidence presented by the West German authorities, was extradited to the Federal Republic in 1986 and, as I have said, has been imprisoned there ever since.

The House will recall that recently the Home Secretary, in a slightly different situation, got into trouble with the European Court of Human Rights for detaining suspects for seven days. Mr. Rees has not been tried in the Federal Republic of Germany for the offence for which he has been

charged. Time and again the West German authorities have adjourned the proceedings. If we count the extradition proceedings, they have had almost five years to build their case against Mr. Rees. That includes the two years in Britain before the extradition and now nearly two and a half years in the Federal Republic of Germany. However, he still has not been tried in open court.

That is a scandalous and shocking abuse of the rule of law and the basic principles of justice—and that in a western democratic country which is one of our NATO allies and a partner in the EEC.

My latest information—perhaps the Minister of State has better information—is that the Germans will apparently again review Mr. Rees' case next April. He has no idea when he will be brought to trial. He may never be brought to trial, and may have to languish in prison for all time.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has a duty to look after and protect the rights of British citizens abroad. He should raise this matter at the highest level with the German authorities. I am not asking the Secretary of State to bring pressure to bear to subvert the course of justice; I am asking him to bring pressure to bear to ensure that justice is done.

In a strange case of this kind, one inevitably recalls the tribulations of Joseph K in Franz Kafka's great novel "The Trial". No doubt the Minister of State is familiar with that novel. It is gloomy and depressing, but in parts at least there are glimmers of hope for poor Joseph K. An extract from that novel might appeal to the right hon. Lady:

"'What is the next step you propose to take in the matter?' asked the priest. 'I'm going to get more help', said K . . . 'There are several possibilities I haven't explored yet.' 'You cast about too much for outside help,' said the priest . . . 'especially from women. Don't you see that it isn't the right kind of help?' . . . said K . . . 'Women have great influence. If I could move some women I know to join forces in working for me, I couldn't help winning through . . . Let the Examining Magistrate see a woman in the distance and he almost knocks down his desk . . . in his eagerness'".

All I ask of Mr. Rees' examining magistrate in Frankfurt—they still have such magistrates there—is that he should without any further delay bring Mr. Rees to trial and present his evidence in open court. If he cannot do that, he should release Alan Rees. I ask the Minister of State and the Government to do their duty and see that that happens.

12.2 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I am very grateful to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) for raising this case of the son of a constituent of his. It is in the finest traditions of this place, empty though it may be at this late hour, that we discuss the circumstances of an individual British citizen who is detained overseas.

As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, I know about the case of Mr. Alan Rees, and, as the House would expect, I will consider later tonight very carefully exactly what the right hon. Gentleman has said and I shall also ensure that a record of this debate and our contributions to it is made available to the authorities in Bolivia and in the Federal Republic of Germany as soon as possible.

The right hon. Gentleman knows me and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office well enough to know that we are concerned that any individual should be held without trial for long periods in any country. However, we must be aware of the law of the countries concerned.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office first became involved with Mr. Rees's case in April 1984, when a formal request for Mr. Rees's extradition for an offence of kidnapping was received from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in London. In accordance with normal practice, that request was passed to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary for consideration.

The background to the extradition request was that, while in Bolivia, Mr. Rees was alleged to have organised, together with his father-in-law, a Bolivian national, the kidnapping on 14 November 1983 of a Mr. Michael Wurche, the Lufthansa manager in La Paz. A ransom of 1·5 million United States dollars was paid by Mr. Wurche's employers, and he was released in November 1983. Mr. Rees was initially discharged by the United Kingdom courts in respect of the extradition offence because the request was not, at that stage, backed by sufficient evidence. However, the extradition proceedings were recommenced following the receipt of further evidence, resulting in the extradition order being issued.

After making an unsuccessful appeal to the House of Lords for judicial review of his case, Mr. Rees was committed for extradition on 24 October 1986. He was surrrendered to the German authorities on 27 November 1986. Since then, he has been held in custody awaiting trial.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I am sure that the Minister did not mean to imply otherwise, but the House of Lords appeal was not about whether Mr. Rees was guilty of kidnapping. It concerned a difficult legal point regarding extradition law. I believe that the case was lost in the House of Lords by three to two.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not have the figures, but I believe it was as the right hon. Gentleman says. It was a judicial review, which I hope are the words that I used earlier.

Mr. Rees is charged in the current proceedings, in Wiesbaden, with having kidnapped, in company with others in La Paz, Bolivia, on 14 November 1983, Mr. Michael Wurche, with extortion, with carrying arms, with using threats and force against Mr. Wurche, and with having caused others to commit such illegal acts against Mr. Wurche.

Mr. Rees, together with his father-in-law, Jose Antonio Anze Jimenez, allegedly planned together to kidnap Michael Wurche, the sales representative and station manager of Lufthansa of La Paz, and to demand a ransom of 1·5 million US dollars, as the hon. Gentleman said. They allegedly acquired the necessary weapons, rented a house to which they planned to bring Mr. Wurche, and persuaded four other Bolivians—Abdon Aguilera Cortez, Carmelo Mario Aguilera Uyeno, Amando Sichori Ticona and Rimundo Richi Herrera—to act as accomplices in their plan.

On 14 November 1983, Mr. Rees and his accomplices allegedly abducted Mr. Wurche under threat from machine pistols and hand guns. On 16 November 1983, Mr. Rees is alleged to have sent a ransom note to the Lufthansa office in La Paz. In that note, Lufthansa was called upon to pay a ransom of 1·5 million United States dollars. It is alleged that, on 24 November 1983, Mr. Rees

[Mrs. Chalker]

conducted several telephone conversations with Mr. Wurche's employers, in which he gave the details for handing over the money.

The ransom money, a sum of $1·5 million, was delivered as allegedly instructed by Mr. Rees, following which Mr. Wurche was set free in the neighbourhood of La Paz airport on 25 November 1983. On 17 March last year a trial was held in the La Paz superior district court, at which Mr. Rees was sentenced in absentia to 25 years' imprisonment. The charges, which were made on 17 April 1984, were of kidnapping, theft, threatening with a weapon and contempt of court, the latter because of non-appearance. Four Bolivians were accused with Mr. Rees, were convicted and are currently serving terms of imprisonment. The information was, however, confirmed to the Federal German authorities only last month. Mr. Rees and his German lawyer are aware of that development.

The action that we have taken in the Federal Republic is as follows. Our vice-consul in Frankfurt has visited Mr. Rees four times since his arrival in the Federal Republic. On all occasions Mr. Rees has been found to be well, and has volunteered that he understands the reasons for his continued detention. Our vice-consul has also been in regular contact with the public prosecutor in Wiesbaden to register Her Majesty's Government's interest in the case. The right hon. Gentleman was informed, in a letter from my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on 12 April last year, that our vice-consul would also contact Mr. Rees's legal representative, whose duty it is to do all that he can within the local judicial process to expedite the trial.

Sadly, a date for the trial cannot be set until the evidence has been provided by the Bolivian witnesses. I understand that there are difficulties owing to their detention and subsequent imprisonment. The public prosecutor in Wiesbaden is still waiting for confirmation of when he and others can attend the hearing of witnesses in Bolivia. The public prosecutor wrote to the embassy of the Federal Republic in La Paz in early January this year asking it to accelerate matters with the Bolivian authorities. He believes that, once he has attended the hearing in Bolivia, a trial in the Federal Republic should follow without delay, and I hope that that is the case.

I said earlier that we must be aware of the various countries concerned in the case. There is no limit on the time for which a person may be held on remand in the Federal Republic, provided that his detention is reviewed at least every three months by a higher court. That has been done in Mr. Rees's case. The last review was by the higher regional court—the Oberlandesgericht—on 9 January, when it was decided that Mr. Rees should remain in custody pending trial. That would bring the next date of hearing—as the right hon. Gentleman said—to around 9 April this year. We understand that Mr. Rees's German legal adviser believes that, bearing in mind the serious nature of the alleged offence, his client's continued detention is not abnormal.

I well understand the right hon. Gentleman's deep concern about the case, but it is internationally accepted practice that the officials or representatives of one state cannot intervene in the judicial proceedings of another sovereign state. We in the United Kingdom would not tolerate attempted foreign intervention in our judicial system, and I suspect that no other country would welcome it either.

The role of our consular officials is to ensure that a British citizen who has been arrested knows his rights under the local law and knows how to obtain legal representation if he so desires. The consul will try to ensure that a British national is charged and brought to trial without undue delay, that the trial is conducted within the recognised canons of justice, that his alien status is not detrimental, either at a trial or during imprisonment, and that he is subject to the same standards that apply to the nationals of the country in which he was arrested.

It is always our policy that consular visits to prisoners should be made in the light of local conditions and the detainee's circumstances. Our consular officials also try to ensure that a detainee's next of kin is informed of the detention, but only if so requested by the detainee. They also arrange the transfer of funds from friends or family in the United Kingdom for prison comforts and raise any complaints with the proper authorities. We have inquired about this. I am satisfied that Mr. Rees has been receiving proper consular attention, and I assure the right hon. Gentleman that this will continue.

The right hon. Gentleman will also be aware that United Nations approved minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners were agreed in 1957. I accept that the rules have no binding force, but our consular officials, as a matter of policy, would bring them to the attention of the local authorities if it were seen that the rules were not being observed in respect of a British detainee. I have no hesitation in saying that there is no question of any such failure in the case of Mr. Rees.

There are, of course, limitations on what British consular officials can do. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, they cannot get a national out of gaol, provide a lawyer at the British taxpayers' expense, put up bail, carry out investigations into an alleged crime, or themselves offer legal advice. As the right hon. Gentleman may know, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has been leading a campaign to educate the public in this regard, so that nobody shall go abroad without having some knowledge of the consequences of wrongdoing overseas. That campaign will continue, but it is important that people should understand the limitations on what consular officials can do.

This is a very special and, thank goodness, very unusual case. I fully understand the right hon. Gentleman's great concern. As in all such cases, the legal process of the country concerned must take its course. Her Majesty's Government cannot intervene in that legal process. However, I am concerned about the case. Through our consular officials, we shall continue closely to monitor the case and will offer all the assistance to Mr. Rees that we properly can. I sincerely hope that this case will very soon be brought to trial and heard and that the problems that have been encountered in providing evidence will be ironed out. Anything that we can do, although we cannot intervene, will be done by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eighteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 9 February 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (HULL) BILL *(By Order)*
BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*
HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*
HYTHE MARINA VILLAGE (SOUTHAMPTON) WAVESCREEN BILL *(By Order)*
INTERNATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK BILL *(By Order)*
ISLE OF WIGHT BILL *(By Order)*
LONDON UNDERGROUND VICTORIA BILL *(By Order)*
WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*
BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*
BROMLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL (CRYSTAL PALACE) BILL *(By Order)*
CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*
PENZANCE ALBERT PIER EXTENSION BILL *(By Order)*
REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 16 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

1. **Mr. Ross:** To ask the Secretry of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

2. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

9. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): Since I last answered questions in the House on 12 January, there have been six deaths in Northern Ireland arising from the security situation. They include a policeman and a soldier murdered by the IRA, two civilians murdered by the Ulster Volunteer Force, a terrorist blown up by his own bomb and a further civilian killed this morning in Belfast. The Provisional IRA also murdered a former member of the RUC reserve in Donegal close to the border on 15 January.

The security threat remains high but the courageous and determined efforts of the security forces continue to yield results. During 1988, 439 persons were charged with serious offences including 23 with murder and 46 with attempted murder. So far this year the security forces in Northern Ireland have recovered some 41 weapons, more than 4,500 rounds of ammunition and 22lbs of explosives.

During 1988 the Garda Siochana recovered over 350 firearms, more than 100,000 rounds of ammunition and more than 1,100lbs of explosives, including 650lbs of Semtex. Already this year they have made a number of significant finds, including weapons and ammunition recovered from the Offaly, Kilkenny, Monaghan and Donegal areas.

Mr. Ross: Was the question of who would be the new chief constable of the RUC discussed at yesterday's meeting between the right hon. Gentleman and the Government of the Irish Republic? Will the Secretary of State confirm that James Joseph Conolly the terrorist who, as the Secretary of State pointed out, died by his own hand, was planting a bomb under the car of a member of the security forces, that he was a workmate of that same member of the security forces and that he had shared his lunchbox?

Mr. King: My answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question is certainly not. In regard to his second question I confirm that there is clear evidence that the terrorist who was killed was seeking to plant a bomb under the car of a member of the security forces. I was not aware of the hon. Gentleman's further suggestions.

Mr. Livingstone: Will the Secretary of State investigate why vital information made available to the security forces about cross-border bombings was not made available to the Garda? That information was supplied by a former UDA activist and assassin, Albert Baker, a former British soldier. Was the information not passed on to the Garda because Sir William van Straubenzee, then a Minister at the Northern Ireland Office, visited him in Crumlin road gaol and discovered that while he had been assassinating members of the Catholic community he had been supplied with weapons by members of the security forces?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman specialises in retelling his version of events of 15 years ago. I have no knowledge of those events. If the hon. Gentleman has accusations or evidence, they should be put before the appropriate authorities. The House will draw its own conclusions from somebody whose only vehicle is to stand up in the House and make such allegations under the protection of the House.

Mr. Molyneaux: Following the introduction of a great deal of legislation affecting the policing of Northern Ireland, given that much retraining and study courses are necessary to enable the smooth implementation of that legislation, and given that that training is months behind schedule, is it possible to persuade the Treasury to make available the necessary additional funds to implement the decisions that have been taken by Parliament?

Mr. King: We pay close attention to the RUC's budget. It has been given a significant increase in funds over the past three years, but this aspect of budgetary expenditure

should be dealt with through the appropriate channels and by the Police Authority. The right hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not go further down that route.

Rev. William McCrea: Given the recent brutal murder of a constable in Sion Mills, the attempted murder of a member of the security forces, the serious wounding of another member of the security services in the same incident while Republicans cheered and the attempted murder of a reserve constable at Drumquin, in which the terrorist was blown up by his own hand, what additional resources will the Secretary of State provide to bring to justice those who are responsible for a catalogue of unsolved murders in Castlederg and surrounding areas? As a matter of urgency, will he increase the members of the soft target protection group in the area?

Mr. King: I understand the hon. Gentleman's strong feelings about recent events, especially the attack at Sion Mills. The appalling behaviour of the crowd that emerged from the pub was beyond belief. I well understand the feelings of the hon. Gentleman and his constituents, which I share. I gave the figures showing the number of people who have been charged with serious offences, and the House will note the significant increase in the number of people who have been charged following recent terrorist offences. I recognise the particular problems that are experienced in the hon. Gentleman's constituency because of some extremely vicious and evil people. I shall certainly take note of the points that the hon. Gentleman makes.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is difficult to place much credence on the accusations made by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who as leader of the GLC invited convicted IRA terrorists to county hall?

Mr. King: The House draws its own conclusions. If the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) has serious evidence he should present it. If an hon. Member rises once a month during Northern Ireland Question Time to make an allegation, which is usually impossible to check, the House must reach its own verdict about the quality of his comments.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Secretary of State agree that security will not improve and the IRA will not be defeated until the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland find the wit and imagination to get together? I understand the right hon. Gentleman's reticence to comment too much, but does he agree that the recent talks that may have taken place are a hopeful sign for the future? Those who seek peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland would be better advised to consider what can be built on rather than to seek scapegoats.

Mr. King: The right hon. Gentleman rightly said that I should not wish to comment on talks in which the Government were not involved. The way forward in Northern Ireland is through democratic discussion, persuasion and argument, not violence. A democratic party that denounces violence does not fulfil its responsibility if it fails to discharge the other half of the logic of that argument and says no to violence and yes to dialogue.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend referred to some of the Garda's successes in 1988, such as recovering over 100,000 rounds of ammunition. Bearing in mind the commitment of the Garda, is my right hon. Friend convinced that the Social Democratic and Labour party has shown equal commitment to security?

Mr. King: I look to the SDLP to show full commitment. We have had expressions in the House of full support for the security forces, which I welcomed. It is not possible to qualify the support that needs to be given to people who are prepared to stand and defend either community when under threat and to risk their lives in that activity; people must decide whether they are for or against. We expect the security forces to operate fairly, impartially and within the law. Against that, they are entitled to the unqualified backing of all democratic supporters.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that although there is melancholy in the House about the list of the latest killings, the situation in Northern Ireland is at best stalemate and at worst an intensification of the killing? We do not seem to be getting anywhere. Does that not pose the problem that the answer is wider and that the Government should be thinking of some political solution—difficult as that is and much as Unionist Members deplore anything that does not tackle the immediate situation? Can we not do something, possibly more expansive than Duisburg and a bit nearer home, to get together?

Mr. King: Anybody who lives and works in Northern Ireland and has some understanding of the events there would not describe the present situation as stalemate. There are encouraging developments in employment, vast improvements in Belfast and developments in housing. There is no doubt that the condition of people right across Northern Ireland has improved in many significant ways and that there are many people working for reconciliation and for better understanding between the communities. The education proposals made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for greater integration in education are further indications, not of stalemate, but of people genuinely wanting to work for a better future.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My right hon. Friend gave a long list of the successes of the Garda in the Republic of Ireland. Can he perhaps comment more on whether he feels that there has been a new spirit in the Garda of getting out and attacking terrorists in their bases in Southern Ireland? It seems to an observer in Britain that it is achieving real results.

Mr. King: After a number of difficulties and interruptions to the process, an honest judgment would be that there is now a better relationship between the RUC and the Garda than there has been for many years. I am also encouraged by the work that is being undertaken by the Garda and the methods that it is adopting. I have given some figures to the House and anybody who is remotely familiar with Northern Ireland and the Irish situation will know that they show that some significant work is taking place.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State put on record for the House once again that the Social Democratic and Labour party, which he has previously mentioned, gives full and unequivocal support to the police in impartially enforcing the law? Does he further agree that our party is open, willing, able and ready to take part in any discussions that will lead to a resolution of the problem? Will he further be honest enough to agree that one of the

real problems that must be dealt with in the north of Ireland is the whole position of security and justice and that is what we should focus attention on rather than some of the platitudes that we have to listen to from time to time?

Mr. King: I have been working for justice, fairness and equality of treatment. Legislation is before the House at the moment to improve equality of opportunity in employment and I attach great importance to that. I welcome what the hon. Gentleman has said about his party's willingness to talk. In the various suggestions about how talks should take place, the key issue is how people within Northern Ireland are going to exist together and the relationship between them. That must be resolved before we worry about anything else. I hope that people will address those relationships directly and concentrate on that aspect.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware that we all welcome the fact that spring came suddenly to the Anglo-Irish Agreement yesterday, that everything seems to be going well and that part of that atmosphere is due to his efforts and to those of the Irish Foreign Minister? Will he also confirm that in terms of talks taking place between the constitutional parties and the importance that that has for security in Northern Ireland, it would be far better if the press exercised some self-censorship—although it must make its own judgments—and let people get on with things instead of seeking to exploit them and perhaps set them back?

Finally, since the Secretary of State believes that the law should be fairly and impartially carried out in Northern Ireland, when shall we know the results of the disciplinary inquiry into the conduct of 20 policemen following the Stalker-Sampson report?

Mr. King: I do not wish to comment on what the press should or should not talk about and the times when it should or should not reveal evidence of discussions that are taking place. However, I recognise that one of the problems in Northern Ireland is that it is difficult to go anywhere without a television camera pointing at one and to find the opportunity for the quiet reflection that some of us might appreciate. Everyone in Northern Ireland knows that that is a fair comment.

I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's earlier comments on the progress of the Anglo-Irish conference and I am grateful for them. On his latter point, I can say that disciplinary hearings are likely to take place shortly.

Housing Associations

3. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the future relationship between housing associations and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): The activities of registered housing associations are funded by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has proposed to me that it should take over this responsibility. However, the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations has made a counter proposal and I intend to have early discussions with both bodies.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I thank the Minister for that response. Does he accept that the housing associations have been doing invaluable and innovative work, and that they are worried that, if the Housing Executive is called to manage the housing associations, because of pressure on its budget, the housing associations will be squeezed, whereas so far they have been receiving fair understanding from the Department?

Mr. Needham: I agree that the housing associations do valuable work. I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said and I shall listen carefully to all the points that are made to me in the present consultation process.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that openness about the Housing Executive would be a good thing? Is he aware of the Fair Employment Agency's report into employment in the Housing Executive? Why has that report been hidden and not published? There has been immense activity and discussion about that matter in the Housing Executive. Surely the general public should know what the finding is.

Mr. Needham: That is a matter for the Housing Executive, not for me. I am sure that the report will be considered and published, as such reports always have been.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Minister completely satisfied that housing associations' allocations in Northern Ireland are in accordance with the selection procedure—priority need —of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive listing? If not, what further monitoring and action will take place to counteract any impropriety?

Secondly, if the housing 1990 proposals come into being and houses from the Housing Executive stock are transferred or sold to housing associations, how will the Minister guard the rights of sitting tenants and those who, because of their accommodation needs, have priority on the Housing Executive lists at that time?

Mr. Needham: If the hon. Gentleman knows of any particular problems because the housing associations have not allocated houses as they should, I am prepared to discuss them with him and to listen to the points that he makes. Whether the Government will read across the Housing Act 1988 is again a matter for discussion and consultation. Those matters are being considered and I welcome the hon. Gentleman's views on any points across the Floor of the House, and across a desk as well.

Schools (Co-operation)

4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are being taken to encourage contacts and co-operation between schools of differing denominations; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The major steps in this programme are being taken through the cross-community contact scheme and the education for mutual understanding programme.

In addition, under our proposals for education reforms, education for mutual understanding will become a compulsory cross-curricular theme. I have recently

announced the establishment of a working party to produce a statement of objectives for EMU, and I expect to receive its report by 30 April 1989.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome that answer. Does my hon. Friend agree, having heard once again of a constant spate of murders in Northern Ireland—many of them sectarian—that all branches of the Christian Church should teach the fact that people should love their neighbours and never kill them? Would it not be valuable to impress that teaching upon all children, whatever their denomination and whatever school they go to?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend, who has a deep interest in these matters, is, of course, right in his designation of murder and terrorism. He will be encouraged to know that an increasing number of people in Northern Ireland wish their children to develop a relationship with each other which cuts out any concept of bigotry or sectarianism. I hope that he will be further encouraged to know that yesterday in Northern Ireland I met representatives of the four main Churches to see how we might carry those discussions further.

Mr. Alton: In welcoming the Minister's commitment to integrated education and the efforts that he has put into those schemes, can I draw his attention to the recent survey carried out in north Armagh, which showed that 46 per cent. of Catholics, and 36 per cent. of the population as a whole, favoured integrated education? The reason that they gave was the balanced curriculum that is available in such schools. In view of that survey, does the Minister think that it would be worthwhile approaching again the Catholic hierachy in Northern Ireland to convince it of the merits of such proposals? Does the Minister believe that everything possible should be done to allow schools to opt out of their present status and become integrated schools, if that is their wish.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. What he has said in his question reflects what we are seeking to do in our education reform proposals. We plan to introduce a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum for children in all of our schools. We plan to introduce opt-out facilities so that parents can move schools from existing frameworks into an integrated framework if they so wish. We plan to assist parents who would like to start new integrated schools. We plan to lay on the Department of Education a statutory responsibility to promote and encourage integrated education. All of those proposals will facilitate the very sort of parents to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I shall not impose the plan, not least because, if I were to try, it would not succeed. It is important that the Government should facilitate those parents who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity. As he said, they are an increasing number.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Minister regret that he refused funding to Dungannon district council for an officer who would be concerned with community relations, basically on the grounds that neither I nor my Unionist colleagues would make the empty gesture of going to Stormont to meet him in order to hype up the effectiveness of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Does he believe that it is helpful for him to frustrate the efforts of district councillors for his own selfish reasons?

Dr. Mawhinney: That is a somewhat idiosyncratic explanation of the situation. What I have made clear to Dungannon district council is that, if it wishes—with the clearly demonstated political backing of the majority and minority parties in that area—I would be prepared to consider providing funds for a pilot scheme for the employment of a community relations officer. There is no point, however, in carrying forward what might be a significant pilot scheme in the Province unless it is seen overtly to have the backing of all of the major political parties in local government.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the hon. Gentleman inform the House of the make-up of the committee which he has mentioned? Could he tell the House too, why three members of the Alliance party are on that committee?

Dr. Mawhinney: The composition of the committee is on the public records, as the hon. Gentleman knows. I cannot tell him its composition now, but he has a copy of that record. If he wishes, I shall write to him.

The committee was composed of people who had expertise and were teachers in the primary and secondary sectors. It reflected the interests of the maintained and controlled grammar school section and of those from outside education who had some knowledge and expertise in these matters. I was not aware of the political affiliation of any members of that committee. Furthermore, the hon. Gentleman will have noticed, as I did, that there has been no publicly voiced criticism of the composition of the committee.

Prison Reform Groups

5. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he had recently received from prison reform groups.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Ian Stewart): My right hon. Friend and I receive representations from many public, private and professional bodies in Northern Ireland on a wide range of matters affecting prisons.

Mr. Redmond: Why is the reconviction rate for male adult offenders in Northern Ireland 42 per cent. as against 57 per cent. in England and Wales? Why are the Government set on changing the maximum remission in Northern Ireland from half to one third, which is contradictory to the recommendations of the Carlisle committee on the reform of prisons in England and Wales?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, in many cases, it is much more difficult to establish evidence and to obtain convictions in Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to crimes involving terrorist activity, than it is in the generality of offences committed in Great Britain.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned remission. The onus is on him and those who object to the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Bill to argue why, if somebody commits a terrorist offence in Northern Ireland and receives a sentence for it, he should spend less time in prison than he would if he committed the same offence and received the same sentence in Great Britain.

Mr. Ron Brown: Will the Minister advise his colleagues in the Home Office that Irish individuals who are convicted

in Britain should have the right to serve their sentences in their homeland? After all, that right is part of a Council of Europe convention, and it should be supported by the Government.

Mr. Stewart: Requets by prisoners in Great Britain for permanent transfer to Northern Ireland are considered in the light of various well-known criteria. They include the length of the prisoner's sentence, his residence when he was convicted, and his behaviour in prison. We consider all such requests on their merits. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will find reassurance in what I have said.

Democratic Reform

6. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he intends to introduce to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland have a similar range of democratic institutions at local and regional level to those found in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government want to see elected representatives playing a greater role in the administration of the Province. We have been stressing, therefore, the need for the constitutional political parties to talk together, and with the Government, about their own proposals. It is only on an agreed basis that any new structures will work.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is an obvious and woeful lack of local government in the Province? Does he agree also that the Duisberg talks at least show some measure of cross-party support for a form of devolved administration in the Province? If that is the case, is it enough for the Government to leave the political initiative in the hands of local parties in Northern Ireland, without at least giving them some idea of the framework within which such talks could be brought to a useful conclusion?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend will agree that most people are impressed and encouraged by the evident willingness of parties in Northern Ireland to talk and to seek common ground. There is no dearth of proposals in Northern Ireland on how to move forward. We now need to get people to sit round a table and examine such proposals. The Government would wish to play any part that they could in helping to accelerate that process.

Mr. McCusker: Would we not be better starting a little closer to home when we consider democracy for Northern Ireland? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a Committee of the House is considering legislation that applies only to Northern Ireland and it includes only three representatives of the people of Northern Ireland, whereas 12 or 13 years ago when the first fair employment Bill was before the House, five of the 12 Members from Northern Ireland were on the Committee compared with the present three out of 17?

Dr. Mawhinney: First, as the hon. Gentleman knows——

Mr. McCusker: The Minister is not responsible for anything.

Dr. Mawhinney: On the contrary, subject to the wishes of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I am responsible for quite a bit. What I am not responsible for is the appointment of people to Committees of the House. However, I welcome the fact that three Members from Northern Ireland are serving on that Committee.

Mr. Budgen: How much longer must the people of Northern Ireland wait and how many more clever experiments will be imposed on them before the Government recognise that a clever constitution based upon devolution will not work? Would it not be better to give them the modest benefits of an extension of local government?

Dr. Mawhinney: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I remind him that in 1987 both he and I fought a general election with a pledge to

"continue to work within the Province for a devolved Government in which both the communities can have confidence and will feel able to participate".

Teacher Training Colleges

8. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in light of the recent initiatives taken by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, in relation to programmes for mutual understanding, he has any plans to integrate the teacher training colleges in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: No, Sir.

Mr. Barnes: We should all realise the importance of integrated education in Northern Ireland. It can probably be advanced only slowly. With the exception of teacher training, nowhere is it more important than in higher education, where it operates extensively. Do the Government propose to do anything about assisting the integration of teacher training by moving slowly over difficult problems but providing finance, setting up a working party and doing all they can to extend the principles of mutual understanding by extending integration?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman's question weaves two strands. Some time ago a working party was set up. It reported and it was not possible to make progress in the direction of the hon. Gentleman's question at that time. I have no plans to re-establish such a working party. Of course, the Government accept the importance of integrated education. Indeed, the two teacher training colleges have been seeking to find some common ground on the training of teachers in education for mutual understanding. I have encouraged that and will seek to continue to encourage it.

Mr. Bowis: Given the importance of the future generations of Northern Ireland learning from their history and not reliving it, will my hon. Friend pay particular attention to the teaching of history and, coupled with that, the review of the curriculum for history? Will he ensure that violence and extremism on either side of the divide are not encouraged to be part of that teaching?

Dr. Mawhinney: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend and I can tell him that, subject to the will of the House, under our new proposals, for the first time in Northern Ireland, schoolchildren from ages five to 16 will be taught history under the same programme of study.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister aware of the growing concern that exists in all kinds of schools, be they integrated, controlled or voluntary, about the Department's policy of publicising school inspectors' reports? Will he agree with me that these have been used quite shamelessly on a selective basis by some sectors of the media? Because of the growing concern and the abuses, will he give the House a commitment that he will review the decision of his Department to make these reports public?

Dr. Mawhinney: No, Sir. There are two quite separate issues here. The first is whether inspectors' reports should be published. The Government believe that they should be, just as they are in England and Wales. The other issue is the use—and at times, I agree with the hon. Gentleman, the selective use—of those reports, particularly in local newspapers. That is not an attractive aspect of local reporting in Northern Ireland and, like the hon. Gentleman, I should like to see a more balanced reflection of what the inspectors have actually said about schools.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is it not true that all the trainee teachers in Northern Ireland could be accommodated in one teacher training college at considerable saving to the hard-pressed taxpayer? Will he consider ending the religious apartheid in teacher training and, therefore, in schools throughout Northern Ireland by moving teacher training into the university, no matter what people might say to the contrary?

Dr. Mawhinney: As the hon. Gentleman knows, because he takes a deep interest in these matters, he reflects a view held by a number of people in Northern Ireland. However, that is not the majority view, for reasons that he understands. But I note what he says.

Prisoners (Review Procedures)

10. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning revisions to the review procedures for prisoners serving life sentences or detained at the Secretary of State's pleasure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Representations are received from time to time about various aspects of the review procedures from prisoners themselves and from those writing on their behalf. The review procedures are themselves kept under review, but we have no immediate plans to change them significantly.

Mr. Hughes: Is the Minister aware that there is strong cross-community support for a review which produces a permanent change in the present system in respect of life prisoners and those detained at the Secretary of State's pleasure? Is he also aware that certain specific aspects, including the important proposal to allow prisoners to have access to their files and to challenge the reports, would command widespread support and give much greater confidence in the whole system of review?

Mr. Stewart: I am aware of the representations of the kind referred to by the hon. Gentleman. However, when criticisms of the present system are made, it is often forgotten that the system has been working very effectively for five years or more. Release dates have been set for 120 prisoners and more than 80 have been released under the existing provisions. I am far from convinced that we should turn the review procedure, which is not a legal process, into a legal battleground. That is the last thing that we want for the process.

Harland and Wolff

11. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on present negotiations regarding the future of Harland and Wolff.

Mr. Tom King: I last met the chairman of Harland and Wolff on Monday to discuss his proposal for a management-led buy-out. Other discussions with possible acquirers are also continuing. It is clear that under public ownership there can be no future for the yard and it is therefore a matter of urgency to try and achieve a private sector solution to Harland and Wolff's problems.

Mr. Howarth: In view of the job losses and the Government's consistent failure to provide a sound future for Harland and Wolff, would it not be better if the Secretary of State considered the policy of public ownership? What can he possibly achieve by talking to Mr. Olsen or anyone else?

Mr. King: It is not the Government who will provide a future for Harland and Wolff, but orders. It needs orders which can be achieved in an effective and economic manner. Under public ownership, the yard has been a one-way street to bankruptcy. The only hope for Harland and Wolff is a private sector solution and many people, including the management, who are completely committed to it, are working together with us to achieve that.

Mr. Peter Robinson: As the Secretary of State says, it is now an urgent matter. Can he give the House some idea of the time scale that he imagines is likely for the full evaluation to take place? Is he in a position yet to say which of the two bids he is considering he prefers to the closure of the yard?

Mr. King: No, I cannot say anything further today. The hon. Gentleman, of all people, will understand if I would rather say less than more at this time when very detailed discussions are taking place.

Mr. Beggs: Does the Secretary of State agree that it would be cheaper and more cost-effective to transfer Harland and Wolff into the private sector now than to bring about closure and redundancies? Does he agree that if the Olsen management-employee buy-out happens, it would provide good prospects for Belfast and the employees at the yard? Will he also assure us that he will not place any obstacles before the new company, which we are confident will be formed, in bidding for contracts for Ministry of Defence work? Will he also ensure that intervention funding will be available?

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman knows, discussions are taking place at this very moment on the complex issues involved in the possibility of Harland and Wolff moving into the private sector. I do not want to say anything more today because this work is going on. It is too early yet to tell whether it can be brought to a successful conclusion.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Bennett: Has my right hon. Friend seen the report published yesterday by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs on inward investment which shows that Wales, with 5 per cent. of the population, attracted nearly 20 per cent. of all inward foreign investment to the United Kingdom in 1987? Does she think that Wales would have succeeded in attracting such investment had power been devolved to two or three regional assemblies, as suggested in the latest U-turn by the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: The direct and immediate answer to my hon. Friend's question must be no. I agree that Wales has a remarkable record in attracting inward investment, which has been very good for Wales and for jobs. It shows that people have confidence in this Government when they invest in the United Kingdom. That confidence comes from the Government's policy.

Mr. Kinnock: When will the Prime Minister clear up the salmonella shambles in her Government?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friends seek the advice of their professional advisers on the facts on research. When they receive advice, it is given out freely. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, further advice was given out last week on other matters such as unpasteurised milk. There will also be further advice later today on mineral hydrocarbons. When we get advice from the Food Advisory Committee on the recommendations for research, we take it. That is the right way to proceed.

Mr. Kinnock: On advice, does the Prime Minister recall that back in 1980 her Government rejected the proposals of the Labour Government that licences should be limited only to those processing plants that had the means of killing salmonella? That was nine years ago when salmonella poisoning was one seventh of what it is now. When will the Prime Minister do her duty by the consumer?

The Prime Minister: The salmonella enteritidis is a new strain, as I believe the right hon. Gentleman knows. We are trying to find out all the latest facts. During the past 10 years there have been enormous changes in food technology. All these, plus the habits and customs of people and the way they cook, must be taken into account. We shall shortly be issuing a leaflet based on the best advice that we can gather about food hygiene from professional advisers. We shall make it available to housewives, schools, and shops and offices generally.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister think that the defeat of the new strain is helped or hindered by closing the only research facility into it? Does she recall that when the proposals were rejected at the beginning of the decade it was because, as the Government said:

> "In the present economic climate the industry should itself determine how best to produce"?

Nine years have elapsed. Salmonella is officially described as an epidemic. We are told that the economy is transformed. When will the Government do their duty by the consumer?

The Prime Minister: The more questions that the right hon. Gentleman asks, the more I am convinced that he knows less and less about the matter. That research establishment had completed its particular line of research. He knows full well that when we are dealing with these problems, the best course of action is to seek professional advice on further research. As he is well aware, the code of practice announced by the Ministry of Agriculture has been in preparation since last August, which is why the Ministry was absolutely ready to announce it following the Chief Medical Officer's advice on salmonella.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the importance of national reconciliation through a pre-independence constitutional conference in Namibia, if civil war and genocide are not to follow elections in that country? Will my right hon. Friend actively pursue this possibility during her forthcoming visit to Africa?

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend feels strongly about this and believes there should be a sort of national constitutional convention before elections. As she is aware, Security Council resolution 435 has been agreed by everyone and is now being implemented. The elections would include elections to such a convention, to decide the future constitution and government of Namibia. There is not much chance of changing that proposal now.

Mr. McCusker: Will the Prime Minister tell us whether the Government raised with the Government of the Irish Republic yesterday the case of Father Ryan? Did they discuss whether he would be tried under the extraterritorial legislation? Were they assured that Father Ryan was still within the jurisdiction of the Irish Republic?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must pursue those matters with my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, who is the proper person to answer such questions.

Q2. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Patnick: Does my right hon. Friend agree that bacteria have always been present in food and that proper cooking, storing, chilling and preservation of food are therefore essential? Is it not true that, while the public are aware of the present epidemic of food-related illnesses, the media have been hyping it up far too much?

The Prime Minister: Of course, bacteria and other organisms have always been present in food. There is a problem now with a number of bacteria, and many new factors are coming to the fore with the introduction of new materials, processes, habits, customs and technology. We have completed the first phase of recommendations on the food hygiene programme, upon which, as I said earlier, we

are taking advice. We shall make that advice available to the public at large as soon as we can. We must obtain professional advice and the facts in order to do so.

Q3. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Adams: Does the Prime Minister agree with her right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has apparently told the Scottish media that he is in favour of retaining the vet school in Glasgow? Will she also tell the House whether she agrees with retaining the vet school in Cambridge?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, a committee of the University Grants Committee under, I believe Sir Ralph Riley, made the proposal. It is considering provision for veterinary education throughout the United Kingdom. There will be a period of consultation and, at the end of that time, the Universities Funding Council will make its decision. I fully agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is deeply concerned because that school carries out a great deal of valuable research that applies to both animals and human beings and a good deal of which is privately funded. We believe that that should be taken into account in the consultation and the decision.

Sir Charles Morrison: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Opposition and the sillier sections of the press are getting the salmonella problem completely out of perspective, while the Government are entirely right— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has as much right to be heard as every other hon. Member.

Sir Charles Morrison: The Government are entirely right to treat the problem seriously, because, if the silly campaign about salmonella continues we shall be importing far more foreign foods, over which we have far less control than we have over home-produced foods.

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, the Chief Medical Officer has given advice which has been widely publicised and should be followed. My hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture has produced codes of conduct, and has taken steps to see that eggs do not get to the market from farms that we know are infected, until they are fully and properly cleared. I believe that although there is a problem, solving it depends on the good common sense of the public, as well as very close monitoring of the flocks of this country.

Norway

Q4. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Norway.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to visit Norway.

Mr. Cryer: Is the Prime Minister reluctant to visit Norway because the Norwegians do not allow nuclear weapons on to their soil, although they are members of NATO and signatories of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which calls on the United Kingdom to get rid of nuclear weapons? Which does the right hon. Lady think is the morally superior attitude: that of Norway, or her warmongering policy that continually threatens the world with extermination on a scale that would make Hitler and Pol Pot look like boy scouts?

The Prime Minister: I had a very good visit to Norway some time ago and went to have a look at some of their military installations, and talked to some of their military. Norway is a faithful member of NATO and adheres firmly to the NATO nuclear policy.

Engagements

Q5. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the proposals from the European Commission for withholding tax of 15 per cent. on investment income is yet another example of the wrong-headed attempt of the Commission to complete the internal market by imposing uniform regulations on the European economies, rather than deregulating as we have done in order to release the dynamic of the economy?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. This country has instituted freedom of capital movements and has not found it necessary to have a particular withholding tax, or to ask for a uniform withholding tax throughout the Community. Indeed, to do so would be a way of alienating capital from this country and from Europe, and sending it overseas. We shall oppose any such proposals by the Commission.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Prime Minister aware that one of the consequences of the development of the Social Security Act, introduced on 11 April last year, is that young widows between the ages of 40 and 45 are deprived of the widow's pension? Is she further aware that young widows who were in receipt of pensions, even widows with families, have had their pensions withdrawn? Will she take immediate personal action to correct this piece of legislation, which is so draconian to those young widows who are least able to afford it, as this society can well afford to pay them a widow's pension?

The Prime Minister: The purpose of that Act, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, was to concentrate the higher widow's pensions on older widows, and of course widowed mothers, and not so much on the younger widows. That piece of legislation also gave newly bereaved widows a sum of £1,000 to be paid immediately, so that they should not have immediate worries.

With regard to widows of 44 to 45, there is a case going through the statutory authorities at the moment. The initial adjudicating officer said that that particular widow was not entitled to a pension. It went to the next layer of appeal, who said she was so entitled, and now there is an appeal up to the commissioner, for him to decide. We believe that, as a whole, that piece of legislation was justified, and well founded in concentrating extra help on the older widow.

Q6. **Mr. Neil Thorne:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thorne: Will my right hon. Friend find time to consider the serious situation that is arising in Belgium as a result of that country's reluctance to take effective measures against terrorism? If it becomes necessary will she use her influence to ensure that the centre of the European Community is removed from Brussels?

The Prime Minister: As I said earlier this week, it is vital that, in respect of terrorism, we obtain full co-operation from all our European partners, as well as from other countries. In the main, we do, but there are exceptions. I am sure that my hon. Friend would like the European Community's headquarters to be located in his constituency, but that is not in the gift of this Government.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Prime Minister aware that her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence boasted on Tuesday that, since 1979, the Government have reduced the number of nuclear warheads in this country by 2,400 or 35 per cent? As negotiations on international disarmament have been going much better since the right hon. Lady made that unilateral arms cut, will she abandon her argument that one must negotiate from strength before achieving any success?

The Prime Minister: No. There were reductions in the number of very small nuclear warheads on the central front in Europe, but that decision was taken by NATO and did not affect the effectiveness of our nuclear deterrence. It is vital that we maintain effective nuclear deterrence, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence was quite right.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY—Until seven o'clock private Members' motions. Timetable motion on the Official Secrets Bill.

TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY—Second Reading of the Local Government and Housing Bill. Motions on the farm and conservation grant regulations and scheme.

WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY—Consideration in Committee of the Official Secrets Bill (3rd Day).

Motion to take note of EC Document relating to Community/United States trade relations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY—Conclusion of consideration in Committee of the Official Secrets Bill.

FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY—Opposition Day (5th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject for debate to be announced.

[Debate on Wednesday 15 February:
Relevant European Community document:
4296/89 Community-United States Trade Relations
Relevant report of European Legislation Committee:
HC 15-vi (1988-89), para 3.]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for the statement. Will he tell the House why he considers it necessary to curtail next week's debate on the Official Secrets Bill? Until now, the Committee stage has taken only two days. On both days it was the Government who decided to adjourn the debate, when the opposition on both sides of the House were willing to continue. Is there nothing that the Government think merits full debate—not even the Official Secrets Bill, which goes to the heart of the relationship between the citizens and the state? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is disgraceful that the House of Commons cannot find time to debate that fundamental relationship, particularly when there are doubts on both sides of the House, and when names such as Foot and Churchill are among those of right hon. and hon. Members who speak against the Bill? Will the Leader of the House reconsider the matter?

In view of the general confusion that exists between the Prime Minister and her Ministers at the Department of the Environment, will there be a statement next week to clear up, once and for all, whether, in preparation for the implementation of the Water Bill, private water companies are to raise their charges by 30 per cent. to 50 per cent.?

When are we to have the promised debate on the Fennell report on the King's Cross disaster? The right hon. Gentleman will recall his promise that there would be such a debate. The Fennell report was published on 10 November, and it is time that it was debated.

Finally, and still on the subject of debates that have been promised for a long time, will the right hon. Gentleman say when the House will debate the Barlow Clowes affair? Or have the Government kicked Barlow Clowes' investors into touch, in the same way that they kick into touch everything that they find embarrassing?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman asked me four questions about next week's business. The first one concerned the timetable motion relating to the Official Secrets Bill. No, I will not reconsider the question of a timetable motion. A great deal of time has already been taken by the House on this subject. We had a debate on the White Paper last summer. The Bill received a full day's consideration on Second Reading, plus two sittings of a Committee of the whole House lasting, in total, about 13½ hours. We are still only on clause 1 and need to make progress. The timetable motion that I shall table later today will be generous by any standards. I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that the signals that we were getting from the Opposition as to how late they wanted to sit were not entirely consistent. I will say no more than that.

Secondly, with regard to the question of water charges, there will not be a statement next week so far as I know, but I will refer the point to my right hon. Friend. I believe that there will be plenty of time to discuss these matters as the Bill makes progress.

Of course, I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern that there should be a debate on the Fennell report. I have promised him one, but I am sorry that I cannot promise that it will take place in the immediate future. I certainly recognise that there is a need for a debate.

With regard to Barlow Clowes, I have indicated that there are inquiries going on. The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is investigating the complaints, and I believe that we should wait until his report is available before having a debate in this House.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): While the Official Secrets Bill contains a number of good features, it also contains serious abridgements on the right of free speech. Does my right hon. Friend not think, on reflection, that it is perhaps rather overdoing it for the Government to attack both the freedom of the press and parliamentary discussion at one and the same time?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my right hon. Friend's strong feelings on this matter, but I think he should recognise that the Bill will replace section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 with provisions that prohibit only those disclosures of information that would be harmful to the public interest. It is a measure which, far from extending the scope of the criminal law in this area, greatly limits it. It is also, I have to say, unashamedly a measure to protect the vital interests of the state, the interests of a democratic Government in a free society.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am sure the Leader of the House has seen the very disturbing advertisement in the national press—put in by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—with regard to the killing of dogs following the abolition of the dog licence. Can we expect that in the next week or so the Government will bring forward regulations under the Local Government Act 1988 to institute a dog registration scheme?

Secondly, given the devastation of the floods in Inverness and Easter Ross, can we expect a statement from the Secretary of State for Scotland next week announcing emergency aid for that area? One cannot help cynically thinking that if there had been such an occurrence in Kent or Surrey it would have been elevated to the status of a national crisis.

Mr. Wakeham: With regard to the hon. Gentleman's second point, I greatly deprecate what he has said. However, I recognise his concern for his constituents and for the area, and I will refer the matter to my right hon. Friend.

With regard to the question of dog registration, the Government have made it clear that they do not consider that a registration scheme would do anything to assist the welfare of dogs or their control, and there are no plans to implement section 37 of the Local Government Act.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with regard to the reform of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act, the debates so far, however important and worthy, as indeed they have been, have been largely repetitious—about the same principles and issues? Given that this is a reforming and liberal measure, the sooner we make progress with it the better.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. At one point in last week's Committee stage I noticed that there were only 11 Members on the Opposition Benches, and for a period of three hours they numbered fewer than 20.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Is the Leader of the House aware that there are 14 private Bills on today's Order Paper, all of them with blocking motions? Does he recall that, at the start of the Session, he undertook to arrange an early debate on private Bills procedure? Would he like to redefine "early" or guarantee that we will have a debate before Easter?

Secondly, is not the real reason for the guillotine on the Official Secrets Bill that the Government have no supporters for the measure?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's last point is patently absurd, as the Government won every vote on the Bill by a substantial majority. On his first point, I have undertaken that we shall have a debate on that very important report and I shall arrange it as soon as possible.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Is my right hon. Friend aware that it is really completely unjustified to introduce a guillotine on the Official Secrets Bill? There has been absolutely no suggestion of either side deliberately protracting the proceedings. In what everyone, including the Home Secretary, agreed was an intensely concentrated debate last Thursday the number of supporters of the Government was minimal. This is a complicated and difficult Bill which goes to the heart of the safety of the realm and the freedom of the individual, and a Conservative Government, above all, ought to give proper time for discussing those two matters.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my right hon. Friend that it is an important Bill and that it deals with very important subjects, but I do not agree with him that we are not giving proper time for debate; I believe that we are. If my right hon. Friend had read the recent report of the Procedure Committee, he would know that that Committee believes that all Bills should be timetabled at the beginning to ensure that there is proper debate. I do not go along with that view completely, but there is a case for a timetable motion to ensure proper debate on all parts of the Bill.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Leader of the House will be aware of the widespread public concern about the food industry and the conflicting and confusing statements made by the Government on certain aspects of it. Does he not agree that it is time that the House was given an opportunity to debate the matter and that a statement was made on the food industry, and especially on salmonella?

Mr. Wakeham: I did not agree with what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question and it is not surprising, therefore, that I do not agree with his conclusion. We recently had a debate initiated by the Opposition on the food industry and the Government's case was expressed extremely well by my hon. Friend on that occasion. A Select Committee is considering aspects of the matter, and it would be more appropriate to consider what is the right time for a debate at a later stage.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): May I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to early-day motion 287, signed by 56 Opposition Members, attacking the Government's action in deporting Viraj Mendis?

[That this House unreservedly condemns the action of the Home Secretary and Minister of State, the honourable Member for Mid Sussex, in ordering the police to break in, by force, to arrest Viraj Mendis who has been in sanctuary in the Church of the Ascension in Manchester; notes with grave concern the violation of the sanctity of the church premises; and demands that he be allowed to remain in Britain until the efforts being made by the honourable Member for Manchester Central and others to find him asylum in another country have been successfully completed.]

Now that we know that Viraj Mendis battened on to the social security system and lied and cheated to stay in this country, may we now have a debate on that early-day motion so that we may show up the gullibility of Opposition Members?

Mr. Wakeham: The full facts of that case have been well displayed and people now understand it much better. I agree that there could be occasion for a debate, but I do not think that I can promise my hon. Friend such a debate in the near future.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House arrange a debate on the growing argument in Kent about railway lines to the coast? Is he aware that there has been marching through the towns of Kent and that 1,000 people followed Peter Pan, otherwise known as the Mujahadeen from Bexley——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must refer to each other by constituency.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman is not worried in the least. He is like De Gaulle——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman may not be worried, but I am.

Mr. Skinner: In view of the growing concern, and as the Prime Minister's husband has joined a society complaining about the railway line passing their back garden in Dulwich, is it not time that we had a debate on the subject?

Mr. Wakeham: Those of my hon. Friends who are concerned about the welfare of their constituents do not appreciate the kind of contributions that the hon.

[Mr. Wakeham]

Gentleman makes to our discussions. These are serious matters and should not be the subject of flippant and irresponsible remarks from the hon. Gentleman.

I understand that British Rail is still considering the route options identified in the report published last July. British Rail will need to seek statutory authorisation for whichever route it finally chooses and the House will therefore have an opportunity to debate these matters fully. A private Bill is the accepted procedure for the authorisation of new railway works.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): While I am always extremely grateful for the close interest in the affairs of my constituents consistently taken by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I wish to ask my right hon. Friend about a slightly different issue. As my right hon. Friend has said, British Rail is about to produce a Bill for a £1½ billion civil engineering project. Many of my hon. Friends feel that the procedures by which the House debates projects of that size and type leaves something to be desired, not least because any committee established to examine the petitions will, by its very nature, exclude anyone with a particular knowledge of Kent. As it is a national issue, can we have a debate on the methods by which private Bills for projects of this scale are debated?

Mr. Wakeham: Absolutely. We can have such a debate and, as I have said, the vehicle for that debate will be the very important report of the Select Committee considering private Bill procedure. We shall have a debate soon, but merely having a debate will not change the rules under which Bills are introduced this Session. There must be consideration, and legislation may well be brought in to change the procedures.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The Leader of the House will understand the feelings on both sides of the House and in the country about the long and protracted situation of British hostages being held in the far east. Without being critical, is he not aware that the nation needs to feel that the Government are saying something about what they are doing? Although it is a sensitive issue, surely our intelligence and diplomatic services should be giving the Government some information, and the Government should be seen to react in such a manner as to give the families of the hostages and British people some idea that the Government are actively concerned.

Mr. Wakeham: Of course the hon. Gentleman is right that if the Government were able to say something it would allay public concern to some degree. I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a close interest in such matters and he will know that many of the discussions and negotiations are delicate and difficult and it could be positively damaging to say anything publicly about them. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend and if he considers that there is an opportunity when it is right to say something I am sure that he will do so.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. Friend aware that after giving due consideration to the weighty views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who was a former distinguished Conservative Chief Whip, common sense indicates that the number of issues to be discussed in the Official Secrets Bill are somewhat restricted, have been much repeated and are likely to be repeated on the three occasions next week for which he has set aside time for discussion of that Bill? In those circumstances, is not a guillotine wholly justified? Perhaps my right hon. Friend might consider guillotining all Bills so we can get home at reasonable hours.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not go along with my hon. and learned Friend's final remark, but I believe that a timetable motion is justified and that I have allocated plenty of time to discuss all the outstanding issues.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Bearing in mind that the Government are a signatory to the European Court of Human Rights, will the Leader of the House make a statement next week on the decision by the Minister of State, Home Office not to take into consideration the decision reached by the court in regard to Mr. Berrehab and Mr. Abdulla Hanna Yousef?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a statement, but I shall certainly refer the matter to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): Can my right hon. Friend give an instance when, on a constitutional issue, a guillotine has been introduced after merely 13½ hours, particularly when, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the former leader of our party said, the issue touches upon the basic rights and needs of society? In 1989 when the Government first introduced legislation on the matter, the Government themselves introduced the amendment that led to the public interest debate. Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that there was no need for a guillotine then?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend refers to the Bill as a constitutional measure. Although it deals with powers of the state, as do many Bills, it does not affect the constitution. I understand a constitutional Bill to include such measures as the Scotland Bill, which was guillotined by the last Labour Government, the Wales Bill, which was guillotined by the last Labour Government and the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Bill, which was guillotined by the last but one Labour Government. I do not accept that argument.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the Leader of the House take note of early-day motion 374?

[That this House views with alarm the potential safety hazard from the substantial quantity of uranium carried by many United States built civilian aircraft as counterweights; notes that the growing stockpiles of depleted uranium and the low price at which it has been sold by the United States Government has led to its substitution for tungsten; notes that in the event of high temperature fires that could arise after a crash rapid oxidation of depleted uranium can occur leading to the release of toxic uranium oxide particles; notes that the inhalation hazard from the 1,000 lbs of depleted uranium in a Boeing 747 aircraft could put about 250,000 people at risk; calls upon the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement detailing plans for the protection of rescue personnel and local residents in the future and to make strong representations as a matter of urgency to Boeing to replace this highly dangerous ballast; and requests the Secretary of State for Transport to include the question of any possible danger of radioactivity from the

depleted uranium used as counterweights and ballast in the airplane that crashed at Lockerbie as part of the inquiry into the Lockerbie disaster.]

It deals with the use of depleted uranium in aircraft as ballast and counterweights. Given that a Boeing aircraft caught fire and crashed two days ago—the third to crash in two months—will he arrange for an early debate on the hazards of using depleted uranium? Depleted uranium gives off toxic particles of uranium oxide, and when alight can endanger as many as 250,000 people. Low radiation is given off even if it is not alight, and many experts are revising their opinion about the dangers of that.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Lady's concern, but there is little, if any, potential hazard from depleted uranium counterweights in commercial aircraft. The possibility of a crash involving a severe fire in the tail section is remote because of its distance from the jet fuel cells. If there were a fire in the tail section, temperatures high enough to generate sufficient amounts of airborne uranium are unlikely, if not completely impossible.

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): I remain completely in favour of the timetabling of the Committee stage of every Bill, but how can my right hon. Friend claim that one day is enough for the remainder of the Committee stage of the Official Secrets Bill? Is my right hon. Friend aware that I, and I suspect one or two others, came to the House last week knowing little about the Bill, but that having listened to the arguments, I am convinced that the Government have not a leg to stand on? If he insists on a guillotine next week, will he ensure that the Chief Whip makes certain that the Government Back Benches are full so that Back Benchers may listen to the arguments and draw their own conclusions?

Mr. Wakeham: I hope that as many Back Benchers as possible will be present to listen to the debate. The timetable motion that I am tabling supplies not one but two extra days for the Committee, which is rather more than my hon. Friend suggested. I think that that is enough, and I hope that my hon. Friend, and other hon. Members who wish to, will take part in the debate.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the Leader of the House assist me by obtaining next week an answer to a question that I put to the Secretary of State for the Environment on 19 January, to which I have so far been given only a holding answer? The question asked how many football matches and grounds had been visited in an official capacity by the Minister responsible for sport. I cannot believe for the life of me that the answer can be many, otherwise the hon. Gentleman would not be pursuing the ludicrous football spectators scheme.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman spoilt his question by the last part of it because that does not follow in any way. I was about to respond in a spirit of helpfulness and make inquiries about where the answer is for which the hon. Gentleman is waiting. In spite of his remarks, I will still do so.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the tragic death earlier this week of an 18-year-old girl from a British territory in the Caribbean, may we have a debate this week about the crazy rule that requires the Health Service to provide free treatment to citizens of French islands in the Caribbean but not to citizens of British territories? Can my right hon. Friend think of anything more vital, urgent or important to discuss than why a girl should die because she did not receive an urgent heart operation that would have been possible if she had lived 50 miles away on a French island?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend has raised a point which, I know, concerns a number of people, but I cannot give him the answer today. It is a subject that goes back a long time and is concerned with the Community rules and the way in which they were formed. I recognise my hon. Friend's concern, but I cannot promise a debate next week.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House give time for an early debate on concessionary television licences? Is he aware that, since his Government tightened up the regulations last year in a mean way, many elderly people feel aggrieved that they do not have access to cheap licences?

Mr. Wakeham: The way in which the changes were made was the best in the circumstances and was a result of a court case that upset the arrangements that had operated for a number of years. I recognise the hon. Lady's concern, but I cannot promise an early debate on the subject.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my right hon. Friend help me out of a "tight" corner by allowing a debate in the near future on the subject of shopping facilities for essential items in the House? At least 20 colleagues kindly told me today that I have a large ladder at the back of my stockings, which shows that not everybody's eyes are on higher things. There is nowhere within 20 minutes where I could go to buy stockings. I point out to my right hon. Friend that I can buy alcohol, tobacco and chocolates here, but that is not much good when one has one's tights in a twist.

Mr. Wakeham: Even if we had a debate on the subject, as my hon. Friend wants, I regret to say that the position at the end of the week would be the same as it is now.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): May I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that the Laganside Development (Northern Ireland) Order and the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order have been referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments? May I also draw to his attention the fact that the orders will have a great impact on urban renewal in Belfast city and the whole countryside of Northern Ireland, yet the Committee does not contain one Member from Northern Ireland? Does that mean that Northern Ireland Members will not be able to participate in the debate on matters that will fundamentally affect urban and rural communities in Northern Ireland? Will the Leader of the House make time to enable Northern Ireland Members to participate in those two major orders, which so much affect our own communities?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sorry about what the hon. Gentleman has said, as I recognise that he has a legitimate feeling of grievance. It is sometimes difficult in setting up Committees to achieve an exact composition when so many hon. Members are anxious to serve on such important Committees. I am sorry that that is the position, but I cannot promise time on the Floor of the House in the near future.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): It seems clear from what the right hon. Gentleman said today, and on other occasions in the House, that the people of Northern Ireland have had their democratic rights taken away by this Government. Will the Leader of the House look at the matter of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, a meeting of which took place yesterday? Once again, shamefully and contrary to what I understood to be decent parliamentary practices, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland failed to come to the Dispatch Box to make a statement. Will the Leader of the House force his right hon. Friend to give up talking to the press privately and off the record and to come, instead, to speak directly to the elected representatives here, so we can know what has been done and said in the name of the people of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that that is very unfair to my right hon. Friend, who has been forthcoming and open and who frequently speaks in the House. Indeed, he was answering questions earlier this afternoon. I shall refer my hon. Friend's comments to him.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House challenge on Monday the fact that there were no examples of filibustering, prolonged speeches or unnecessary interruptions on the Official Secrets Bill? Will he tell the House when there has been so much opposition to a timetable motion from Conservative Members before? Is he not aware that the accusation will be that the Government are using their majority in a corrupt way to push through the Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman, who claims to be a democrat, seems to be very upset about somebody having a majority for anything with which he disagrees. He will have to wait until Monday to hear the points that I have to make. I shall make my own speech in my own way and I shall not take advice from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): May we have a debate next week on the position of the Health Service in rural areas because women in my constituency are outraged that the Leicestershire health authority took no notice of their protests against proposals to close the maternity unit in Oakham? If consultation is to mean anything, those proposals should have been dropped—not confirmed yesterday—after all the protests.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern of my hon. Friend and his constituents about that matter. I wish that I could promise him an early debate, but we shall be having a debate in the not too distant future on the wider question of the Health Service review which was published by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health last week.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House press the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement next week on the water industry? As millions of people are facing monster increases in water charges, will he press the Secretary of State to introduce rebate arrangements to help pensioners and others on low incomes to pay their water bills? Will he also press his right hon. Friend to introduce a complete ban on water disconnections, which are increasing rapidly? Finally, will he understand that many of us now think that the Yorkshire water authority is more secretive than the Masons, since it is banning the press from committee meetings on water quality and restricting information on its financial affairs? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Yorkshire water authority has applied to be subject to the Official Secrets Act?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman raises a number of issues but the one thing that was consistent throughout was that they had nothing to do with water privatisation, and that is for sure. Nothing in the privatisation proposals would justify the sort of increases that have been suggested and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has invited the chairmen of those companies which are proposing rises of more than 10 per cent. to explain their proposals to him. We had better wait for that meeting.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Having successfully caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, on three successive weeks, to invite my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to state his views on early-day motions 249 and 250, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he has come to a conclusion about the merits of those motions which are supported by 208 hon. Members on both sides of the House?

[That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Price Marking (Petrol) (Amendment) Order 1988 (S.I., 1988, No. 2226), dated 20th December 1988, a copy of which was laid before this House on 22nd December, be annulled.]

[That this House notes the recommendation of the Trade and Industry Select Committee that petrol prices should continue to be displayed in gallon as well as litre term on boards visible from the roadside; notes that the Price Marking (Petrol) (Amendment) Order 1988 will remove this requirement with effect from 23rd January; and calls for a debate on the Order.]

Mr. Wakeham: As my hon. Friend is aware, he had a meeting in his capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. My right hon. Friend has now written to my hon. Friend confirming that the Select Committee's comments and the early-day motions have been carefully noted and that he is considering what further steps can be taken towards the common objective of ensuring that price differentials are clearly shown in order to protect the consumer.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Is the Leader of the House aware that the test case on behalf of 2,000 widows in the 40-45 age range concerns my constituent, Mrs. Doreen Whitbread, and that the tribunal ruled that the retrospective impact of the regulations was unfair and invalid? As the Prime Minister has said, the Government are still taking up that case, presumably because of their exceptional meanness. When can we have parliamentary time to try to persuade the Government to accept that judgment and pay the widows?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point and I have nothing to add.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): So that the House may make its own judgment about the predictable complaint from his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who, unaccountably, is not in his place, will my right hon. Friend give Mr. Speaker now

—or if not now, will he circulate it in the *Official Report* —a list of those occasions when the right hon. Gentleman, whether as Prime Minister or as Patronage Secretary, imposed a guillotine upon proceedings in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his own point, but I am not concerned with what happened in the past. I am concerned with the present Session of Parliament and the Bills that have to go through. Each timetable motion that I introduce can be justified on its own merits in the circumstances of the time, and this one is no exception.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the textile industry? There is great apprehension about the negotiations on the multi-fibre arrangement, which is vital to the future of the textile industry, particularly in Bradford which has lost a number of jobs, particularly over the past 10 years? In addition, water privatisation concerns not only workers and pensioners who are worried about increased prices, but employers in the textile industry who have expressed strong opposition to the Government's proposals. Therefore, a debate is even more urgent.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the multi-fibre arrangement is important, but I cannot promise an early debate on the matter. However, I note that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is answering questions on Wednesday and if the hon. Gentleman catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, he may care to press him then. I treat with some scepticism the hon. Gentleman's remarks about privatisation and employers because nothing in our water privatisation proposals justifies increases in prices.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern over the mounting evidence of abuse of the contracting-out system for the political levy and the continued existence of closed shops in Britain? Will he give the House an opportunity to debate those important issues and to bring forward examples of those abuses so that changes can be made in the Employment Bill before it leaves the House?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are well advanced with their review of the operation of the pre-entry closed shop. The December White Paper entitled "Employment for the 1990s" made it clear that the pre-entry closed shop was a barrier to employment. The Government will also be considering many other areas of industrial relations and trade union reform.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Leader of the House give some consideration to early-day motion 176 on the fate of Mr. Charles Bester?

[That this House condemns the decision of the South African courts to jail for six years 18 year old Charles Bester following his conscientious objection to serving in the South African armed forces; notes his statement in court after hearing his sentence, 'you shall know that truth and the truth shall set you free'; and calls upon the South African government to immediately release Mr. Bester.]

He is an 18-year-old Anglican who has been jailed for six years in South Africa for refusing to join the South African defence force. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, considering that 87 hon. Members from all parties have signed that motion and that 55,000 people from churches all over Britain have signed petitions calling for his release, the Foreign Secretary should give further consideration to placing pressure on the South African Government for Mr. Bester's early release?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government reject the early-day motion to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Such decisions are a matter for the individual concerned. However, we understand why some South Africans choose to refuse to do military service and respect the sincerity of their views.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are those among us who supported the Official Secrets Bill on the ground that much of it is desirable but who find it impossible to accept the guillotine motion on a measure which has attracted its most intelligent criticism from Conservative Members?

Mr. Wakeham: The judgment about a timetable motion should be whether the time allowed is adequate for proper and balanced discussion. My motion stands up to that test and that is why I hope that my hon. Friend will support it.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 398 calling for the resignations of the Secretary of State for the Environment and of the Minister for Water and Planning?

[That this House deplores the announcement by the Water Companies Association that up to a quarter of all households face increases in their water bills this year of between 30 per cent. and 50 per cent. as a direct result of water privatisation proposals; demands a full and proper explanation from Her Majesty's Government as to how such a situation could arise from a proposal which Ministers have said will be good for the consumer; and calls for the immediate resignation of the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister for Water and Planning.]

On the off chance that that advice is not taken, will the Leader of the House arrange for an early statement from the Secretary of State for the Environment so that hon. Members may learn why up to one quarter of households face an increase of up to 50 per cent. in water charges as a direct result of a measure which the Secretary of State told the House and the country would be good for the consumer? Will he accept from me that it is not good enough to say that the matter can be dealt with in Committee as hon. Members on both sides of the House want to discuss it, particularly those hon. Members from the north-east of England, where up to 1·5 million households will be affected?

Mr. Wakeham: I can deal with it straight away. I entirely reject the allegations made by the hon. Gentleman. He was talking complete nonsense, and the matter does not bear close examination.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Could I reinforce the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), because anything that can be done to prevent our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) from developing hypocritical tendencies will be helpful to his place in the history books?

Mr. Wakeham: I have quite enough to do to organise the business of the House and to keep it running smoothly. I have announced a timetable motion for the Official Secrets Bill next Monday, and I shall be happy when that debate is over.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Since curried eggs have given the general public a good run for their money in more ways than one, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman if he will ensure that the former Health Minister, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), pays into the public kitty—the Exchequer—the proceeds from her forthcoming book? We should remember the important principle that no Member of this House should benefit from public office. She will certainly benefit from that book.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that that proposition stands up to any inspection at all. There are long-standing traditions and rules about the way in which we conduct ourselves in public affairs. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is at all helpful.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): There has been speculation in the press today that the Government's programme to relocate Civil Service jobs in London is to be accelerated—up to nine tenths has been mentioned. The move to take jobs to the areas where people need jobs is most welcome. Will my right hon. Friend comment on that move, and can we expect an early debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not disagree with the general thrust of what my hon. Friend has said. However, this is not the time or place to make an announcement about Government policy in that area.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House find time next week or in the near future to debate the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the need to extend it to give anonymity to people in employment who have spent convictions and have served a prison sentence? Will he also take time to read early-day motion 403?

[That this House questions the judgement of the North London Polytechnic governors in permitting the employment to take place of an Irishman connected with terrorism and who was convicted and imprisoned for offences related to explosives and is concerned that this person is in a position to influence young people at taxpayers' expense.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford South (Mr. Cryer) has tabled an amendment:

[Line 1, leave out from 'judgement', and insert 'and justice of those honourable Members who seek to vilify viciously and hound an employee of the polytechnic of North London who has served a punishment for a crime and has then sought and sustained work in the community; and regards with abhorrence those who seek to force such people into perpetual unemployment and isolation merely in order to obtain political capital from a media which shares their own questionable values.']

Does he not think that the actions of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) in publicly naming and condemning someone who has a spent conviction and is working legally and properly in my constituency is a disgrace? The right hon. Gentleman should not have done so. The spirit of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act should mean that there is anonymity, so that people can get on with the rest of their lives, having served their sentences.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's concern for individuals is a bit one-sided. If I had heard from him some appreciation of the understandable anger at the way my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was treated when he visited the polytechnic of North London, I would have considered his comments to be of more value. The polytechnic is an independent institution which is responsible for the employment of its own staff.

Mr. Corbyn: The right hon. Gentleman is taking it out on someone else.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Has my right hon. Friend noted on the Order Paper today motions 39, 40 and 41, which in one form or another have appeared almost daily ad nauseam and, more to the point, at great public expense? Two of those motions seek to change the procedures of this House and the other seeks a massive increase in our allowances. Are there not more proper ways to pursue those sorts of issues? Is my right hon. Friend not amazed at the effrontery of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) who seeks to finance his administrative empire at the cost of nearly £100,000 per year? Is there no way in which this paperchase can be stopped?

Mr. Wakeham: I can understand my hon. Friend's anger, but the question of the right of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) to put matters on the Order Paper is not for me. I am sure that the rules of the House have been observed and the hon. Gentleman is entitled to do so. Whether he furthers his cause by repeating these motions on the Order Paper is, of course, a matter of judgment. I do not believe that it is a matter on which I should comment.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Has my right hon. Friend noted early-day motion 397 that was tabled yesterday?

[That this House expresses its grave concern at the continuing existence of the National Dock Labour Scheme; deplores its debilitating effects on the economies of the port areas, most of which are in inner city areas; notes that the Scheme has presided over a decline in the number of registered dockers from 78,000 in 1947 to less than 9,500 today; notes the Wharton Econometrics Forecasting Associates Group study that 45,000 extra jobs would have been created in the ports but for the Scheme; observes the need to clear these restrictive practices well before 1992; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to make the necessary arrangements to abolish the Scheme and set our ports free.]

It already has the support of 129 hon. Members and it expresses growing concern about the continued inactivity of the Government. Does he recognise that this motion represents the frustration of many hon. Members who represent port constituencies at the continuing collapse of our wharfs and port companies, notably in Grimsby and Aberdeen recently? Does he recognise also that we are missing many opportunities brought about by the advent of 1992 for distribution centres on behalf of major companies from abroad, which are now going to the continent due to the adverse effects of the dock scheme in our own British ports?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government understand the strong feelings of many hon. Members about the dock labour scheme. I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend, but I have nothing further to add to the statements which have been made previously.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will recall that during the last Parliament on a number of

Opposition Supply days we debated the north/south divide? In view of the dramatic improvement in the north-east and the economic recovery of that region—which was led by the example of the Chancellor's activities—does my right hon. Friend agree that, as the Opposition refuse to debate this subject publicly and to give it an airing during Opposition time, the Government should find time to beat their own drum about the excellent way in which the north-east of England has recovered?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my hon. Friend. The way in which the subjects for Opposition Supply days have changed over recent months is significant. I believe that the Opposition, too, recognise the great improvement that there has been in the economic fortunes of all parts of the country. I wish I could find time for a debate on the north-east in Government time, but at this time of year there is a substantial legislative programme to get through, and I fear that I must concentrate on that, tempting as my hon. Friend's request is.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will no doubt appreciate the importance of the Channel tunnel to many parts of the country, especially the English regions and Scotland and Wales. Will he consider giving time for a debate in the House on the connections between the regions and the tunnel? No doubt my right hon. Friend appreciates that British Rail is considering its plan, and it could probably benefit from listening to the views of many hon. Members who represent those regions and who could help it to plan for the future.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the fact that British Rail would certainly profit from listening to the views of my hon. Friend and other hon. Members. I wish that I could find time for a debate in the near future, but I fear that it will be difficult.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): In the light of the sustained criticism from both sides of the House of the proposed guillotine on the Official Secrets Bill, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government are playing into the hands of those who want a written constitution? Does he agree that, where a Government have a vast majority and propose to reject government by consensus, that should be balanced by the Government being especially respectful of the rights of the House of Commons? Would it not be better to risk wasting parliamentary time than to have the Government appearing heavy-handed?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with most of my hon. Friend's propositions, but, having weighed those propositions, I have concluded that it is now the right time to introduce a guillotine motion on the Official Secrets Bill.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): May I provide an antidote to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), the hon. Friend of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), and ask my right hon. Friend to reflect on previous Labour Governments which guillotined authentic constitutional Bills, such as the one on devolution, and, in his rack and thumbscrew phase, our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, who guillotined the most serious constitutional measure that this House has seen this century—the European Community Bill? Can I ask my right hon. Friend to get on with liberalising the law on official secrets as soon as possible because, by some miracle, a future Labour Government may come into being and carry out their policy of instituting more prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act than any other party?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend is right. Whether or not a guillotine should be used—as I believe the bishop once said on another occasion—is "a matter of principle that has been settled". We are just haggling about whether this is the right time or not. I noted an interesting comment by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), to whose utterings and sayings I always look before moving a guillotine motion. He said:

"it is constitutional Bills for which guillotines are most required. . . . the House should not give the impression to anybody . . . that there is something extraordinary, improper or contrary to our traditions in the application of timetable motions to constitutional Bills."—[*Official Report*, 16 November 1977; Vol. 939, c. 585.]

I bow to the right hon. Gentleman's knowledge.

BILL PRESENTED

Funeral Industry (Code of Practice)

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe presented a Bill to establish a compulsory code of practice for funeral industry directors: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 10 March and to be printed. [Bill 69.]

Public Expenditure

[Relevant document: First Report of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on the Autumn Statement 1988, House of Commons Paper No. 89 of Session 1988-89.]

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the debate on public expenditure. Before I call the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, I announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.20 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans for 1989-90 to 1991-92 (Cm. 601-609, 611-619 and 621).

Perhaps I may be permitted to say at the outset that I am sure that hon. Members will be extremely pleased to see the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) in his place for this debate. We warmly welcome him and look forward to hearing his remarks.

This is the tenth year in which the Government have published a public expenditure White Paper. In those 10 years, the advance in our economic prospects has been mirrored by great improvements in the management of public expenditure. At the same time, the format, coverage and content of the White Paper have improved beyond recognition.

My right hon. Friend's Autumn Statement revealed that we now have the strongest fiscal position of any major nation. That is due in no small measure to the policy of firm control over public expenditure that we have followed consistently for several years. That policy has played an important part in the revival of our economic prospects and in the growing strength of our economic performance.

I have no doubt whatsoever that firm expenditure control is necessary. It is the right policy for the economy, and it is the right policy for the taxpayer, too.

Public spending has a central role to play in the provision of services that we all care about. But it differs from private spending in one important respect. It involves spending money, compulsorily extracted from the taxpayer, and then spent on his or her behalf by the Government on priorities that the Government determine and that, by and large, the taxpayer must accept. I believe this means, therefore, that the Government have two clear responsibilities. First, spending other people's money must be justified on merit. That means that it must meet a social or economic goal effectively and efficiently. Secondly, total spending must be no more than the taxpayer can bear.

Our policy is controlled growth of public spending—growth that we know we and the taxpayer can afford. The practical effect of being prudent is that, in the long run, we do more for services.

Within the parameters that I have set, public spending has an essential role to play; beyond them, it can be an unsustainable drain on the nation's resources, as the Opposition proved between 1974 and 1979, when borrowing reached over £110 billion in today's terms, and inflation soared. The House will recall that public expenditure then had to be savagely and swiftly slashed —most notably, capital spending. We are determined that will not happen again.

Firm control of the total level of public expenditure and the right choice of public spending priorities are absolute prerequisites of proper economic management. That has proved to be true in the past, and it will remain true in the future. There should be no expectation in any part of the House or beyond that a fiscal surplus will encourage additional expenditure that cannot be justified and cannot be sustained.

This year, we have made two important changes to the White Paper. First, we brought forward much of the material on the public expenditure totals to the Autumn Statement in November. The House has already debated that statement and considered the Government's overall policies for public expenditure. The White Paper now before us focuses on the detailed composition of our spending plans.

The second change is that we have split the White Paper into separate volumes for each Department. This makes it much more accessible and easier to use. For example, from now on, someone interested in the cost of Scottish roads needs to buy only the Scottish volume. Departmental Select Committees will find this approach much more convenient. *[Interruption.]* It is an attractive colour, as Opposition Members may have noticed. There is none of that nasty red.

It also moves towards the creation of separate departmental reports which, from 1991, will be published with each Department's main Estimate. This will improve clarity and assist the House in its scrutiny of departmental programmes and Estimates.

These changes reflect helpful recommendations, for which I am most grateful, from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, and from the Committee of Public Accounts. I am sure they will be welcomed by everyone who uses the document.

I am grateful also to the TCSC for recognising the vast improvements in recent years in both the quality and quantity of the information provided in the White Paper. It has expanded dramatically from a single slim volume in 1979 to 19 volumes in the present year, although the House will be relieved to know that expenditure itself has not grown at the same rate. Nor is it a dry document. It is a detailed and comprehensive account of our stewardship of public expenditure. It provides more and better information than ever before both on how we spend the nation's money and the value that the public get from that expenditure. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may not think that the value that we get is important, but we do. That may be one of the distinctions between us.

The wealth of material in the White Paper reveals beyond any doubt that we pay the same close attention to the detail of expenditure as we do to the overall totals. But it is the substance of the White Paper, rather than its presentation, that is important. *[Interruption.]* As bedside reading, I would much rather read these White Papers than the notes from the IMF that the Labour Government used to get. This White Paper illustrates deep changes in the level of public expenditure and its distribution to priority services.

In the decade to 1978-79, the average real growth in public expenditure was nearly 3 per cent. In the decade since 1978-79, we have halved that growth so that it is now comfortably within the growth of the economy. The growth in the ratio of public spending to national income, which had been rising since the mid-1950s, has been halted and reversed. The past seven years have seen the largest and most sustained fall in the ratio since the unwinding of the wartime economy. It is now at its lowest level for over

20 years, and it is set to fall still further. We are now living within our means and not beyond them, and we propose to keep it that way.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Talking of living within our means, will my right hon. Friend confirm that of the £170 billion national debt today, the equivalent of £110 billion was incurred by the Labour Government from 1974 to 1979? If we did not have to pay the interest burden on that debt, we could spend much more on other programmes or carry on with tax reductions.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is right. He anticipates the direction in which my remarks will turn in a few moments.

We want, and now have, fiscal prudence and lower taxes. We have it because of stable planning, value for money and sound finance. This firm control means that we need no panic cuts of the sort we saw under the Labour Government in the 1970s, which damaged so many services.

The most notable programme to benefit from the firm public expenditure control that we now have is the National Health Service, which we made a top priority in the last survey. I shall ask a question of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. Is he content with the resources that we have made available to the National Health Service, compared with previous plans? There has been an unprecedented increase of £2 billion next year and £2·5 billion the year after. I remind him that those record sums are more than what he said were necessary at this time last year. At his pre-Budget press conference, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"We believe the minimum extra provision which should be made in the Budget is £2 billion."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman had his answer in the Autumn Statement, and it exceeded his demands.

Real resources for health care have been increased by over 37 per cent. since 1978-79. As a result, in England alone, there are now 77,000 more hospital doctors, nurses, and other staff directly caring for patients than there were in 1978. They are better paid and better equipped.

But that increase in resources, massive though it is, is only part of the story, for better value for money is important too. And the number of patients treated has increased faster even than the level of resources. The National Health Service in England is now treating 1·25 million more in-patients, 2·6 million more out-patients and 440,000 more day cases than in 1978. The number of coronary artery bypass grafts has quadrupled, cataract operations have more than doubled and bone marrow transplants have increased 15 times. Better performance by the National Health Service has meant better health for the nation. What a shame that the Opposition so frequently run it down by saying that it is under-resourced and unable to cope.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): If that is true, how is it that I was told last week by the Brompton national heart hospital that the number of coronary bypass operations rose by 100 per year, from 600 to 1,200, over the six years up to 1984 and then stuck at that level, because it simply did not have the resources to increase it further although the demand was there, and that this year it is going down by 100? That is very far from the picture the right hon. Gentleman has given me of what is happening in the National Health Service.

Mr. Major: I have given the picture of what is happening in the National Health Service across the whole of the country. It is not a question of whether those figures are right; those figures are right, and that is what is happening in the NHS. I will tell the hon. Gentleman what else is happening, for it is relevant, and even he, I suspect, will welcome it. In all age groups the mortality rate fell between 1979 and 1987, partly, of course, as a result of the growing excellence of the National Health Service. For children under one and aged from five to nine, death rates have fallen by about one third. That is a staggering improvement that everyone will welcome—everyone, it seems, except perhaps the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). The proposals that we announced last week will produce a still better, more responsive and more efficient Health Service.

Let me make it absolutely clear that we are not privatising the National Health Service as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)—who I am sorry to see is not here—absurdly suggested. His leak on that matter was as inaccurate as his leak on the level of community charge reimbursement some months ago. I say to the hon. Gentleman "Better luck next leak". He has been wrong on each occasion so far. We are modernising the National Health Service, making it more efficient and better resourced. Perhaps the Opposition had better do the same for the hon. Member for Livingston, for his leaks are deeply inaccurate and, as he is the same age as the NHS, I suspect that he is just as much in need of reform as it is.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Just as the Chief Secretary seems to be wrong about heart operations at the Brompton hospital, so he is wrong about the National Health Service being safe in the Prime Minister's hands. Is he aware that the Bradford royal infirmary, according to yesterday's *Telegraph and Argus*, is to have a new private clinic within the hospital, and that the general manager for Bradford has already announced that the three biggest hospitals in the Bradford health district are going to opt out of the National Health Service? He seems to be wrong about Brompton; he is definitely wrong about Bradford.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on both counts. If there is a private wing to be added to provide a better health service for the community, I am delighted. Those hospitals are not going to opt out of the National Health Service; they remain within the NHS but with proper local community management as NHS trust hospitals. The trouble is that the hon. Gentleman lives in the blinkered world of the 1940s and has not noticed that it has moved on.

One further area of priority that I know is of interest to Members of the Opposition is capital expenditure.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves the subject of the Health Service and the plans to reorganise it announced recently, can he tell us, since he must have been consulted about this, what will be the cost to the taxpayer of subsidising private health care for pensioners?

Mr. Major: It will entirely depend upon the take-up at some future stage, but the net saving to the National Health Service as a whole brought about by the fact that people will be able to exercise choice—which I appreciate the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not like—may be substantial.

Mr. John Smith: I take it from the Chief Secretary's reply that he cannot give an answer to my question—what is the cost of the subsidy? Am I to understand that this was agreed without understanding the public expenditure consequences of the decision?

Mr. Major: I can assure the right hon. and learned Gentleman that the sum is modest and that in due course it will be available to him. Something else will be available to the right hon. and learned Gentleman in a few moments: that is, information on public expenditure to correct some misinformation which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) gave some time ago.

As the White Paper shows, we have increased provision for next year by a massive £2·75 billion, bringing total public sector capital spending to a record £27 billion. Within that sum is substantial extra investment in roads and public transport. An extra £220 million is being provided next year for motorways and trunk roads in England, with a further £250 million in 1990-91. There is, in addition, substantial extra investment in London transport, including improved safety standards and refurbishing the Central line.

The Opposition are often critical of our record on capital spending, though I am bound to say that they are the last people in the world with any right to be so. For example, in the 10 years since 1979, real spending on motorways and trunk roads in England has gone up by 30 per cent.; it fell by 40 per cent. under Labour. Our plans provide for a further 20 per cent. increase by 1991. The record is the same for capital spending in the National Health Service: up by 30 per cent. in England, in real terms, since 1979; down by over 30 per cent. under the last Labour Government. Prison spending fell by 60 per cent. under Labour; it has increased by over 200 per cent., to provide modern and necessary prison facilities, under the present Government. And so on. The record of successive White Papers speaks for itself. When the right hon. and learned Gentleman speaks for the Opposition perhaps he will acknolwedge that record and not misinterpret it.

Last month my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East by how much he would increase public expenditure. We still await an answer from the hon. Gentleman, and I look forward to it. Nor am I optimistic that we shall get one today because the hon. Gentleman plainly has no idea what his public expenditure costs would be. He is into promises but not into costing them. Let me help him with some of the more recent promises that I have seen—*[Interruption.]* It is a clear indication that the Opposition do not like it when they will not listen, but, whether they like it or not, they are going to get it.

The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition came back recently from his trip to Botswana—I hope without the difficulty that he has had on other occasions—with a pledge to increase aid spending by £1·9 billion. The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) is reported—I hope the right hon. and learned Gentleman will tell me whether this is accurate—to have pledged a further modest £4,000 million boost for research and development. Health charges, we are told, would be abolished, depriving the NHS of half a billion pounds in revenue. How would it help Bradford if that sum disappeared from the Health Service?

But that is just a dipstick sample of the Opposition's spending promises. I understand very well why the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, who is a wise politician on occasion, said on 22 January:

"I will be keeping a careful eye on commitments."

He knew his colleagues only too well. After the last few weeks he will keep a fairly careful eye on the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East as well, if I am any judge.

In the meantime, in a spirit of helpful inquiry, perhaps I can add another question on capital spending as this is an important issue to hon. Members on both sides of the House. The question is simple and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and his hon. Friends will undoubtedly wish to respond to it. Which would the Opposition prefer, this Government's record on investment or that of their predecessor, the Labour Government?

Before Opposition Members answer, perhaps I can help them out a little—*[Interruption.]* I will come to statistics in a moment. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East complained last month that general Government investment was falling. I thought that that was a fishy claim so I investigated it. It is a very fishy claim. I push aside the fact that general Government investment is a very selective measure because it excludes much of public sector capital. However, even on the selective measure which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East chose, he made his claim on the basis of a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the figures. His figures were not the figures for total gross investment. His were net figures, net of receipts. Effectively, they were net of council house sales.—*[Interruption.]* Obviously the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East does not understand what he said, or he would not be chortling now. By being net of receipts, the hon. Gentleman's figures effectively excluded the new investment made possible by those receipts.

By that logic, if I sell my house and use the proceeds to build a new one, my contribution to investment is zero even though there is another home and another home owner. That is why the figures quoted by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East are fishy. Last month I said that the hon. Gentleman was a purveyor of more dodgy material than Arthur Daley. I am now bound to say that I realise how unfair I was to Arthur Daley, now that I have had a chance to examine the figures.

If the hon. Gentleman had got his figures right, he would have realised that general Government investment is now 10 per cent. higher. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East should listen and then he might not make the same mistake as his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East. I know that the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not like it, but he should listen.

If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East had got his figures right, he would have realised that general Government investment was nearly 10 per cent. higher in real terms in 1987 than in 1979 and was not falling. The indications are that 1988 will show a further increase, not a reduction.

By contrast, between 1973 and 1978, Government investment fell by more than 30 per cent. In that period the Government's investment figures fell by that percentage on either basis, gross or net, because council house sales were not permitted by the Labour Government and so the availability of receipts to add to spending did not arise.

When the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has finished giggling with his hon. Friends, I hope that he will acknowledge that his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East wittingly or unwittingly misled the House. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will spare us lectures based on the wrong figures and answer my straight question. Whose investment record does he prefer, ours with more investment or the previous Labour Government's with declining investment? The country knows very well which is the better. *[Interruption.]* I can see that the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not want to answer and I know why. He has no answer to that question.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman prefer the efficient and effective public services that exist now to the impoverished services which we inherited? We look forward to his reply because we could not get an answer to that from his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East last month.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is not the Treasury's presentation of the figures partly responsible for the misunderstanding under which the Opposition seem to be labouring? Why does the Treasury persist in deducting the proceeds of the sales of privatisations and council houses from capital spending? Would it not be better to show the gross capital spending and the proceeds separately?

Mr. Major: If my hon. Friend was to consider chapter 21 of the White Paper—I know that he is an accountant and I hope that that is not a disadvantage for him—he will see that the figures are perfectly clear for anyone who chooses to read them.

The figures produced by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East for investment also neglect investment by public corporations. Perhaps he believes that investment in water or railways is unimportant. The Government do not, as the White Paper shows— *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East believes that to be so, perhaps for the first time in his life he will listen to me.

How much higher does the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East think that British Rail's investment in railways will be in 1991 in comparison with investment in 1978-79? He does not know. Will it be 5, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40 or 50 per cent.? What does he think? Investment in railways is set to be more than 75 per cent. higher in real terms by 1991. That is the biggest renewal programme in rail since the switch from steam to diesel. It will be 75 per cent. higher than at the end of the last Labour Government's period of office. That is a "cut" which most people would like to see.

As the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East referred to cuts, between 1973-74 and 1978-879 investment in railways hardly increased at all in real terms. That is the record which the hon. Gentleman tries to forget. A similar story applies to water. The volume of investment is half as high again this year compared with 10 years ago. There is a £1 billion programme to improve sewage treatment work over the next four years. That must be compared with the chronic under-investment during the 1970s. Investment in water was cut by the Labour Government by 25 per cent. in the five years to 1979-80. That led to an outdated and overloaded sewerage system which we are now renovating.

The lesson is clear. A successful economy can invest, and we are. An unsuccessful one cannot and cuts investment. That is what the Labour Government did. *[Interruption.]* I think that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said, "Wicked." I did not quite catch the word he used. There is nothing wicked about it. It was simply incompetence which led the Labour Government into that position.

I must tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues that a successful economy can do something else that an unsuccessful one cannot. *[Interruption.]* I was intrigued to hear about interest rates. Purely by chance, 10 years ago today, the bank rate increased to 14 per cent. because the Labour Government could not control credit. I do not need to be told about interest rates.

A successful economy can repay debt. An unsuccessful economy cannot do that. The stock of Government debt has built up virtually without interruption since the war, reaching £171 billion two years ago. As a result, this year we will pay £18 billion in interest on that debt. That is equivalent to over 10p on the basic rate of income tax. That is dead money for today's taxpayer. It does not build roads or railways, improve the National Health Service, education or defence. It simply pays the interest on past debts.

Our policy on that debt is clear. We will maintain a balanced budget. However, we are going further than that. We are repaying debt. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out in the Autumn Statement—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) would like to intervene, I will of course give way.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Will the Chief Secretary to the Treasury tell us about the redistributive effect of repaying the national debt in terms of the poor from the rich?

Mr. Major: I am not sure that it was wise to invite the hon. Lady to make an intervention.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor set out in the Autumn Statement, in the last fiscal year we repaid £3½ billion and in the current year we expect to pay a further £10 billion. That is equivalent in two years to one twelfth of the outstanding stock of debt which has built up over the past two centuries. This is the largest sustained debt repayment for over a generation, which is of relevance to the hon. Lady's question. It also means that the debt interest projections in the White Paper fall from £17½ billion in the current year to £15½ billion in 1990-91. Our reduced debt burden will be available, therefore, either to improve services or to reduce taxation, or indeed to further reduce debt.

One of the most striking changes over the past 10 years has been the dramatic fall in public expenditure resources spent on the nationalised industries—hon. Members should note that I said, spent "on" the nationalised industries, not spent "by" the nationalised industries—on improving services or new capacity. The fact is that since 1978-79 the total external finance required by those industries has fallen in real terms by nearly £5 billion. That means a saving to public expenditure which we have available to reallocate to other higher priority programmes.

Those savings have come about as a result of the transformation in the performance and productivity of the nationalised industries, which has been dramatic. In aggregate, today's nationalised industries have increased

[Mr. Major]

their productivity by an average of 7¼ per cent. a year in recent years. Last year they made a profit of £¼ billion. The White Paper forecasts a larger sum this year.

What is surprising is that the Opposition tend to describe those savings as cuts. In a debate last month the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East criticised cuts in spending next year on industry and energy programmes. To do so yet again is completely to miss the point on why spending by the taxpayer on energy next year is lower. The answer is above all because of the improved performance that I have just described. For instance, the electricity industry will generate more internal resources so that it can at one and the same time repay more borrowing next year than this, and invest £200 million more—a point which the hon. Gentleman did not mention last month. That is not a cut in investment. The hon. Gentleman has not acknowledged it; he clearly did not understand it and I hope that he will now acknowledge it. In any event, what he said on that issue in the debate on the Autumn Statement was wholly misleading.

Spending on industry will also be lower next year, but not because of so-called cuts. The reduction is the result of the fact that Rover will no longer be a drain on the Exchequer now that it has been successfully restored to full and profitable private ownership.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): With a Honda badge on it.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman had an extremely expensive education. I am not sure that it was money well spent. I, alas, did not have an extremely expensive education. I had the undoubted privilege of paying taxes in order to keep the hon. Gentleman at a university for many years. Frankly, I would like my money back.

Over the last decade the taxpayers coughed up over £3 billion for Rover. From next year the need will have gone. No doubt the Opposition will describe that as a public expenditure cut as well.

The position on employment is similar. Spending by the taxpayer is lower. But that reflects the longest period of falling unemployment since the war. That fall too has led to savings in unemployment benefit of over £1¼ billion a year over the next three years. That clearly illustrates the savings which result from the success of our economic policies. Indeed, the fall in unemployment illustrates dramatically the contrast between our policies and those of the Opposition. They said that we should spend more to reduce unemployment; in fact, we are spending less because we have reduced unemployment. There is a clear distinction.

Over the years in the public expenditure debates we have had many lectures from the Opposition on the case for higher public expenditure. Their old, favourite theme is that more public spending is the only way to reduce unemployment. What has happened? Unemployment has fallen by over 1 million and for 29 months in succession. And not just in the south-east. In the past year unemployment has fallen in every region, and has fallen fastest in Wales, the west midlands and the north-west. The rate of unemployment is now lower than that of France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Canada. And the number of people in work is at the highest level ever, even after excluding those on community schemes and training programmes. It could be done only by public expenditure, the Opposition said, yet we have done it without boosting public expenditure but by creating an enterprise economy that is generating 1,000 new net firms a week. When did that happen under their public expenditure plans when the Opposition were in government? When unemployment benefit spending falls as a result, the Opposition no doubt will yet again point to cuts. If those are cuts, they are cuts which we are proud to secure, and I hope and expect that there will be more of them.

The Government who knew about cuts were the last Labour Government. Between 1973-74 and 1974-75 they increased spending by 12 per cent. in real terms. Inevitably the brakes had to be slammed on, the International Monetary Fund appeared and spending was cut by 8 per cent. in real terms. Although Opposition Members have still not learnt it, the fact is that control of public spending is a fundamental part of a credible economic strategy. It is inescapable, as every Government in every country must eventually recognise

Mr. David Lightbown (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): Even Russia.

Mr. Major: "Even Russia," says my hon. Friend. Even the Politburo is ahead of the Opposition in learning that lesson. Purely by chance I want to quote to the Opposition from Tass:

> "Bearing in mind the great difficulties in financing public expenditure, and the growing budget deficit, which leads to unbalancing the country's economy, the Government requires drastic measures to reduce public expenditure and cut down capital investment".

What an echo of the 1970s for Tass to understand what the Labour party did not. The Government of the Soviet Union understand. Perhaps the Opposition Treasury team should follow their colleagues who deal with foreign policy and go to Moscow to get up to date with Socialist thinking —*[Interruption.]* For an intelligent man, the hon. Gentleman is very loud. As for us, we need no such advice. We know that economic disaster is the inevitable result of unsustainable growth in spending. Allowing public expenditure to grow inexorably is easy. Saying yes to every pressure group is easy. Forgetting about priorities or affordability is easy. It is plain wrong, but the Opposition do not understand that. Such recklessness inevitably brings a fearful reckoning, as it did for them. That is the legacy which we inherited and which we firmly rejected.

We believe the first economic duty of government is to safeguard the value of the currency; to protect the taxpayer and to be prudent and responsible with the nation's finances. Those principles are at the heart of our management of public expenditure. The plans in this White Paper are sustainable and affordable. They select priorities and they rest on a sound and strong economy. They are the right way ahead, and I commend them to the House.

4.57 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof

> "regrets the continuation of inadequate investment in public services, in the infrastructure, in education and training, in research and development, and in the regions; urges the Government to end its dogmatic insistence on reducing the level of public expenditure as a proportion of national income; and condemns the Government's failure to invest in the nation's essential public services, which further

exacerbates the already seriously unbalanced economy, and will do nothing to bring down the level of unemployment, reduce the growing North-South divide, or improve the capacity constraints which currently impair the nation's economic performance."

In the first debate since I have returned from my illness, may I be permitted not only to thank the Chief Secretary for his kind remarks but to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to right hon. and hon. Gentlemen in all parts of the House for their warm good wishes and encouragement, expressed to me so generously and frequently during my illness and since my return. I should also like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who was precipitated into undertaking my responsibilities at short notice and who showed his calibre and courage by a relentless and most effective critique of the Government's economic policies.

Returning to these debates, I am struck by how little has changed. The Chancellor certainly has not changed. He is as bulky as ever, even if things have changed a little on this side of the Dispatch Box. The balance of payments deficit is worse. Interest rates are even higher, causing, as a direct result of Government action, savage increases in mortgage payments which have wiped out for several million, by a factor of several times, any tax benefits which they got from last year's Budget. Inflation keeps rising and is heading towards 7 per cent., having doubled in about a year.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury) *rose——*

Mr. Smith: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, because he may keep bobbing up if I do not.

Mr. Brazier: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for giving way. Will he tell the House how many letters he has received from his constituents complaining about the rise in mortgage rates? I have received only one, and my constituents enjoy average living standards.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman's intervention says a lot about him and his relationship with his constituents. If it is true that the hon. Gentleman has received only one letter about the increase in mortgage rates, in a week or two he will be singing a different tune. He will receive a pile of letters from his constituents when they realise that he has expressed no concern about the increased burdens that they now have to shoulder.

I have received a substantial number of letters and have had time to read them carefully. What is more, I agree with what they say. The writers complained volubly that they were told that they would receive substantial tax cuts as a result of the Budget, but instead received monthly mortgage increases of £38, £50 or £60 which are several times what they were supposed to receive as a boost to the supply side. I hope that, when the hon. Gentleman receives the avalanche of letters that I trust his intervention will provoke, he will read them carefully and pay attention to the needs and desires of his constituents.

There is not much change between the Government's approach to public expenditure as revealed in the Autumn Statement that we debated some months ago and how it appears in the White Paper that we are debating today. Their attitude has three main characteristics. First, they continually make the dogmatic assumption that the amount of public expenditure, as a proportion of national income, should be consistently and constantly reduced. Secondly, they consistently seek to mislead in their presentation of statistics. Thirdly, they almost invariably have the wrong priorities.

Another feature has been revealed by the Chief Secretary's response to my intervention earlier. The Government clearly enter into commitments without fully understanding what they are doing. The Chief Secretary was asked a straight question about the cost of subsidising private medical services by giving tax relief to pensioners who use them. He said that he did not know, and that it would depend on demand. That means that it is open-ended. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who is responsible for controlling our public finances, has agreed to a change in our taxation system without knowing the consequences in terms of public expenditure. *[Interruption.]* If that is an example of the Chief Secretary's prudence, it is not one that we wish to emulate.

Mr. Major: The right hon. and learned Gentleman clearly does not realise that it is a tax incentive and does not concern public expenditure.

Mr. Smith: The Chief Secretary has made an even more interesting point. He knows perfectly well that to give a tax incentive such as that—to people who are already using private medical services—means a loss in another direction. The revenue will receive less money. There is little intrinsic difference between giving people a tax subsidy and giving them an absolute grant. The two are the same in terms of public expenditure. I do not know whether the Chief Secretary thinks that it does not matter, but it will matter to many people who will say, "Why should I pay taxes when I use the National Health Service to subsidise others who use private medicine?" I hope that the Chief Secretary receives a few letters from his constituents about the reply that he has given to the House.

It is not good enough to proceed in this way. When the Government announce such important chages, the costs and implications should be clearly stated to the House. When the Chief Secretary, of all people, cannot answer a simple question directly, it says a great deal about the way the Government approach the House.

We had to listen to quite a lot of lecturing from the Chief Secretary, who seems to find public expenditure White Papers exciting bedtime reading. He seems to think that Opposition Members regularly read Tass reports. In the previous debate, *Pravda* was quoted, and in this debate Tass. I am not surprised that Treasury Ministers prefer alternative sources to the Treasury's own statistics. That is a matter of taste for them, but it is not a taste that Opposition Members share. We are more sceptical about *Pravda* and Tass than the Treasury Ministers.

The first major difficulty about the Government's approach to public expenditure is that they assume that it is necessarily good constantly to drive it down as a proportion of gross domestic product. A leader in the *Financial Times* of 16 November 1988 tackled the matter very well. It was headlined: "Risk of public squalor". The Government's approach was described by the leader writer as follows:

"the simple-minded assumption that a reduction in the share of GDP that goes on public expenditure must be a 'success' is indefensible."

[Mr. Smith]

That was what the Chief Secretary kept telling us throughout his speech, yet the *Financial Times* thinks it is indefensible.

The leader continues:

"It is quite unlikely, for example, that parents would regard their ability to pay for a cheap holiday on the Costa del Sol as adequate compensation for the Government's refusal to spend more on their children's education."

That is a sentiment that many of my constituents—whether or not they write to me—would share. The leader goes on:

"Public spending cannot be intrinsically bad"—

that is a view that we would all share—

"and its reduction as a share of GDP cannot be intrinsically good."

One would think that was mere common sense.

"In a number of cases public spending ought to rise substantially faster than national income."

Perhaps even the Government would agree with that.

"Success in the management of public spending consists in providing people with services of the quality and quantity they would demand if they had the choice. If the Government is unable to give them the choice, it should not disguise this failure in a cloud of rhetoric about successfully reducing public spending to its lowest share of GDP for 20 years."

I imagine that all reasonable hon. Members would agree with that. The approach to public expenditure should be simple. Claims should be assessed on their merit and necessity. If they are meritorious and necessary, the money should be spent. To confine public expenditure within a necessary and constantly declining proportion of GDP is a very wrong-headed approach.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Conservative Members are finding it difficult to follow the right hon. and learned Gentleman's reasoning. Is he objecting to the fact that public expenditure is actually rising? The percentage of GDP has clearly confused him. The GDP has been rising at an extremely fast rate under this Government.

Mr. Smith: I understood clearly what the Government were saying, as did the *Financial Times*. I repeat to the hon. Gentleman, who cannot have been listening, that the Government constantly make the proposition that it is desirable and meritorious to reduce public expenditure as a percentage of GDP. I challenge that assumption: there are occasions when we may want to increase the amount of money spent, and when it is justified, it should be done.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will the hon. Gentleman say why page 7 of the Autumn Statement shows that general Government expenditure under the Labour Government fell from 48·25 per cent. of GDP to 43·25 per cent.? Even the last Labour Government thought that GDP expenditure, as a percentage, ought to fall. The key point was that the gross domestic product did not grow enough under the Labour Government.

Mr. Smith: If I had asked someone to make a helpful intervention in my speech, I would have written that question for the hon. Gentleman. It shows clearly that the last Labour Government assessed public expenditure needs according to the individual case made and did not keep to a constant proportion. *[Interruption.]* It is clear in this case—I hope the hon. Gentleman will try to comprehend—that the Government are always saying that it is desirable constantly to reduce the percentage. Why on earth is it desirable to do so? The trouble is that the Conservative party has a deep-seated prejudice against public expenditure. It aims to squeeze public expenditure whatever the economic circumstances, and trumpet the fact when it can do so.

The Government say that their objective is to hold the rate of growth of public expenditure below that of the economy. There used to be another rationale for that. The rationale given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and others, in the earlier years of the Government, was that we had to cut public expenditure to avoid the crowding out of savings, which forced up interest rates. We have had a few years of the Government's policies, and recent events may have dented this analysis somewhat.

British interest rates are now the highest of the major industrial countries, after the Government have had their way with public expenditure for nearly 10 years as the Chief Secretary was boasting, and the personal savings ratio has fallen dramatically, from almost 14 per cent. in 1980 to under 2 per cent. today. So much for the theory of crowding out. No wonder; perhaps the Chief Secretary, who constantly wants to intervene, could tell us whether the Government still believe that the crowding-out theory obtains in the circumstances of today.

The Government have none the less been operating under the assumption that there ought to be such a constant reduction. They fight shy of putting the case for public expenditure—*[Interruption.]* Now that the Chief Secretary has received the latest information from today's report from Tass, I shall give way to him if he wishes to communicate it to the House.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I have hardly developed this point, so it is difficult to give way on it. But I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if it will allow me to get on with the debate, and then perhaps I can proceed with my speech.

Mr. Arnold: Is not the right hon. Gentleman yet again confusing the difference between net and gross? Is there not a considerable increase in gross savings which is offset by the vast increase in home ownership, and therefore do not two rights very much make a right?

Mr. Smith: I shall be dealing with those matters later, but the hon. Gentleman should have a better sense of topicality, and intervene at an appropriate point.

The Government constantly fight shy of putting the case for public expenditure; it is always presented in terms of savings in public expenditure. Public expenditure is a crucial element in the proper development of our economy and society. If we do not have necessary and sufficient public investment, at least at the level of growth overall, the economy's key public services are likely to be diminished, overstretched and under-resourced. In any sustained economic expansion, the growing demands of society, and the private sector in particular, will increase, and the public sector will be called upon to provide more.

If growth is unbalanced, as we would argue, and public investment is neglected, then the result will be bottlenecks that choke the opportunity for sustained expansion. The public squalor that I fear is occurring in some instances will strangle private affluence. Exactly these errors have been made by the Government, who have pursued the goal of reducing public expenditure below the overall level of growth in the economy. Public expenditure is running at

only about 7 per cent. below the GDP growth par. A deliberate strategy of under-investment and neglect will result in this country being burdened well into the 1990s.

I take, for example, expenditure on transport, and especially roads, to which the Chief Secretary drew attention. The right hon. Gentleman said that an increase of £240 million will be made in the next financial year. We welcome the extra funds, but we recall that, over the past five years, investment in roads has fallen by 4 per cent. while the growth of traffic has averaged more than 25 per cent. and motorway use has increased by more than 60 per cent. That is a classic example of public investment failing to grow in parallel with increased demand.

Against such an investment shortfall, it is hardly surprising that the CBI recently demonstrated that Britain has the most congested road system in Europe; that this congestion alone costs an estimated £5 per household per week; and that the overall costs of distribution in the United Kingdom are about £40 billion in a year. The cost of road congestion should have been eased by public investment. The case for such investment should have been self-evident, and should have been undertaken years ago, before congestion became the major economic and environmental problem that it is today. But the Government's obsessive public expenditure squeeze has denied the road system of the resources that it needs.

When Labour left office in 1979—I hope the Chief Secretary will listen to this—investment in transport amounted to £5·4 billion in real terms, as against the £4·8 billion that is planned by the Government for the next financial year. Labour's investment performance in roads similarly compares favourably with that of the Government, as is helpfully revealed in the White Paper's report on the Department of Transport, one of the documents to which the Chief Secretary has referred.

In a new departure, perhaps even a breakthrough in the Government's presentation of facts, the Treasury has published a chart on page 17 of the White Paper relating to the Department of Transport, which analyses the road maintenance condition between 1977 and 1987. The chart usefully plots the progress of maintenance for local and national roads. It shows a sharp improvement in the maintenance standards achieved for both sectors until just after 1979, followed by a dramatic decline thereafter.

Most helpful of all, the chart is bisected by a line; above the line it is marked "better" and below the line it is marked "worse". I am happy to confirm that, according to the Government's own document, published as part of the White Paper on public expenditure, we see that road maintenance was constantly above the line during the period of the Labour Government and almost always below it during the time of the Conservative Government. If we are in any doubt about its meaning, the chart helpfully says "better" on the top and "worse" at the bottom.

I am sure that is what the Chief Secretary had in mind when he said he loved to read these documents when he was trying to get to sleep. I recommend, if he is dozing tonight and finding it a little bit difficult to drop off, that he looks at charts showing the better and worse positions.

I congratulate the Department of Transport—perhaps even the Treasury is responsible for this—on this newly adopted approach to presentation of Government statistics. I very much hope that other Departments will follow the Department of Transport's lead. Perhaps the Department of Trade and Industry's monthly trade figures could be similarly improved, perhaps with trade surpluses appearing above the line and marked "better" and trade deficits appearing below the line and marked "worse". That might make our debates more illuminating, as well as entertaining.

Even when the Government revert to the practice of being economical with the truth, the White Paper cannot conceal the continuing decline in public investment. Even on the Government's preferred definition of public sector capital spending, which includes defence, the White Paper reveals a decline of investment in real terms of 0·5 per cent. in the next financial year. By 1992, capital spending in the public sector, excluding the privatised electricity and water industries, will have been cut by £800 million in real terms. That is found in table 22.1.11, at page 22 of the Supplementary Analysis and Index attached to the White Paper.

The older definition of gross domestic capital formation which, in line with the national accounts excludes defence equipment spending, is declining in real terms in every year from 1984 to 1985, until 1991 to 1992. The truth is that Government spending on the nation's infrastructure, defined as gross spending on capital formation by central and local government, excluding defence expenditure and capital grants, has not increased at all under this Tory Government in real terms today. It is more than 50 per cent. below the level of the mid-1970s, and is planned to fall by 9 per cent. in real terms between now and 1991.

Those figures show all too clearly the Government's dogmatic hostility to the public sector. They are a recipe for stagnation and decline in living standards and in economic efficiency. I hope that the Government will understand this point, if none other made during the debate—that under-investment in the public sector harms the supply side of the economy. In the next decade, the country will face enormous challenges. After 1992, it will have to compete successfully with other countries in Europe for the single market, and with the rest of the world, including Japan, for the global market place, in which our industries must thrive and survive.

If we are to pay our way in the world and live within our means—we hear little about this from the Government—we must tackle the huge £14,000 million balance of payments deficit that is the result of Government policies, which is the major economic obstacle facing this nation in the years ahead. We must ensure that we are equipped to supply the demands of the domestic and overseas markets. If we are to enjoy a genuine supply side miracle, that will need public investment. We must invest in education and training, in research and development, and in the regions—using public resources where the market has failed to provide adequate investment, and where Tory claims of success are absurd.

I note that the Chief Secretary, both in his documents and in his speeches, refers occasionally to priority areas. I assume that, by implication, the other areas do not receive priority. The right hon. Gentleman never refers to education and training, to research and development, or to regional development as priority areas. That is because they are all classified as non-priority areas, in terms of the Government's record and of their current viewpoint.

Education and training are the most important priority of all. Investment in education enhances the nation's most precious resource—the knowledge and skills of our people. From the nursery to the university, our country is failing to invest. It is one of the meanest providers of pre-school

[Mr. Smith]

education for the under-fives, and there is inadequate provision all the way through secondary and tertiary education. Government education expenditure has dropped from 5·5 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1978-79 to 4·7 per cent. in 1989-90. That underspend is reflected in the levels of educational attainment, which are falling below those of other major industrialised countries.

Work undertaken by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research reveals that the average British student leaves compulsory education with a level of attainment in mathematics that is as much as two years behind the average German or Japanese student in the same age group. While almost half of British children leave education at age 16, in Japan and North America, 95 per cent. and 80 per cent. to 90 per cent. of children respectively stay in full-time education until age 18.

Mr. Major: Whose fault is that?

Mr. Smith: Most people would say that a Government who have been in power for 10 years might take a little of the responsibility.

Despite that poor performance, the Government plan to give less cash for local schools next year—even as primary school enrolment is increasing. They will make £9 million less investment in our universities. It is not surprising that a British brain drain is now enriching American universities and colleges.

Mr. Major: That is nonsense.

Mr. Smith: The Chief Secretary should attend some of the debates in this House. If he had been here to listen to Tuesday's debate, he would have heard startling evidence about the brain drain of highly talented academics, who are leaving this country for the United States.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): But he is really worried about Professor Walters returning here.

Mr. Smith: Yes, I can understand why the right hon. Gentleman does not welcome every person who travels in the opposite direction, back to this country. Nevertheless, he should show a little regret that some of our most talented people, whom we trained, are leaving for other countries because they are denied the facilities they need in Britain.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish this part of my speech. If I did not receive so many sedentary interruptions, I could perhaps deal with his more polite intervention.

The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals reports that 36 per cent. of key professorial posts in Britain are vacant. On Tuesday, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) informed the House, in a debate that escaped the Chief Secretary's attention, of the scale of teacher shortages. By 1995, there will be a 5 per cent. shortfall in mathematics teachers, a 14 per cent. shortfall in physics teachers, and an 18 per cent. shortfall in chemistry teachers. How shall we manage to man science-based industries unless those problems are tackled by the Government?

Sir Peter Hordern: The figures from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research review that the right hon. and learned Gentleman quoted made a deep impression on many people—but I believe that that review was written three or four years ago, and described a period during the mid-1970s, when relevant comparisons were made with West Germany, France and Japan. The figures that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gave, and the comparisons he made, relate entirely to a period of Labour government.

Mr. Smith: My understanding is that those figures aptly describe the present situation. If that were not so, the hon. Gentleman would make the point that matters have improved since the period to which he refers, but I note that he does not seek to do so. Everyone who has studied the subject knows perfectly well that this country is neglecting the education of its young people.

That is seen also in skills shortages and training. A shortage of teachers means a shortage of developing skills. Today, British industry is dogged by the Government's failure to invest in human capital. The nation is crying out for skilled workers, but the Government propose cutting training support. Spending on youth training schemes will decline by £25 million next year, in cash terms, and by £150 million in 1991-92.

The Chief Secretary's defence is that the number of people involved is dwindling—but when there is a falling number of entrants, surely that is the time when extra resources can be used to upgrade the scheme. We know that, in many ways, YTS has not been a good investment —now is the opportunity to make it such for the nation.

Support for employment training will be cut by 4·5 per cent., or by £50 million in real terms. Training for those at work will also decline—even though the Government spend only 2 per cent. of their training budget on improving the skills of people at work. It is almost unbelievable that a major industrialised country expresses its priorities in those terms. How on earth can we transform the British economy, reduce our trade deficit, and meet the challenge of 1992 with such an appalling record of under-investment in training?

On a number of occasions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has told the House that training is a matter for industry, not Government. He has told Select Committees and others that British industry's record of training is lamentable—so the people on whom he placed responsibility for training are, according to his own evidence, failing to discharge that responsibility. If industry is not meeting that responsibility, should not the Government do so? But they say, "Sorry, it is not our responsibility. It is the responsibility of industry." What happens in that pass-the-parcel situation is that people do not get trained. That is disastrous for those who fail to acquire skills, and it is an even more disgraceful waste of our most important economic resource—the skills of our people.

Skills shortages are a major constraint on industrial capacity. Company after company reports bottlenecks due to skills shortages. In the area of information technology, for example, science-based industries are crucial in promoting British business and in increasing our success in world markets. However, the IT industry is hard-hit by skills shortages and lack of training. The report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry published last November estimated that 30,000 vacancies exist in the IT sector, which is equivalent to about one tenth of the

industry's total work force. Despite that, British IT training is far inferior to that of our European competitors.

In Britain, only 1 per cent. of payroll costs are used for in-service training, against the best practice of 4 per cent. to 5 per cent. in the rest of Europe. That is a classic market failure. The responsibility for training was placed on the market, but it is not being discharged.

The Government's response is to persist with the dogmatic view that training must never be a Government responsibility. That is reflected in the public expenditure White Paper, and it is one of the many reasons why its proposals are wrong. They will lead to a loss of competitiveness, a loss of market share, and an increasing trade deficit. Indeed, the IT industry now suffers a serious trade deficit. It was £2·2 billion in 1987—the worst figure in the last 10 years. This is one of the major components in our serious balance of trade deficit.

In research and development, under-investment is matched. The United States of America, Japan, Germany and France have all increased their R and D to GDP ratios, while in the United Kingdom the ratio has declined. The result is that British domestic patent applications rose by only 3·4 per cent. between 1979 and 1986, compared with 8 per cent. in France, 7 per cent. in the United States, and 93 per cent. in Japan. Yet the public expenditure White Paper shows cuts in the value of non-defence scientific and technical research of 8·5 per cent. over the next three years. Clearly this is another of the non-priority areas for the Government.

But there is regional development as well. Just as short-sighted is the Government's investment in the regions. This Government have presided over the most massive divide between north and south. We now have an overheating economy in the south, while the north is being deprived. We have a society which is congested in the south, while there is too much space in other parts of the country. We see the costs both for the people who live in the south and for those who live in the north.

It is not good enough to say that there is the occasional town in the north—whether Harrogate or Edinburgh—that is better off than some parts of the south. The statistics are blindingly clear that there is a growing and massive divide between the economic opportunity of those in the south and that of those in the north. *[Interruption.]* Then it is even worse than I thought. I thought I might have to make a case that the Government should do something about it; I did not think I would have to labour to prove that there is a difference between the north and the south. All the people who have lived in the north know about the difference in terms of economic opportunity.

Yet the White Paper reveals the Government's antipathy towards regional policy. That is why the cuts in the value of expenditure in Scotland amount to £230 million, and why there are freezes in spending in Wales and Northern Ireland, and more cuts in regional industrial support to the extent of £30 million. I know that the Chancellor does not like getting these facts, but we do not often get the opportunity to put them to him so directly, and I hope that the result of his listening will be that he might realise that some of his non-priority areas are absolutely at the heart of Britain's capacity to overturn the trade and balance of payments deficits.

In addition to these problems for the supply side, which is at the heart of our economic problems, there is the quality-of-life aspect of public spending. Our quality of life depends crucially on a number of important public services. I myself know how important the National Health Service is. It is crucial that it be adequately funded and able to improve the quality of its services.

I want to deal directly with the question of Health Service funding because the Chief Secretary made a great deal of it in his speech, and I want to point out that there are three types of definition that the Government use in the statistical fog that surrounds the presentation of the White Paper which led the *Financial Times* to say:

"The Government's announcements on public spending are up to the most creative standards of the accounting profession".

It was not I who said that, but the *Financial Times*—often a good witness in these matters. Sometimes the Government describe it in terms of cash increases. They do so most frequently in the case of the Health Service. Sometimes they use the GDP deflator—the average of inflation throughout the economy—and sometimes the deflator for general Government expenditure, which is easily obtained from *Economic Trends* and which can be applied to the figures. They do not use that very often because it gives them the smallest increases and, of course, it is the cash terms, which exclude totally the effects of inflation on the services to which they are being applied, that they are most happy to quote.

The Prime Minister, for example, often boasts about a cash increase, in the case of the Health Service, of £9·4 billion in 1979-80 to £22 billion in 1989-90. But the increase in so-called real terms is considerably less. If we apply the GDP deflator to Health Service expenditure, the increase is from £16·4 billion to £21·5 billion—a rise of just 3·1 per cent. per year.

But we get a very different picture of the real-terms increase if we use the implicit deflator of general Government expenditure to look at the cash figure. On this basis, the rise from 1979 to 1980 is from £19 billion to £21·6 billion—a growth of 1·4 per cent. per annum. Taking account of demographic factors, principally the aging of the population, and the need to keep abreast of technology, which I think everyone accepts—which, together, require a minimum rate of growth of at least 1 per cent. per annum—it is pretty clear that real health provision in this country has been almost at a standstill. So we have a figure of 1·4 per cent. measured against a requirement of 1 per cent. I think that, for all the statistical conjuring tricks that this Government get involved in, the public do not believe them. When these figures are revealed in their true light, the public are proven to be right, and the Chief Secretary is proven to be wrong.

But it is not even just that. The quality of life is a crucial part of our public services. The tragic run of accidents at King's Cross, Zeebrugge and Clapham highlights the need for the highest regard for safety standards in the public and private sectors. But safety needs investment, and it is quite incredible that the Government cut, for example, research funding in food safety at the institute of food research in Bristol.

Only yesterday there was evidence of a report prepared by, amongst others, Government officials about the dangers of salmonella poisoning. It is hardly believable that the Government are ending next month a project which involves three scientists in dealing with the elimination of salmonella from poultry. They are to be made redundant and the research discontinued. I can tell

[Mr. Smith]

the House that, although the Government claim to have a £15 billion public sector surplus, it would only cost them £300,000 over the next two years to save this project.

I may say also, on the conflict between whether it should be a private or a public responsibility, that I understand approaches have been made to commercial people to see whether they would carry on with the research. The response from the firms has been that they would carry on with the research only if they got the exclusive use of the results for their commercial benefit. So the safety of the public is less important than their commercial benefit, which is why we need to take responsibility for many other areas of public expenditure.

We find this problem throughout all the areas. I discovered just the other day that the tourist deficit in Britain is increasing by an enormous amount. The latest balance of trade in tourism shows that it is in the red to the tune of about £2·1 billion. Why has this happened? One reason—I hope that the Chief Secretary will listen to this—is that Mr. Michael Mendlicott, the chief executive of the British Tourist Authority, said that he blamed high hotel prices. I think he was quite right to do that, but he said also that it was the image of squalor and litter that foreign tourists now associated with Britain.

We have had a lot of talk from the Government about "operation facelift". We even had the Prime Minister scrambling around St. James's park trying to pick up pieces of paper that workmen had been instructed to put in careful piles so that she could pick them up and put them in a bag and be photographed doing so. That is the extent of the Government's commitment to improvement in this area. The truth of the matter is that visitors to this country are telling us how squalid it has become. That is because of the neglect of the Conservative party.

But what is perhaps the most shameful thing—this is the last example in detail that I will use, so that I may spare the Chief Secretary even more embarrassment—is the Government's record on overseas aid. When the last Labour Government left office, they were providing 0·52 per cent. of GNP in overseas aid.

In 1987, the Tory Government gave just 0·28 per cent. of GNP in aid—the lowest figure ever recorded. Under the Tories, British aid has declined by over 15 per cent. in real terms. *[Interruption.]* I hope that the hon. Gentleman who is shouting about fiddling will listen to what I have just said. British aid to sub-Saharan Africa in 1979 amounted to £386 million. In 1987 it was worth only £284 million—a cumulative decline since 1979 for one of the poorest parts of the world of over £600 million.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) recently asked the Prime Minister her position on overseas aid. I quote the right hon. Lady's reply:

> "You raised the question of the UN target for aid at 0·7 per cent. of GNP. The Government have accepted this in principle. But like previous administrations, and many other donors, we have not set a timetable to achieve this target; progress towards it must depend on economic services and other calls on Government resources."

The sums involved are not large, and the Government have a £15 billion surplus. The spending of that money on aid would not add to any inflationary problems in this country but could bring much-needed relief to people living in very difficult circumstances indeed. Any Government with any sense of decency would use that money to increase overseas aid as one of their first priorities. [HON. MEMBERS: "What would you do?"] We would head towards the United Nations target, which is what every civilised country wants to do and which the Prime Minister says is also her objective.

Just in case it is thought that I am making a narrow partisan point—I do not think that the vast majority of the people of this country, who are ashamed of our aid record, will think that—I remind the House of what our colleague countries in the OECD said recently about the British effort. The development assistance committee of the OECD reviewed the United Kingdom's overseas aid programme. It noted the Government's contribution and commented on the Autumn Statement—the precursor of the White Paper. The committee said:

> "The Committee firmly believes that the time has come to reverse the downward trend in the United Kingdom's ODA/GNP ratio".

That was the view of our fellow countries, whose Governments are trying hard to achieve the target set by the international community—a target on which the Government have so disgracefully turned their back. Perhaps one small thing that the Government might consider is the reversal of their priorities in this important respect.

An analysis of the White Paper in terms of concept, and a scrutiny in terms of detail, reveal that the Government are trapped in a dogmatic obsession on public expenditure, which undermines our national economic effort and impairs our quality of life. In terms of overseas aid, it also undermines our international reputation.

Nor is that the only evidence of the Government's wrong-headed approach and misshapen priorities. They are a Government who lavish benefits upon the rich but freeze child benefit and humiliate pensioners with the social security and housing benefit cuts of last year. They are a Government whose notions of equity are revealed by their determination to press on with the poll tax—a form of taxation that every other civilised country has rejected. They are a Government whose sense of responsibility for national assets is revealed by the irresponsible privatisation of vital public services such as electricity and water. In other words, they are a Government whose policies do not remotely reflect the priorities that the nation needs. Sadly, the White Paper reflects this Government's inadequate values, false priorities and deceptive techniques, and it is not worthy of our support.

5.43 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): The House will have listened with great interest and much amusement to the remarks of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). It is a great pleasure to have him back and I should be immensely grateful if he would do what he said he would do when I saw him on his first day back and send me a copy of his diet, which has obviously stood him in good stead. We are delighted to have him back, and he looks extremely well.

The voters of this country will certainly not be seduced by what they have heard from the right hon. and learned Gentleman—by the promise of apparently limitless public spending or by a raft of promises that could not possibly be fulfilled.

Mr. Skinner: When did you write this?

Mr. Soames: Just now.

Like a parachutist, the right hon. and learned Gentleman has dropped in on us from cloud-cuckoo-land. He gave all his old prejudices a good canter round the course, like an old hunter who has not been out of the stable for a very long time. He dodged all the fences and none of us learnt anything new. In short, he was deeply unconvincing. During his enforced absence the Labour party continued to show all the qualities of an organisation in terminal decline, and I am afraid that his return will have done nothing to help matters.

The debate takes place against a very favourable economic background. The firm control of public expenditure has been a vital ingredient in achieving such a satisfactory state of affairs. Restored and revived, the United Kingdom now has a golden opportunity to take a lead in Europe, not only in internal economic matters but in joint action to shape international developments that affect all our interests. We should not be in that position were ours not an economy with growth, substance and vitality in it.

We live in a heady atmosphere, so far removed from that portrayed by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East that one can hardly believe that he lives in the same country. [HON. MEMBERS: "He does not."] For the first time in my lifetime, even the BBC—apparently with the sole exception of the "Today" programme—seems to sense that there are more possibilities than problems. The energetic creation of new wealth is a powerful force in any community and it has had a most beneficial effect in an enormous number of ways. In short, the country as a whole has been caught by the flame that is generated by the enthusiasm of economic success. Moreover, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and his colleagues are particularly fortunate in their opponents who are, by and large, profoundly unconvincing as arbiters of financial rectitude.

The transformation of the economy since 1979, coupled with more vigorous policies to stimulate enterprise and the sound management of public finances, has allowed the Government to spend far more money on priority programmes. On this matter, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was positively churlish. It is to the Government's credit that they have maintained a clear sense of priority in their distribution of further moneys.

Ms. Armstrong: The hon. Gentleman talks about priorities and Government prudence. He may like to ponder what has happened in my constituency, where the Government have decided to save public money—the grand total of £2,000—by closing down two unemployment benefit offices. The cost of that prudent measure to claimants in my constituency will be £10,000 a year. Is that a measure of the Government's commitment to solving this country's problems?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) raises a constituency matter, which I am sure is important, but with which I am afraid I cannot deal. This year the Government have committed £1·4 million to the employment training scheme and substantial other moneys have been spent on employment, no doubt wisely, across the country. The hon. Lady should raise her constituency case with the Minister responsible for these matters.

It is to the Government's credit that they have maintained a clear sense of priority. The whole House will welcome—I am amazed that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East did not welcome it more wholeheartedly—the substantial extra resources for the Health Service, which is more than £2 billion, and by far the largest increase that the Health Service has ever received.

I particularly welcome the substantial increase in the science budget and in defence expenditure and the amount to be spent on law and order which I hope will help to appease the cries of rage throughout the country. I welcome the fact that more money is to be spent on capital expendiure—an extra £2¼ billion this year alone. All those additions make a mockery of the Opposition amendment. However, I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman that many of our public facilities, such as DSS offices, are squalid in the extreme. The Government should embark on a programme of making good those facilities while emphasising improved services to the customers of the state. My hon. Friends will be amused to hear that since the competitive tendering clauses of the Local Government Act 1988 are beginning to rear their ugly heads, Crawley borough council has issued training instructions to its staff for the first time in 40 years on how to be nice to the punters. It is an agreeable thought that the council has finally woken up to that.

Many of my constituents will be pleased about the amount of money that the Government are spending on overseas aid. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was quite uncharacteristically churlish about that. I agree that we would like to be able to spend more, but the figures that he gave were quite inaccurate. Over the next three years spending will increase by 18 per cent. in cash and 5 per cent. in real terms. That is excellent news. The right hon. and learned Gentleman failed to acknowledge the quality of the aid delivered by the United Kingdom, which is of quite an exceptional standard and which sets it apart from almost any other country in the world. That marks an important step forward for British interests.

The ODA is also to be congratulated on the lead that it has taken to co-ordinate support for the Nigerian economic reconstruction programme to which substantial further funds have been committed. In the 1980s it is pleasant for the Government to be in such a position at the International Monetary Fund that we are co-ordinating the rescue of countries, rather than the reverse, which was the case when the Labour party was in government. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was right to say that one swallow does not make a summer, but the Government have turned an important corner by increasing the aid programme. It is continuing evidence that a strong and successful economy can and should do much more for nations far less fortunate than Britain. It is a further example that the might of modern powers is vested not in military prowess but in economic primacy. To that end I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on arriving at such an excellent agreement for the British Council which does so much to promote British interests abroad.

I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East about transport infrastructure. In the past few years the Government have made a huge investment in that previously neglected area. There has been an increase of more than 50 per cent. since 1978-79 in

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new road building and trunk road maintenance. The trouble is that the investment is so very unevenly distributed. In the early 1970s, quite rightly, the Labour party built a large motorway infrastructure in the north. It is only now, about 20 years later, that that motorway infrastructure is beginning to grow into itself. The Labour Government neglected the south at the expense of the north and the south is now suffering serious problems. It will be clear to anyone who travels throughout the country that the picture that the right hon. and learned Gentleman painted of the north-south divide is an absolute fallacy. It is evident that only blindness and ignorance of the true state of the country's economy can lead the right hon. and learned Gentleman to say such things.

My constituency, which contains Gatwick airport, a large industrial estate and a town which has the lowest unemployment in any constituency in Europe, let alone the United Kingdom, has a road system off the motorways which would not be acceptable in a third world country. I would be grateful if my right hon. Friend would have a word with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to find out what can be done by way of transport supplementary grant for west Sussex.

I should also like to draw my right hon. Friend's attention to another serious matter which is building up a considerable head of steam. A clear and disturbing demographic pattern is emerging whereby we will face great difficulties in recruiting people into public service, particularly in teaching, science, the law and other professions. There will be a great deal more competition for new graduates, and just when the education reforms should have their most critical effect we shall be even shorter of the right people to teach those specialised and vital subjects.

I have recently been taking some interest in the magistrates' service, and in the pay and career structure of justices' clerks. My right hon. Friend will be aware of the critical role that justices' clerks play in the administration of the courts. I fear for the future of the profession, if faithful and loyal service by many good and honourable men does not receive a reasonable or just reward. They do not expect to keep up with private practice salaries, but, in a humane, honourable and prosperous society, it should be expected that the sums paid to lawyers in the public service who carry similar responsibilities should be comparable. The gap between the salary of a typical justices' clerk and a civil service lawyer with similar responsibilities is now several thousand pounds per annum. I find that unacceptable and prejudicial to the smooth running of the administration of the country. It is difficult to attract lawyers of the right calibre into the service and there is very little hope for its future unless we grab the opportunities that exist.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): My hon. Friend is making an important point. Is he aware that that problem afflicts not only his constituency in Crawley but mine in Manchester? It is becoming increasingly noticeable throughout the country that courts cannot do their work because there are no longer sufficient clerks to service the courts. In recent weeks there have been numerous incidents in which the courts have had to suspend their work and that is profoundly unsatisfactory.

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is completely right. At present my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office is undertaking an inquiry into the administration of the courts in which he intends to pursue the matter of justices' clerks. It does no good for the Government whom we support and whose policies seek swifter dispensation of justice that despite the heroic efforts of the magistrates the shortage of justices' clerks means that it is taking 14 to 18 weeks for cases to come to court. That is completely unacceptable.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Has my hon. Friend considered the possibility of leading a delegation comprising my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and me so that we would make a trio and take a journey to see my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor who is responsible for these grave issues to which my hon. Friend has quite rightly drawn attention?

Mr. Soames: I would be proud to lead such a distinguished delegation. My hon. Friend is well known in Eastbourne as the fisherman's friend, and he will now be known as the justices' clerks' friend.

The same problems apply throughout the professional public service and I urge my right hon. Friend very carefully to study what steps we may take to improve the conditions of service and to recruit, maintain and motivate those people who are vital to the administration of the country.

By any measurable yardstick of achievements, individual political, economic cultural, or scientific, the Untied Kingdom has entered a new and brighter age. None of it could have happened without a sound and growing economy and the spirit of enterprise that permeates the whole fibre of the country. The Government should continue their prudent and sustainable progress. I wholeheartedly support the public expenditure White Paper.

5.59 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) would not expect me to follow him in his eulogies of the Government, but I join him in congratulating my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) on his speech. It is delightful to see him in such sparkling form on his return. Having reeled from the blows of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), it must have been hard for Ministers to receive yet another devastating blow. If Conservative Members doubt that, they should have seen the Ministers' faces when my right hon. and learned Friend was speaking. They tried to obtain advice from their non-existent advisers, but clearly the message came back to them, "You are on your own." No answer was given to my right hon. and learned Friend, and they were unable to deny any of the statistics that he gave.

I shall consider two issues. First, I shall follow my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East and examine the Government's policy of reducing public spending as a proportion of gross national product. Secondly, I shall analyse the Government's related policy of forswearing fiscal policy as a short-term instrument and confining its use only to the medium-term. Both issues are important to the running of the economy.

We heard from the Chief Secretary about what happened in the 1970s. It is important to disentangle some of the realities from the fantasy that the Government put across. We must look behind the myths that they are trying to create. It is true that there was a surge in public spending in 1974-75. Social spending increased by 9 per cent. over that period, chiefly because of increases in pensions and subsidies on food and rents and especially because of the massive increases in public sector pay, which occurred mostly as a consequence of the threshold agreements introduced by the previous Conservative Government, which were triggered off by increases in inflation. Public spending was not matched by growth in the economy because it coincided with the shock to the economy caused by the quadrupling of oil prices, which amounted to as much as 2 per cent. of GDP. In other words, it removed 2 per cent. of our growth. Without growth, the share of public spending jumped dramatically from 41 per cent. in 1973 to 48 per cent. in 1975.

Conservative Members often forget that, faced with rapid growth in borrowing, the Labour Government acted swiftly and effectively to control public spending. Contrary to the myth put about by Conservative Members, especially the Chief Secretary, the initiator of the policy of restraining public spending was not the IMF but the Labour Government.

Mr. Major *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Radice: The right hon. Gentleman was not in Parliament at that time. The decision was taken by the Labour Government as early as 1975, when cash limits were introduced. They were very effective, and, as a consequence, the share of public spending fell from 48 per cent. in 1975-76 to 46 per cent. of GDP in 1976-77 and to below 43 per cent. in 1977-78. So effective were the controls that in 1977-78 public spending fell 7 per cent. below the level of cuts demanded by the IMF. The IMF cuts were not necessary, because the controls were already biting. I was a member of the General Sub-Committee of the Expenditure Committee and followed that blow by blow.

Sir Peter Hordern: The hon. Gentleman rightly says that cash limits were a notable improvement on the previous presentations of public expenditure figures, which had been couched in funny money—there were no figures at all. That does not account for the fact that substantial cuts were made by the Labour Government, which were imposed by Dr. Witteveen's letter in 1976. The real cuts followed closely afterwards.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. I have looked carefully at the facts. At that time, the Government thought that the public sector borrowing requirement was £6 billion, but it had already been reduced to £4 billion as a consequence of the cash limits. Public spending had been brought under control. As a member of General Sub-Committee, I assure the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) that those are the facts.

The lesson to be drawn from the 1974-75 experience, which was quickly learnt by the Labour Government, is that it is unwise to increase public spending faster than growth in national output.

Mr. Major: Hear, hear.

Mr. Radice: Wait a moment. It is a sensible rule of thumb to increase public spending only in line with growth in national output. But the policy of expanding public spending in line with what the economy can afford is very different from the policy being pursued by the Government, which is of deliberately reducing the share of public spending as a matter of principle regardless of the circumstances. That is the point that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East has been trying to get across. Continuing to reduce public spending as a proportion of GDP has no economic justification.

The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee makes a good technical point in its report when its says that focusing on the overall ratio of public spending to GDP can be misleading because it does not distinguish between direct claims on resources and the transfer of claims between groups of individuals. It is only when transfer payments are excluded that one gets a true measure of the claim of public spending on resources, which is why we recommend that a ratio of public spending to GDP excluding transfer payments should be published.

More fundamentally, the idea that public spending must decline as a proportion of GDP has no economic justification. The share of public spending is already lower in the United Kingdom than in most European countries. All the evidence shows that continuing to plan for a declining proportion will harm the economy. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East has made that case very lucidly indeed. Industry will be deprived of improvements in the vital infrastructure projects that it needs and could have. The Confederation of British Industry made that point very clear at its annual conference. As my right hon. and learned Friend so eloquently said, industry will be deprived of extra investment in education and training and the support for innovation and investment in research and development that it needs and could have. The regions will be deprived of assistance in regional support and aid that they need and could have.

As an hon. Member representing a northern constituency, I must say that the Government's attitude to regional aid has been extremely short-sighted. We are now spending the same over three years in regional assistance as we were in 1978-79. There are welcome signs of recovery in parts of the northern economy, but perhaps the hon. Member for Crawley should venture a little further north than the Watford gap to get a good idea of what is happening.

Mr. Soames: No good is done in the House by absurd remarks from one hon. Member to another about whether he knows the north. All hon. Members spend a great deal of time travelling and I spend a great deal of time in the north. The caricature of the north as against the south as it is portrayed by Labour Members does the north no good. It is a false picture of an area of the country that is beginning to take off. The north—whether Newcastle or the north midlands—has had its whole economy transformed. It is taking off and there are real opportunities, which people are taking. The hon. Gentleman does those people no good by running them down, even though he does not mean to.

Mr. Radice: I know that the hon. Gentleman has been shooting throughout the length and breadth of the British

[Mr. Radice]

Isles and I respect him for that. Yes, as I have already said, there are signs of recovery in the northern economy, but it is only just starting to happen. I am sure, however, that the hon. Gentleman will bear me out when I say that the southern economy is greatly overstretched and overheated. But, as we know from experience, it is precisely when the national economy is expanding generally that firms are more easily encouraged to expand in the assisted areas. As the European Commission has pointed out, a vigorous regional policy is essential not only for the regions themselves, but, equally importantly, for a balanced and sustained national growth.

More generally, if Britain is to maintain a balanced and healthy economy, it needs a substantial level of public investment in line with the growth in the economy and the growth of output. Britain needs investment in such basic infrastructure projects as roads, as the hon. Member for Crawley agrees, transport, on which he again agrees, lighting and sewerage. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East was right when he said that foreigners coming to this country say that we are a dirty country and do not invest in public utilities.

Mr. Soames: We do not say that.

Mr. Radice: The hon. Gentleman may not have done enough shooting on the continent. If he had, he might have seen the investment there. He might have seen how different matters are in West Germany, France or Scandinavia. One can see the difference with the naked eye, because the Government here have not been investing in the basic infrastructure.

Mr. Brazier: I am having a little difficulty in following the hon. Gentleman's argument. A moment ago, he said that the best condition for growth in the assisted areas was to have a good overall growth rate. That condition is being satisfied now. He then said that there was insufficient investment in the regions and he quoted statistics that related only to direct grants to the regions. He is saying that the infrastructure is the key factor. That is precisely the reason why so many companies are relocating to the north and why companies coming from the outside choose to go to the north. The reason is precisely that there is a higher level of investment in the infrastructure of the north than the south.

Mr. Radice: That is true. When a Labour Government were in power in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a large investment in the infrastructure of the northern economy. We are partly benefiting from that now. One of the reasons why Nissan came to the north-east was that some of the infrastructure was good, but we must continue to invest in the infrastructure.

Mr. Soames: We are.

Mr. Radice: We are not doing enough. If we brought our public spending up to the national growth rate, as is done in every other economy, then, with the growth that we had in the economy, we would be able to invest in projects not only in the north but in the south, where there is overcrowding. That is the burden of my case and I am glad that the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) has given me the opportunity to say that yet again. I hope that he now understands the point.

The only substantial argument produced by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury for Government policy was that it was needed to free resources for the private sector and private individuals. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East and I have already demonstrated clearly the ways in which private industry needs sustained public investment. For individuals, the idea that it is necessary to reduce rates of direct taxation as a matter of principle regardless of circumstances has no economic justification.

After last year's Budget, the Chancellor's tax cuts stimulated an already over-vigorous consumer boom and that should be a warning that reducing taxation is not always the prudent option.

That brings me to my second and final point, which is about the Chancellor's fiscal strategy. He has continued to stress that the Government's fiscal policy is set in the medium term and is not used as a short-term instrument. If one has a commitment to reducing public spending as a share of gross domestic product as a matter of principle and one also has a commitment to reducing taxation as a matter of principle, regardless of circumstances, it is true that that rules out the use of fiscal policy as a short-term instrument.

The problem with that strategy, as many commentators have pointed out, is that the Chancellor is forced to run the economy with an instrument too few and with one hand tied behind his back. It would help in the running of the economy if the Chancellor were able to use fiscal policy in a counter-cyclical fashion—by increasing public spending or reducing taxation when demand needs boosting, or increasing taxation and decreasing spending when demand needs reducing. An example of the first type of counter-cyclical fiscal action is the 1987 Japanese budget, when the Japanese Government, in contrast to what happened in this country in 1987 and 1988, both increased public spending and reduced taxation to boost the economy in a balanced and sensible way. That is different from what happened here. An example of the second type of counter-cyclical fiscal action would be if the Government decided that they should increase taxation levels on the better-off in the coming Budget. That would be helpful because there is now an overwhelming case for using all the instruments available to run the economy, including fiscal policy.

If we are to meet the justified social needs that we have in this country to assist our regional problems and to achieve balanced economic growth—which even the Government do not pretend that we have at present—the Government should first abandon their commitment to reducing and continuing to reduce public spending as a percentage of GDP. Secondly, if we are to manage the economy more effectively, we need to be able to use all the economic instruments, including fiscal policy, when necessary.

6.18 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Let me start by welcoming the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) back to his place. If I may say so—I hope it does him no harm—he made an excellent speech in full and good vigour.

I want to say a few things about the efficiency of public expenditure. Last week, we had the National Health Service review. I think that hon. Members will agree that

it was devised to promote efficiency within the Health Service. The idea of costing pharmaceutical preparations, drugs and general practices, leads to that supposition. One must look more widely at public expenditure to see where else such an approach can be taken.

I cannot help but remark on the leading article in *The Times* today about the common agricultural policy. My attention was first drawn to that matter by a report of the European Court of Auditors, which explained that there had been a leakage of payments to unknown parties of about £4 billion. But recently the fraud inspectors, who have just been appointed, in evidence to the European Parliament worked out that the zone of shadows, as they described it, amounted to between 10 and 20 per cent. of the entire EC budget—£6 billion. All that had been spent on phoney export certificates and compensation claims.

I had not supposed that the CAP was a form of outdoor relief for the Mafia, but that plainly is what it has become. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has given the clearest instructions to our Ministers that when they go to Brussles next Monday they are to put that matter at the top of the agenda. But, with the best will in the world, I cannot help thinking that the weakness of the CAP is that it is in nobody's particular national interest to do very much about it. If the leaks and squandering of money stopped, it would mean a net repayment by a particular country to the European funds. There will not be enormous enthusiasm to stop such misdoings.

That points to, and has pointed to for a considerable time, the weakness of the CAP and the need to put it right. We must find some better way of compensating farmers by some kind of income support better than the CAP. It does grave damage to the Third world by producing and exporting food and produce which discourages them from producing their own. Moreover, and perhaps more seriously, it is a threat to trade with the United States of America, as has been shown by the recent ructions in the GATT negotiations.

This topic has arisen before, but I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to believe that the weakness in the CAP, despite all their efforts to stop it, is a fundamental one which needs to be addressed by changing the form of income support for those who live on the land, not through this method, which has now become completely disreputable.

There is one other aspect to which I want to draw my right hon. Friend's attention, and that relates to defence procurement. The only figure that we have for defence is £20·1 billion, which is the total defence expenditure this year. We have a figure for expenditure on defence personnel and, by a process of deduction and a fortunate glance at the Public Accounts Committee's report, I see that we now spend some £8·5 billion a year on equipment. I regret to say that in the part of the public expenditure White Paper dealing with defence there is not a single mention of cash figures. There are plenty of percentages, plenty of mishmash and guff about efficiency, but no cash figures. Here again, this is a serious matter which should have been addressed a long time ago.

We should start from the basis that the Ministry of Defence should look at the original cost of the equipment that it now has and what was finally paid for it, and ask whether that money would have been spent in that way if it had had the opportunity to do otherwise. That leads me to ask what plans we are making for much closer collaboration with our European partners in defence.

We must accept that the time has now come when national research and development expenditure on enormously expensive articles of defence equipment can no longer be justified. We have at least three different kinds of torpedoes, each of which has cost well over £1,000 million so far. I do not know why it is necessary to have three different kinds of torpedoes, but I recollect that when the subject came up in the Public Accounts Committee there was an American torpedo in use which we could have bought for £300 million. Those are enormous figures by any standards. Whether it is torpedoes or other forms of equipment, it is high time that EC Defence Ministers got together and decided what kind of equipment they wanted and did it to a common standard. The defence industries would have to gear themselves towards producing that equipment. Much-needed European collaboration would take place, and we would see a marked improvement. It is no longer possible to go it alone on important defence equipment procurement. I hope that that will be noted.

I notice that the Public Accounts Committee's report last November showed that the profit due to contractors engaged on non-competitive risk between 1982 and 1984 was £600 million and that a significant number of contracts were priced after they had started. We become concerned about figures of £20 million or £300 million and we have debates in the House. But for hundreds of millions of pounds for defence equipment we do not appear to have any debate at all.

Finally, I want to say a word about what are called the Ryrie rules—I think that hon. Members know what I mean—the financing of public projects by private expenditure and the innate Government guarantee that lies within it. That relates to something that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) said earlier about the desirability of public expenditure on capital projects.

I shall not discuss for a moment the share of GDP because the Government are right in reducing the percentage of GDP take-up by public expenditure. But we have an entirely new position today. We have a large public sector debt repayment programme, which is almost unique. I think that it happened once under Roy Jenkins for one year, but that was very much under the influence of Dr. Witteveen. Apart from that, we have seldom been in the position of repaying public sector debt, certainly not to the extent that we are now doing.

If we have too much consumer demand in the private sector, which appears to be the case, a position that we rightly tackle with high interest rates, is it right not to look at the public sector separately? We have a large public sector suplus and we are buying in gilt-edged securities at the long end of the gilt market. I simply mean by that that the Government are repaying debt by buying long-dated gilt-edged securities.

The effect of that is to reduce interest rates for a debt which is 15-years-old or more, with the result that we are now buying that debt at an interest rate of about 10 per cent. I am surprised that more companies are not borrowing long-term at that rate. Essentially, it means that the Government are in the position of a company which decides that, rather than invest in a capital project, it will repay its debt or retire its ordinary shares. That is a perfectly good option for a company to take, but it is somewhat unusual.

We must look specifically at the public sector and ask whether the repayment of debt which gives a return of 10

[Sir Peter Hordern]

per cent. is as good a return as that which may be got by investing more in British Rail or British roads. I say that because the White Paper on transport has made a rather good analysis of the cost of building new roads, and trunk roads in particular, which shows a substantial advantage —I think about 20 per cent.—if expenditure on roads is proceeded with. I believe that the same is true for British Rail.

I defer to nobody in my admiration of what the Government are doing in public expenditure—the extra money that British Rail is spending and the extra that is being spent on British roads. However, such has been the prosperity in Britain that the increase in motor traffic has been far faster than anybody predicted. The result has been the snarl-up on the motorways, of which we are all aware, which has a direct economic cost to the country. What we should do is to look carefully at the marginal cost and the benefit of repaying debt in the public sector, as opposed to spending rather more and allowing, perhaps, British Rail to borrow on a 15-year basis the money it requires for a further major capital expenditure programme.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport plans to privatise British Rail. If it were privatised, as British Gas is, it would have no hesitation in going to the capital market and getting the money that it needed. One only has to look at British Gas's capital expenditure and the money that it raises to know that that is the case. We must look at it sensitively and consider whether it makes sense to refuse British Rail the opportunity to mount a higher investment programme, given the difficulties which are arising and will arise still more in the future. If one goes to France, one can see the effect of the high-speed trains and the volume of traffic because of the better communications. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—I should have perhaps given him notice of this —is enormously in favour of our making further progress within the European Community, except when the railway goes through Bexley and Sidcup, which is understandable.

We must make a much more careful analysis than we have been accustomed to doing of the new conditions which arise from having a surplus in the public sector and consider whether it makes sense to repay debt or to have a further scale of investment. The extra traffic on the roads and on British Rail leads me to believe that, unless we take further action shortly, we shall have a serious snarl-up. The Ryrie rules are in need of a revision.

Such a long-term analysis should follow a strategic assessment of all our public expenditure programmes, rather than simply allowing a rolling programme for each Department each year three years ahead. I have argued before that there needs to be some form of body, such as the "Star Chamber," which comes together once a year to consider whether public expenditure really matches what our political and national aims are five or 10 years ahead. I feel that there would be some important strategic decisions made which would be different from our present ones.

Are we sure that we are making the best use of the information technology which is having such a profound effect in the private sector? I need only say that I understand that in the Social Security Department it is hoped to make payments—such as income support payments—through the local offices simply by tapping through the information to the computer at Newcastle and then telling the benefit recipient the position. It should be possible to have a plastic card with the information written upon it, thus making it unnecessary to go to some of those sordid social security benefit offices. That scheme should, of course, be voluntary, but the task would be made much easier if the recipient allowed the Inland Revenue to give what figures it felt were necessary to get the recipient's precise position and speed up the payment. Information technology can do a great deal in this respect. One of the advantages would be that it would speed up payments, make them more certain and make collecting them a good deal more agreeable than it is now.

I hope that when my right hon. Friend and his colleagues consider the public expenditure programme later in the year they will give some thought to the question of investment in the public sector, and consider the damage that has been caused to our communications by the large volume of traffic on our roads and railways.

6.34 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): This, by definition, is an extremely wide-ranging debate and I hope that the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) will understand if I do not follow specifically the number of routes or avenues he explored in his interesting speech. In the context of the points which have already been made by the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice), I would say that I believe that the speech of the hon. Member for Horsham bears a great deal more resemblance to economic reality than the speech of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). The concept of the hon. Member for Crawley that there is no such thing as a north-south divide, of which so many Opposition Members frequently speak, is astonishing. It shows how fortunate he is in being able to boast that he represents the constituency with the lowest percentage level of unemployment. I believe he said that it was the lowest in western Europe. I wish that we could spread a bit more of it around. The hon. Gentleman's constituency being the jewel in the crown of employment opportunities in western Europe should be for him the most convincing argument yet in favour of the reality of the north-south divide.

There have been many friendly statements made about the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). I have made mine in print north of the border —perhaps he has seen them on Saturday mornings—so I will not embarrass the right hon. and learned Gentleman now, but it is nice to have him back.

On behalf of the Social and Liberal Democrats I would first like to give our views about the current economic position and the public expenditure related to that. Secondly, I would like to suggest one or two changes of policy which the Government could pursue. Thirdly, I would like to take the opportunity of this public expenditure debate to make a constituency point which has arisen during the past 48 hours. Hon. Members on both sides of the House may know of the weather problems in the Highlands of Scotland during the past few days and the damage that has been caused.

There is no doubt that the overheating of the economy during the past year has resulted in the usual symptoms —severe trade deficit and increasing inflation. The higher

demand in the economy has not been met by domestic suppliers, so prices have risen to ration demand and imports, too, have filled the gap. The cause was the £40 billion credit boom about which the Chancellor is taking action through high interest rates. The Chancellor also had an encouraging, if not benign, influence on that credit boom with the tax cuts in the Budget. The wringing-out within the economy that the Chancellor is now trying to achieve—it is the mortgage holders especially who are feeling the most squeezed—has been mainly encouraged not just by his earlier economic decisions, but by the positive political inducements which were put before the taxpayers and the public generally.

By attempting to cure or dampen demand by means of high interest rates, the Chancellor is arguing that credit has become more price elastic as the private sector has become a net debtor. The rise in the exchange rate, which results from the high interest rates, is considered a good thing because it encourages foreigners to lend us money to finance our trade deficit, thus forestalling a sterling crisis in the short term, such as we have seen previously. It is argued, too, that it exerts a downward pressure on wages because exporters and import competitors must control unit labour costs more tightly to remain competitive internationally. Therefore, two direct economic and political implications of the policy have favourable or acceptable resonances from a Conservative viewpoint—especially the dry one, which is currently in vogue at the Treasury. The Chancellor is also dampening demand by keeping a tight fiscal policy, and allowing a fiscal surplus to build up.

Against that backdrop, we have heard Conservative Members and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury argue that public expenditure must be controlled and not increased further, because of the inherent dangers that it would carry for further excess demand. As I have said, the Chancellor cannot be absolved of the responsibility for the position in which we now find ourselves. To get out of it, others will have to pay a price.

The economy must be slowed down. Interest rates are an essential component of any strategy that any Chancellor must use, but they are not the sole component. They should not be as blindly and slavishly followed as the Chancellor has done in recent times. He is relying too much on interest rates, and that is generating difficulties elsewhere in the economy.

In what other ways can inflation be curbed or its rate of upward movement kept in control and excess demand cooled? First, given our problems with savings levels, to which the Chief Secretary referred, although not convincingly, there must be further incentives for personal savings to aid interest rates and cool the credit boom. Anything that the Chancellor can do in his next Budget will be of assistance.

I do not recall whether the shadow Chancellor referred to the European monetary system, but, secondly, I repeat the argument that if we are interested in exchange rate stability within tolerable bands and an anti-inflationary regime which goes beyond the borders of this country, it makes eminent sense for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. When trade figures are bad, we would not necessarily need to hike up interest rates to protect the pound. Membership of the EMS would give credibility to a stable level for the pound in the medium term.

We are now into the first decade of this Government—this premiership—and we are still waiting for the magical, mystical and impossible-to-attain circumstances in which Britain may enter the EMS. The Prime Minister is increasingly seen at home and abroad either to be isolated or in a rapidly shrinking minority in her implacable hostility to the EMS. I hope that the arguments of the Governor of the Bank of England, the Chancellor, the former Chancellor, the former Home Secretary and many others will win the day. They would add considerable momentum to the policies for which the Chancellor, in aiming for his objectives, could command general political support.

Thirdly, the Government should drop many of the proposed increases in public sector prices. They are inflationary and injustified, except by the Government preparing certain industries for privatisation. That is thoroughly irresponsible, even by the Government's own economic yardstick, and it should be abandoned.

Fourthly, we must increase public expenditure to tackle underlying inflationary pressures—here I endorse the remarks of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and the hon. Member for Durham, North—such as skill shortages, regional economic imbalances, and a crumbling infrastructure. Any loosening of fiscal policy in the coming weeks must be directed at that kind of expenditure and not at tax cuts. Expenditure to tackle those problems would be less inflationary than tax cuts, and it would also help to solve the underlying problem.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Crawley is not present to hear the comments that I am about to make. The Town and Country Planning Association—not a hotbed of militant reactionary thought—recently produced a positive and constructive report on the north-south divide. It refers to attracting higher order corporate functions,

"Promoting local and regional businesses"

and

"Improving the development framework".

Under those headings it has some sensible proposals to improve the situation. It concludes by stating:

"Finally, to give credibility to any policies for dealing with the North/South Divide, the government must put its own house in order both politically and administratively. There should be a senior minister appointed with responsibility for coordinating all central government action concerning the regions, and the regional offices of central government should be strengthened with teams representing all relevant departments who can make decisions with regard to public investment, funding approvals etc. on the spot."

I do not necessarily endorse the need to create yet another Ministry or to appoint yet another Minister to oversee it, but that conclusion demonstrates a genuine feeling in the regions, and the further north one goes, the more pronounced it becomes. Various squeezes have taken place on local authority capital expenditure. There is a lack of development agencies in the regions in England, in contrast with the number in Scotland and Wales. There is a stifling of local economic and planning initiatives to come up with schemes that will be sensitive to local circumstances and capable of making a local economic impact. Therefore, I hope that the Government will recognise and respond to the validity of that criticism.

In terms of the need for greater investment, I refer to a commentary on the Government's current economic plans—the White Paper—by the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, dealing in particular with roads

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

and infrastructure. It is important to continue to bring down unemployment, and we should give priority to that. A typical breakdown of unemployment statistics shows that the last employment of a half to two thirds of those currently on regional unemployment registers is likely to be some form of construction-related activity. It is as important as that. Ironically, it has always been a British failing that, whenever there is a squeeze, and whenever a certain amount of money needs to be found in the system, the construction capital cost side is most likely to suffer. Yet it has the most immediate impact on creating employment and the most immediate potential for reducing unemployment and creating job opportunities. The Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors Association concludes:

"Despite a number of optimistic comments in the Press, it was never seriously expected that there would be any figures for infrastructure investment plans higher than those in the Autumn Statement last November, even if the Chancellor is now looking at a prospect of a 1988-89 budget surplus up to £5 billion higher than was expected when his public spending plans were drawn up. The whole system has now become too rigid for that. So, at the same time that there is still a widening gap between the nation's needs for infrastructure investment and the Government's plans for spending on infrastructure, there is another widening gap between those plans and what —in the view of a growing number of commentators—"

—including many Conservative Members—

"it could safely afford to spend on investment without prejudice to its stated economic objectives."

The fact that they are not willing to do so suggests that the only obstacle now is political prejudice. That again is an area where the Government should be giving a change of direction and more positive emphasis.

Equally, further employment opportunities exist in terms of the environment and the many schemes at local regional and national level that could be run and could harness the talents and abilities currently not being used. This would not only have the beneficial effect of reducing unemployment and increasing economic activity but would also have beneficial social and environmental effects by way of the reduction of pollution, the saving of energy and the like.

The Government should begin to give greater attention to reducing our skill shortages by putting people back to work and encouraging the growth of small businesses. I hope that they will recognise eventually that that is a more positive way to try to move supply back into line with demand. It is not the only way; other initiatives can be taken. For example, in regions of high unemployment, why not look at the possibility of specially targeted reductions in employers' national insurance contributions to try to stimulate employment in black spots? None of this has been looked at, and that is a sad reflection.

I want to touch on one area of defence of which the hon. Member for Horsham spoke. I certainly subscribe to his comments concerning European defence design and procurement policy, which without a doubt has been woeful in terms of the open-ended and cost-plus types of contract that have hitherto been common. Clearly, there is a need for action here. At a time when the new President of the United States will be seeking to begin to persuade the Congress to endorse in a bipartisan spirit his general strategy with regard to the United States deficit, and as feeling is clearly building up more and more among Republicans and Democrats about the huge burden which the Americans shoulder through their military presence in the form of both manpower and machinery in Western Europe, we have to brace ourselves, along with the other western European NATO members, for higher defence expenditure if the Americans begin not, I hope, to disengage but perhaps slightly to reduce their level of financial and perhaps physical commitment on the continent of Europe. I hope that the Government will not be averse to defence expenditure increases should that burden begin to move on to the British economy, in common with the economies of other western European members of NATO, in due course.

For all these reasons, therefore, we cannot support the rather self-congratulatory and somewhat complacent tones of the Chief Secretary, and as a result will not be supporting the Government.

I will finish on a specific item. There has been very severe flooding in the Highlands of Scotland during all this week. Hon. Members may have seen press and television reports. A strategic rail link in the town of Inverness has been completely washed out, which has severe implications for the movement of haulage and passenger traffic in that part of the country. An entire valley in my own constituency, the Conon valley, is currently flooding. In Fort Augustus, in Inverness-shire people have had to be evacuated from their homes because of flooding conditions. In the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), where the bridge is located, there has been further flood damage. In a rural school in the village of Kingussie in Speyside a quarter of a million pounds worth of damage has been done in the last few days.

I am not straying from the debate, because the Minister of State, Scottish Office visited what is frankly a bit of a disaster area, in every sense, yesterday. He said that, although he could not give any commitment at the time, he would be looking very sympathetically to see whether additional public expenditure would be available to help bail out and assist the Highland regional council, the district councils and individuals, such as landowners, tenants and so on, who have suffered considerable disruption, distress and direct personal loss. I hope that the Minister will take note of that, as we should be extremely grateful for a swift response—probably not by the conclusion of tonight's debate, but I hope not too long thereafter—as to what the expenditure commitment by central Government might be. Certainly, if there is any approach to the Treasury from the Scottish Office I hope that there will be a sympathetic and constructive response, because help is drastically needed.

On that particularly woeful but extremely important point I rest my case in this debate.

6.55 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): It is with some hesitation that I address the House in an economic debate, conscious of the wide array of talent on such matters on both sides of the House and the existence of a degree of knowledge much greater than my own.

We are debating the Government's expenditure plans and I would not be sitting on the Government side of the House if I did not believe that the creation of wealth—a misrepresented cause if ever there was one—was a prerequisite for the prudent management of the economy generally. Unless the wherewithal is produced—and by

that I mean the products, the jobs, the reinvestment, the exports and the taxes—there is really no legitimate basis to the debate. The alternative, of course, is to go back to the bad old days of the International Monetary Fund bailing us out, when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) became what *The Times* described as "the shy pioneer of Thatcherism"—a description which I fully endorse.

It therefore follows that the cake must be as large as possible before it is subdivided. I thus congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on his management of the economy, which has produced as healthy a situation as we have ever experienced. I congratulate him particularly not for wearing compassion on his sleeve but for acting to ensure that funds, for example, to the Health Service have not only been increased but are about to be better managed as well, to the benefit of the patient, first, as a human being and, secondly, as a consumer.

I shall concentrate on two issues: first, self employment and, secondly, home ownership.

The problems of unemployment and all its associated social evils have caused all of us in the House much anguish. The fall in unemployment, for which the Government must take much credit, has been associated with a rise in the number of self-employed people. This welcome increase, from just under 2 million in 1979 to almost 3 million in 1988, tells its own story. As ever, the Government have provided the climate, and the inherent ability and energy in the British character has done the rest. The prophets of doom about the enterprise allowance scheme have been proved wrong to the extent that fully 74 per cent. of the businesses so set up are still in business one year later. Employment for many others has been secured thereby and the expenditure earmarked for such projects by my right hon. Friend has indeed ensured value for money for the taxpayer.

However, I should like to put to him two apparent anomalies the correction of which may be both fiscally neutral and involve marginal increases in expenditure, to the benefit of society as a whole. First, a self-employed person—and I have to declare an interest as I have become self-employed during my own career——

Mr. Morgan: Are not we all?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I stand corrected, but I believe that in this House we are not self-employed as seen by the taxpayer.

As a self-employed person I belong to the group of people who attract the highest rate of tax, at 40 per cent. However, if a self-employed person incorporates, he or she is taxed at 35 per cent. The consequent pressure to incorporate brings with it exactly the sort of problem that the Government, I suggest, are dedicated to avoid—the generation of bumf and bureaucracy. Perhaps my right hon. Friend would look at this matter anew.

The self-employed cannot get the same funding rate for their personal pensions as those available to people employed by others. Up to the age of 51, only 17·5 per cent. of earnings can be so utilised, rising to 27·5 per cent. at the age of 61. That contrasts starkly with around 30 per cent. as the norm for funding through a company.

It is only natural that at the outset of a venture a self-employed person has so much to occupy his mind that pension planning is a very low priority. Even if he does get round to it, I will show that he does so at a disadvantage. I understand that the conventional wisdom is that an alteration in the rate might produce tax havens for the better off. However, speaking as a layman, I imagine that the lowering of the income tax burden and tax in general, a trend to which I look forward to seeing continued in the forthcoming Budget, would make such a set of circumstances much less attractive and less important in the context of the economy as a whole.

There are parallels with the lack of freedom for those in employment to make individual pension plans when their employers have company schemes. If the employee opts out, he has Hobson's choice of losing around 10 per cent. of his salary which is paid by the company in pension contributions. If SERPS is being re-examined critically, should not that other anachronism be tackled as well?

In short, I am against any system under which people are discouraged from making their own pension provision and feel that Government expenditure in tax relief thereon is amply justified. For those of us brought up in the welfare state, it is difficult to break the shackles both psychologically and in fact. However, from personal experience I can state that forcing an individual to study the options concentrates the mind wonderfully. It makes sense morally and financially to encourage the trend towards more personal pension provision which has already increased from involving about 225,000 people in 1979 to nearly 1,250,000 in mid-1988.

The likelihood of long-term dependency on the state must be reduced by that trend. That argument is strengthened by demographic changes which in the years ahead will mean a smaller working population maintaining an increasing number of dependants. The icing on the cake is the encouragement of savings at a time when the Government are keen to seek that development as part of the concept of popular capitalism. It may be a truism that in the Western world conventional savings tend to increase only if there is little faith in the economy. If the Government's supreme success has been the response to the lifting of exchange controls, there is a certain irony in the low level of savings which is a peculiarly difficult index of achievement to explain.

I also want to consider the further promotion of home ownership. There is a danger at the moment that the high levels of interest rates are causing hardship to those who, through the Government's initiatives, have become home owners for the first time. It is perhaps only during this Government's term of office that Sir Anthony Eden's dream of a property-owning democracy has seen such a dramatic advance. In nine short years the number of owner-occupied homes has risen from 11·5 million to 14·6 million, giving 65 per cent. of the population a material stake in the country and putting the United Kingdom near the top of the western European league table of home ownership.

All hon. Members must be aware from their post-bags of the present cash flow difficulties among our constituents. We all look forward to a time when interest rates are reduced, once inflation, the most cruel tax of all, is again under control. I deplore the fact that various financial institutions have advanced sums at a ratio quite inappropriate to the income of the borrower. I trust that their irresponsibility will be examined should repossession be threatened.

On a more long-term basis, I urge the extension of the already well-proven business expansion scheme into the provision of the purchase rather than the renting of

[Dr. Goodson-Wickes]

residential properties. I want to suggest two areas of great need that might benefit from an injection of private enterprise: starter homes for young people at an early and financially fragile stage in their careers and community housing for those on lower incomes.

I know that business expansion schemes are being considered under those headings, but have yet to be introduced. The provision of starter loans for first-time buyers will always be difficult, but it is the key for the whole residential property market which is experiencing particular difficulties at the moment. Whereas such schemes might be judged to be outside the spirit of the legislation as assured tenancies may be involved in a move towards subsequent purchases, private money could be brought to bear without generating new inflationary pressures or otherwise distorting the market.

With regard to community housing, it may be possible to bring BES funds to support housing associations. Although the returns for the investor will be low, security would be immensely greater and a new type of investor may be attracted in large measure.

In asking my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to look carefully and favourably on those schemes when they are introduced, I do so only in political terms as I have no financial interest in them. I believe that those new ideas will fit well with the Government's well-established philosophy.

I end with the following quotation from a politician of the gentler sex:

"The limits of the possible constantly shift, and those who ignore the limits are apt to win in the end. Again and again the laughable idealism of one generation evolves into the accepted commonplace of the next."

Those are not the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but of the late Baroness Wootton of Abinger, who was not well known for her Conservative views. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider my suggestions, if not limitless in implications, at least constructive in the context of Government expenditure.

7.6 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I want to begin by seeing whether the debate can get away from the crude nostrums whereby Conservative Members have implied that all public expenditure is bad and all private expenditure is good. Alternatively, they have suggested that all public expenditure carried out by the Conservative Government is evidence of running a tight ship while expenditure carried out by previous Labour Governments was evidence of the Cabinet being infested by a team of drunken sailors. That simply cannot be true and there is no evidence for it. If Conservative Members persist in believing that it is true, I shall provide the evidence to show that the quality of public expenditure under this Government reveals that the drunken sailors are with us today. I shall show what is happening under this Conservative Government and the alleged efficiency of the tight ship accountants who are supposed to be running the economy.

When I say that, I do not mean that all public expenditure by this Government over the past 10 years has been bad. I simply criticise the doctrine of unilateral original sin with which the Government have been trying to put their case tonight. The Government have tried to state that all their public expenditure is tightly controlled, thoroughly justified and that it produces a real rate of return for the economy. They suggest that what happened between 1974 and 1979, and even under the Conservative Government run by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), there was no control over public expenditure which went wild and was used for all sorts of things which did not pay. That is not true. There is very little evidence that public expenditure is somehow superbly run today because of the way in which the Government manage tight control.

This "public bad, private good" has produced a very strange attitude which has landed the Government in considerable difficulties. Conservative Back Benchers like the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) are beginning to squeal about the lack of public expenditure in certain areas, for example, on commuter rail services or road expenditure in the south-east which they recognise has been neglected and must be pushed forward simply to keep pace with the demands which can be met only from the public sector. If Tory hon. Members think that public expenditure is invariably tightly controlled under the Government by chucking the drunken sailors out and getting the few accountants in, let me give them a few examples of public expenditure which is seriously defective in quality.

Two days ago the Secretary of State for Education and Science was proud to announce a major programme, costing £35 million over five years, allegedly to build up Britain's effort to solve the great global problems, including the greenhouse effect, by concentrating the oceanography effort of the country in a centre of excellence at Southampton university. The laboratory is to be removed from Wormley in Surrey to Southampton, and Research Vessel Services, based at Barry, is to be relocated in Southampton. The public expenditure total over three years was given as £17 million, but the commitment announced at the press conference in Cardiff that morning by the director of the Natural Environment Research Council was £35 million. That is a massive expenditure commitment to oceanography and to the solution of the greenhouse effect.

What about the quality of the expenditure? Will the money be spent on the right things? Oceanography requires boats. Good oceanography requires up-to-date boats. All of that £35 million is to be spent on things other than boats. Professional oceanography cannot be done without up-to-date boats. The £10 million which would be required to modernise HMS Discovery, the flagship of British oceanography, is not being spent on the boat. Money is being spent on a new laboratory rather than on the boat. That is one example of where the quality of public expenditure is characterised by the hands-off attitude of the Government.

The Government have only £35 million to spend so it may seem that they could not afford expenditure on the boat. We may ask why they are spending money on the laboratory rather than on the boat, or on bricks and mortar rather than on the raw science to collect data. It is the serious problem which the Americans regard as the GIGO principle—garbage in, garbage out. If we do not have good data from a modernised boat which can collect deep water samples, using winches with modern hydraulics, what is the purpose of having a beautiful new laboratory?

That is an example of a public expenditure choice which is seriously defective, not in quantity, but in quality. It is an example of the way in which Ministers refuse to get involved in judging whether the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has got its priorities right.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I find it difficult to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. He seems to think that the Government, through their Ministers, should make every investment decision down to the £10 million to which he has referred. £10 million is a lot of money but it is only a tiny percentage of £150 billion of expenditure. Is the hon. Gentleman telling the House that Ministers should use their judgment, with whatever background they have, to decide how to allocate £35 million expenditure rather than, as the Government have been doing, giving the responsibility to people with greater technical knowledge who will be in a better position to decide how the money is best dispensed?

Mr. Morgan: I wonder what the hon. Gentleman thinks Ministers are for. They receive information from trade unions or from people in an industry to warn them about the problems. The example that I give is a good one. Ministers were well aware of the importance of the choice between the laboratory and the boat; they were warned not only by my hon. Friends but by people with knowledge, in trade unions and elsewhere. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that Ministers are incapable of offering a view, he does not understand how public expenditure is run. The permanent secretary of the Department of Education unfortunately is the accounting officer for all of the Department's expenditure, and the Minister is the person who is accountable to Parliament. The Minister is accountable for the quantity of public expenditure and for its quality. Now and again that involves making choices.

In the example that I gave, if the choice had to be between a laboratory and a boat, Ministers got it wrong. If the choice was between spending £45 million and £55 million, I still say that they got it wrong because they spoiled the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar. They will have a beautiful new laboratory and a boat which is said, by the people who run it, to be rotting. That is the boat which we will send out into the oceans and on which we will depend for the British contribution to the solution of a serious global problem—the detection of the cause of the greenhouse effect. Everyone, including the Prime Minister, agrees that that is a most serious problem.

Mr. Paice: I have no knowledge of the £10 million which the hon. Gentleman believes should be spent on a boat, but does he accept that any Minister is surrounded by advisers from all sorts of backgrounds who can give him technical advice on which he will make a decision? We understand that the hon. Member believes that the wrong decision was made, but he seems to be suggesting that, because he thinks it was the wrong decision, the Minister made it wilfully, disregarding all the advice. Does he accept that any Minister can act only on the technological advice that is given to him? If a Minister makes a decision which favours one sector of advice, it will inevitably be against the advice of other people. That does not necessarily mean that the Minister's decision is wrong.

Mr. Morgan: That is a cop-out. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is saying that the Minister made the right decision or that Ministers should never take decisions when potential problems have been drawn to their attention by the people who are involved at the sharp end.

I shall give another example. The Chief Secretary mentioned in his opening remarks that expenditure on the nationalised industries was falling and that this was a sign that they had boosted their productivity and had become more efficient. He seemed to suggest that they were memorials to the greater pressure to which the Government had exposed them as regards public expenditure. We have heard all that before.

What are the facts? The Government spend money on giving grossly discriminatory tax breaks to industries when they are privatised but not if they remain in the public sector. Conservative Members are shaking their heads; I am about to give an example which may change their minds.

Let us consider British Steel which has been privatised. In the act of privatising British Steel, the Government have forgone taxation on the next three years' profits of about £180 million per year. BS has been given a tax break by the Government. This year its profits will be about £550 million. Normally it should pay about £200 million in corporation tax. How much corporation tax will it pay? The amount is £20 million, which is roughly the equivalent of the dividend which it will pay. In effect the taxpayer will pay the dividend.

The Government decided to forgo the tax because they wanted to launch British Steel successfully into the private sector. They will also forgo the tax for the next two years because City advisers told them that that was necessary to boost BS as an investment which would go down well with the investment analysts. That is spending money like a drunken sailor. There is no evidence that BS could not afford to pay the proper rate of corporation tax. Why should it not pay its taxes like every other company? Why should it have a tax rate of 5 per cent., effectively, when everyone else has a tax rate of 35 per cent.? Forgoing taxes of £180 million is an example, perhaps not of drunken sailors at work in the Government, but of dogma in the Government.

The Government's attitude of "private good and public bad" means that they knock off taxes to be paid by companies that they have privatised because they believe that they are good. The Government should be asking, "What is the proper rate of corporation tax for a company in the steel industry?" They should not ask how much they can knock off the taxes of a company that they are privatising, which then becomes a memorial to Conservative dogma.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: In the hon. Gentleman's example, does not the taxpayer, rather than forgoing the tax, actually receive the money up front? The new shareholders of British Steel paid the taxpayer money to receive shares in that company. The price reflected what was going, including any tax break of the sort that the hon. Gentleman was talking about. The taxpayer has had his money, with jam on it.

Mr. Morgan: That is an example of precisely the Conservative dogma that I was talking about. If people will buy British Steel only if it is virtually tax free, so that the dividend comes from tax forgone under the public expenditure proposals, dogma overtakes good sense. Why

[Mr. Morgan]

cannot British Steel be privatised and pay normal corporation tax? Why is it treated with the benefit of £180 million of tax forgone by the Government?

British Coal is not treated in that way. It still pays £440 million a year in taxes and interest rates because it has not been privatised and is not given special tax treatment. The accounts are left as they were. Why are benefits given to privatised companies but not to others? They are all businesses, so why should one receive special treatment? The answer is that it fits the Government's dogma. It has nothing to do with the quality and control of public expenditure. If it fits Government dogma, the money is there; if it does not, a tight control is kept.

My third example comes from higher education. In the "shrinkage" phase of public expenditure on higher education, when it was popular to bash universities, universities were squeezed. They came close to bankruptcy and were merged with others or taken over.

Whereas the last Labour Government set up the Open university, this Government almost brought about the first closure of a university, University college, Cardiff. At the last minute, it was taken over by the University of Wales institute of science and technology. Does that mean that all of a sudden there will be an improvement because of the rationalisation and merger of two university colleges where before there was only one? Does the quality of public expenditure improve? The evidence suggests that it does not.

I cite as an example an extraordinary process that has been taking place for the past 12 months. Twelve months ago the rationalisers or cost-cutters—I would say the accountants, but I might offend the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw)—decided to rationalise two universities. It was meant to be a big rationalisation exercise involving overlapping departments, so a top personnel officer was hired. A former union organiser for the Association of University Teachers was appointed at a salary far higher than ever previously paid for a personnel officer—a high professional salary of some £32,000 per year.

Less than 12 months later the personnel officer has disappeared from the scene. He was given two years salary as a pay-off, so the exercise has cost £100,000. That was an example of cost-cutters at work, and it shows that they do not always get it right. They wasted £100,000 on a personnel officer who was consequently given the sack.

The cost-cutters refused to say that they have sacked the personnel officer. They say that he has been suspended on full pay, that he is on leave and that he is not at the university any more. When cost-cutters start, they throw money around like drunken sailors and sometimes make mistakes.

A further example involves the roads programme. The Government make great play of this programme and say how well it is going. However, it is not going well at all in Wales. Anyone who knows south Wales will know its key road is the M4. There is one missing link in the M4, from Port Talbot to what some call Lon Las and pub-goers call the Bowens Arms. I call it the Baglan to Bowens Arms link, but the official title is the Baglan-Lon Las link. That missing link has been promised for the last 11 years. I asked the Welsh Counties Committee—which looks after the roads on behalf of the local authorites and liaises with the Welsh Office highways department—exactly what had happened to the missing link. My mother lives in Swansea and I live in Cardiff and I frequently use the road. I shall read the answers that I have been given about these wonderful tight-ship runners of the economy, who have nevertheless, devoted expenditure to priority areas such as the M4.

The letter from the Welsh Counties Committee said:

"The Baglan-Lon Las Road was included in the first 'Roads in Wales' published in 1978 and identified as a dual two or three lane road 'to start in 1981-83' at a cost of £28·3 million in 1977 prices. In the next issue, for 1980, it was described as 'being prepared with a view to starting 1984-87' at a cost of £45·6 million at 1979 prices. In the 1983 edition, it is described as 'expected to start between January 1986 and December 1988' at a cost of £74·13 million at 1982 prices, and appears to have been reduced somewhat to a dual two-lane road. By the time of the 1985 version, it was described as 'expected to start between January 1988 and December 1990' at a cost of £87·65 million in 1984 prices."

The road has still not started. The last promise that we received from the Welsh Office was that if the road—of some three miles—were broken up into four sections for four separate lettings, the final contract would not start for another two years. That is the key road for getting economic development off the ground in Swansea or further west, or for anyone who frequently travels from Cardiff to Swansea. Yet the link has been delayed again and again because of the incompetence of the highways department of the Welsh Office and its inability to control public expenditure so that promised road programmes are not delayed as on those four occasions.

Another example of the Government's rhetoric of "tight-ship" public expenditure is Government advertising. When the Government see the potential for an advertising programme, the drunken sailors come back in and accountants move out. Unlimited expenditure is allowed for newspaper advertising, with provincial and London newspapers simply awash with full-page Government advertisements for health programmes. They are no longer information advertisements for training programmes, privatisation programmes or Action for Enterprise. They carry almost no information but are solid propaganda advertising and are totally uncontrolled.

I do not know what the total amount spent on Government advertising in newspapers is. I do not suggest that newspapers have become afraid to criticise the Government because they depend on Government advertising, but it is fair to point out the danger of that happening. With the dripfeed of continuous advertising, in the end the threat of withdrawing that advertising is serious. That is particularly true if the private advertising boom comes to an end as it seems to be doing. It could raise serious constitutional and civil liberty issues.

What should the Government spend their money on that they are not spending it on at the moment? I raised the question earlier in an intervention in the speech of the Chief Secretary. I shall tell him why I raised it because he may be mystified why the hon. Member for Cardiff, West should raise a question on the Brompton and national heart hospital. Traditionally, the national heart hospital is a flagship hospital, particularly, as the Chief Secretary said, in bypass cardiac surgery, and carries out a national role. It tends to perform more complicated operations than those performed in the main regional centres of cardiology, such as Cardiff and Newcastle. Five years later

when an operation has become routine in the national heart hospital, it is experimented and built on in the big regional hospitals.

The national heart hospital has traditionally served south Wales for many heart operations. This year for the first time it has started to turn away patients coming from south Wales. I went there to find out why it was turning away Welsh patients. I was told that it was because it could no longer carry out the operations even for those within the local catchment area in the home counties. The hospital could not carry out operations that it felt obliged to do because nobody else would do them in the home counties, and it had to turn away cases from south Wales.

One could say that was all right because the services in Cardiff could be built up. But I must tell the Chief Secretary that the situation that I have described at the Brompton hospital, where stagnation was reached in 1984 with 1,200 bypass operations a year and staggered on at the same level until only 1,100 operations were performed this year, is reflected in Cardiff. Far fewer people have operations in Cardiff. Since before the 1983 general election we have been waiting for the Welsh Office to get its act together and to fulfil an election promise to double the number of heart operations in Wales in the National Health Service, from 600 to 1,200 a year.

But not a brick has been laid on brick; not an intensive care unit bed has been hauled into a ward. Bypass operations are stuck at 600, even falling to 550 in Cardiff this year. This sort of thing does not happen in Germany or America or other countries. I know that the hon. Member for Dover will say that it is the wonder of private medicine, or of hybrid state and private medicine.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. The minute that he mentioned the United States of America I was reminded of my visit to Houston medical centre last August, where I witnessed a coronary operation carried out by Dr. Denton Cooley, who does about 4,000 coronary operations a year in a very impressive private sector hospital. I asked him whether there were trade unions in the hospital and his reply of course was no, not in his hospital.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Gentleman is raising some important points, but it would be the greatest fantasy to imagine that anything that stops further expansion at the Brompton so that it could carry out the 100 operations a year that are needed has to do with the presence of trade unions. There is simply not enough money to carry out these operations in the Brompton. It used to get a sufficient allocation, now it does not. That position has been contributed to further by the house price boom in the south-east, and the product of the Barber-boom "mark two" that the Government produced in last year's Budget. They cannot keep intensive care unit nurses and medical laboratory technicians in London. On £8,000 a year, what chance does a technician have of getting rented or private accommodation? These issues hamstring the National Health Service. Basically, there is simply a lack of money for expanding the service.

Mr. David Shaw *rose*——

Mr. Morgan: I am sorry, but I am about to finish and I am not giving way any more.

The Government are sitting on a cash mountain, rather like the British General Electric Company. After GEC has shrunk and rationalised, how does it find the spirit to set the resources free when it wants to expand into electronics, defence equipment and microchips? The company's feet seem to be trapped in clay. The same applies to the Government's cash mountain. They no longer know what to do with it. They will not spend the money on what they should be spending it on. They are trapped purely by their own dogma into spending on advertising, which does nothing but reinforce their own dogma.

Our message is that the Government have not improved the quality of public expenditure. Their wayward attitude has been adopted to achieve a turnround. After managing a shrinking economy now that oil prices have come down, the Government say they are back on a path to growth and need to expand railways and spend more money on the roads. But all of a sudden they find that the skills, the training and the attitudes are not there. Control over the quality of public expenditure is not there to get it right.

7.35 pm

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): I join my hon. Friends in congratulating the Treasury Bench on the good news in the Autumn Statement, and the public expenditure White Paper. It was a welcome message that the sound financial management that the Treasury has overseen since 1979 has been rewarded. It has not been an easy path, no one would suggest that it has, but the message has been widely welcomed in the country over three general elections. I have had the honour to fight and win at a general election on two occasions. It has been clear to me on the doorsteps before and during elections that the economic policies of the Government have been a major factor in their success.

The Government have never shirked taking measures that are painful in the short term. Indeed, we would not be the Government today if we had shirked carrying out those painful short-term measures. In 1979, the newly elected Government inherited the inflation that the Labour Government brought upon this country. We were highly and irresponsibly overborrowed, overtaxed and overregulated. We had to take some very painful measures.

The good management of the economy in those years allows us today to talk about an impressive array of public investment projects which have been announced in the past few years. These are good in themselves. Contrary to the opinion of the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), public expenditure is not regarded as a bad thing on the Conservative Benches. But irresponsible public expenditure clearly is bad.

Even more heartening to the Conservative Benches than the public expenditure projects that we have heard about in the past year or two is the fact that they are complemented by investment in the private sector. Industry is busy investing again in its future. The strict controls and cuts in public expenditure that we faced in 1979 to put right the damage done by the Labour Government were painful, and were indeed opposed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. All hon. Members had pet projects, which they would rather not have seen cut, but we had to accept those cuts in the national interest.

Now this country is increasing its public expenditure again. Thankfully, it is reducing as a percentage of the total national income. We are allowing more of the taxpayers' money to remain with them so that that money

[Dr. Ian Twinn]

can be responsibly spent, on an individual or commercial basis. We again undertake public spending. These projects are very popular in the country, and very popular with my constituents.

I am not somebody who would normally be associated with demanding increased public expenditure. However, in Edmonton these projects are of great benefit to my constituents. I would argue strongly for increased public expenditure on public street lighting, which is perhaps a matter of concern to you, too, Madam Deputy Speaker. It can have a great impact on safety on the roads and for pedestrians.

I must praise Treasury Ministers for what they have done. But clearly the fact that we can consider public investment now does not give us an excuse to relax. The Chancellor said during the Autumn Statement that things can still go wrong. One of the Government's greatest assets is international and domestic confidence that they will take strict and harsh action, if that proves necessary.

But we do not want to spend the money just because it is there to spend. We want to spend it in a responsible way. Perhaps that is the key difference between the Government and the Opposition, whose attitude is that, if money is there, it should be spent, whatever the objective. We believe that our country's wealth should be spent wisely and responsibly. It should be spent on reinforcing the enterprise culture, so that we may move away from the dependency culture which many right hon. and hon. Members born into the welfare state have grown up with. The Government's success has been in persuading voters that that is the right path to take—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may look shifty and smile to themselves——

Ms. Armstrong: I am not smiling. I am angry.

Dr. Twinn: The electorate have rejected the policies of the hon. Lady who is muttering to herself on the Opposition Benches. She well knows that her party's policies hold no sway in the country today. We believe in an economy in which initiative is rewarded.

Ms. Armstrong: This is a disgraceful speech.

Dr. Twinn: The hon. Lady may not recognise initiative when she sees it, but the electors do.

Ms. Armstrong: How much more of this?

Dr. Twinn: Does the hon. Lady wish me to give way to her?

Ms. Armstrong: Not me—but there are many others waiting to speak.

Dr. Twinn: The country's wealth must be used wisely, so that the best value is achieved for money that, as has been said, is confiscated from taxpayers, who expect the Government to behave responsibly in spending it.

Because the economy is flourishing, we can plan ahead and not indulge in stop-go public expenditure policies that were a feature of the 1970s, which are wasteful and destructive both of the incentive to be a productive economy and of individuals, in that they deter people putting their best efforts into it. Stop-go policies are destructive also of the money itself. Government Departments, local authorities and the private sector need to plan ahead in the medium to long term, and the firm foundation that the Government have given the economy now makes that possible. The Government have also accumulated reserves, so that they can respond responsibly when there are sudden changes of needs and priorities.

Taxpayers' money must also be used wisely to reinforce the major programmes of capital expenditure that the Government are now starting. The Government's diligence is to be congratulated. We can now undertake programmes that, a year or two ago, we thought would be a long time coming. I refer to major public investment in the Health Service, with £2 billion this year, and another £2½ billion the year after, being spent on Health Service buildings alone. I refer also to major investment in the roads infrastructure, in the rail network, in London Underground, in the law and order programme, and in prison building.

This week we have had a major announcement concerning expenditure on the sciences and about the money that will be spent on environmental research. That is something close to my heart, as is the major investment in our polytechnics over the past three or four years. That may have been at the expense of other education sectors, but perhaps that is because the polytechnics have been willing and eager to respond to the Government's challenge to use public investment wisely, to produce a return for the country.

I turn to the ways in which the public expenditure White Paper affects my own constituency. On the macro side, tax cuts are important and are particularly welcome. I hope that they are not finished yet, and that we may hear further good news in next month's Budget. Tax cuts have helped stimulate growth, and have brought more employment and improved incomes for my constituents. They spend that extra money in the way they see best—perhaps on their homes or on company shares. Alternatively, it is saved. Share ownership has increased magnificently under the present Government. When I go door-knocking in my constituency, I find that people take an interest in the economy that they did not do before privatisation of previously nationalised undertakings.

Higher interest rates are not such good news, and, unlike some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I do not pretend that my constituents welcome them. They find them painful, and anyone who has embarked on a mortgage in the last year or two will know just how painful. There are right hon. and hon. Members in that same situation. Others, like myself, will remember first entering into a mortgage in the 1970s, under a Labour Government, when our incomes were squeezed equally severely, and when we found it difficult to meet mortgage repayments.

There is another side to high interest rates, because many people are enjoying a greater return on their savings. That is particularly important to the elderly members of our society, who find that their capital is increasing in real terms, by comparison to the situation under the last Labour Government, when savings were effectively confiscated. My constituents recognise that the Government are, by imposing high interest rates, acting responsibly in controlling the evil of inflation. If the Government did not do that, my constituents and I would be much worse off.

I turn to specific items of expenditure affecting my constituency and the constituencies of my hon. Friends the

Members for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) and for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), which are also benefiting from Government expenditure. Expenditure on the London Underground is of importance to Londoners commuting to work. There is also encouragement to be had from the central London rail study and the possibility of new rail services for the capital. Anyone who works, lives or travels in London knows that its roads, although not as full as the media speculators like to pretend, are becoming uncomfortably busy, and investment in public transport is welcome. There is to be serious investment also in Docklands and in other London areas.

Edmonton has seen the transformation of its local hospital service, with major public investment in the North Middlesex hospital, which serves Tottenham as well as my constituency, and in Chase Farm hospital in Enfield. They are being improved with the construction of major ward blocks. At the North Middlesex hospital, £8 million has been spent on two major developments since 1985, with another £2 million annually on smaller projects. When the Opposition criticise the Health Service, my constituents look at their local hospitals and, while acknowledging that things could be better, and that the old Victorian buildings could have been pulled down sooner, they can see for themselves that the Opposition's claims are untrue.

Mr. Morgan: The figures that I gave the House are not untrue.

Dr. Twinn: I invite the hon. Gentleman to visit my constituency, where he can see for himself the impact of the public investment there. A year or two ago, the hon. Gentleman might have found it difficult to enter my constituency. Edmonton is famous on London travel news as the location of two major traffic jams. One occurs where the Great Cambridge road crosses the north circular, and the other is at the Angel. These are stationary lanes of traffic. The Government are now spending £26 million on digging up my constituency and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Southgate so that the traffic may flow freely again. We have a further £60 million committed to speed the traffic, by dual carriageway, through my constituency—aiding the industry there—and into the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit).

The north-south road being built in my constituency —again funded purely from the public sector, to the tune of £100 million—will facilitate industry in Enfield, Haringey and Hackney. Traffic from the East End following the Lea valley will be enabled to get into and out of London efficiently, cutting the cost to industry and securing retention of jobs in London—something that is very important to us all. If we did not have the good economy that allows expenditure of the magnitude of £100 million on industrial spine roads in London we would be losing even more jobs than have already been lost as the result of the bad management of the local authorities in central London. Both of these schemes represent very important investment for local employment and local growth.

Let me put in a plea for a little extra public expenditure. There is a rather beautiful park in my constituency. It is called Pymmes park, and I am very keen that it should be preserved. The north circular road is about to lop a large lump off the front of the park. The Conservative council in Enfield, being a public-spirited council, paid for alternative schemes to be investigated. It engaged consulting engineers and has come up with an excellent scheme that would cost just a few million pounds extra. If that could be provided from this magnificently flourishing economy that we have, it would be very much appreciated by my constituents.

Let me return briefly to the matter of roads and lighting. In this respect I have an interest to declare as a consultant to Thorn Lighting, but, more important, I am joint chairman of the British parliamentary lighting group. Perhaps I should draw the Government's attention to the work we have done as an all-party group in sponsoring research showing that very small increases in public expenditure to improve and increase the quality of street lighting, whether in the inner city or in the suburbs—like my constituency—or in rural areas, pays big dividends in the reduction of crime.

It makes people who live in those areas much happier, and reduces the fear of crime. But it actually has an impact on public expenditure as well, because there is less need for the use of police time and there are fewer calls on the Health Service. There is also less need for calls on the social services from people who are worried about going out at night. The old and the frail are particularly affected in this way. So, increased spending on street lighting could have a dramatic effect on the well-being of our country and, I believe, in the long term, on public expenditure.

Finally, I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the good work they have done in improving our economy since 1979 and in giving us the scope to spend more money. I hope that this will not stop, that public expenditure will continue to decrease as a percentage of total national income. But I hope also that the flourishing economy will make it possible to spend more money on projects on which the Government have a legitimate right to invest, and that they will encourage the private sector to come into partnership with them.

7.54 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): This debate, the debate that we had on the Chancellor's Autumn Statement and, even further back, the debate that followed the Budget of last April are as much a marketing exercise and a slick public relations operation as they are about real investment in the real economic world. I believe that the Government, whatever criticisms we may make of them —and I would make many—have had one relatively outstanding success. Despite the fact that, for the last 10 years, the British economy has achieved a relatively unremarkable performance, it has been paraded by the Government, with some success, as a most successful economic performance.

I think it is reasonable in this debate to look briefly at what has in fact taken place during those 10 years, because it is only in the light of the economic performance and of the economic decisions during that period that expenditure decisions announced in the White Paper have been taken.

This Government came to power at a time when the British economy was recovering, hesitantly, from the recession of 1975. They then proceeded, at a relatively very slow and poor-performance rate, to the second post-war world trade recession—in my opinion, a typical, traditional, capitalist world trade recession. I refer to the years 1981-82. Their vicious social policies exacerbated the consequences of that recession by the mass unemployment

[Mr. Pat Wall]

and increasing social misery which resulted for at least two fifths of the population of Britain, and which leave us today in the situation where at least 10 million of our fellow citizens are low-paid by any standards, earning under £150 a week, which is the base of the European Community's decency level for wages.

In my opinion, the upturn in the economy during the last three years has been a highly exaggerated performance. I think that that was made clear in an *Observer* editorial on 27 November last year:

"Behind the hitherto remarkably successful Government propaganda lies an uncomfortable fact—that economic growth since 1979 has been rather low by post-war standards. In particular, the growth in manufacturing output has been exceedingly low—indeed, almost negligible."

The editorial went on to say:

"We are not producing nearly enough to satisfy the voracious appetite for imported goods created by the Government's credit relaxation and tax cuts."

The editorial went on to point out that that gap had not been nearly filled or offset by the growth in overseas earnings and in the proceeds of the City of London.

It is not an issue, as the Chancellor and the Minister would try to make out, of a temporary overheating of the British economy that creates the problems we now face. It is more and more apparent, I think, that what we have is a gross under-powering of British manufacturing industry, and that really results from the lack of investment, both in the private sector and, as we are discussing tonight in the vital public sector of our economy and the infrastructure of the economy.

During the period betwen the two world wars it was common in Britain to belittle the performance of France. Although, even in those days, Britain was declining as an industrial power, it was still a major producer of goods on a world scale. Scorn—indeed, contempt—was heaped on the heads of Frenchmen for being a nation that did not produce but invested abroad and lived on the interest. Now, rentier France out-produces British industry by more than one third, and so called productive Britain has become rentier Britain, relying more and more on its investments overseas, and less and less on the wealth that it used to create. It is an interesting fact that, since 1981, the proportion of the gross domestic product invested by the state in France has actually increased, whereas in Britain it has been declining.

In his opening speech the Chief Secretary made great play of the way in which—he said—investment had gone up. The real truth is that what is important is not so much whether investment has gone up or down in those terms; it is the proportion of the national product that is used for state investment.

In 1983-84, 45·75 per cent. of gross domestic product went in Government expenditure. The figure has fallen to 39·75 per cent. in this financial year with a further decline to about 38·75 per cent. in 1991-92 suggested in the White Paper.

I was amazed by the arguments advanced by the Minister. The Government have repeatedly claimed that they have cut state expenditure and reduced the proportion of the national income that goes on it. For years, we were told in speech after speech and in article after article that when the public sector borrowing requirement was brought under control interest rates would fall and an investment boom would follow. Even today the Chancellor was boasting that the Government have had such success in controlling the PSBR that they are now repaying a substantial amount of the national debt.

The truth is that, so far from falling, interest rates have risen by eight stages to 13 per cent. That is the opposite of the outcome suggested in past Government propaganda and it has happened at a time when manufacturing industry—far from enjoying an investment boom—is struggling to achieve a level of investment only slightly higher than it enjoyed in 1979 when the Government came to power.

In addition to their false arguments about the public sector borrowing requirement, the Government have advanced false arguments about the balance of trade deficit. The Chancellor says that it does not matter that we have a balance of trade deficit of £14 billion or thereabouts. That was not what Tory party propaganda said about the Wilson and Callaghan Governments and their balance of trade difficulties, still less what it said about the Government of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). For internal party reasons, great play has been made over the years of the balance of payments problems faced by that Government.

The Minister said that we can have proper investment only on the basis of a thriving economy. We should consider to what extent our economy is thriving. The *Financial Times* recently noted an

"unwillingness and inability of companies"—

British companies—

"to set aside an increasing share of profits or outputs at the same rate as their foreign competitors."

In the past six years, manufacturing investment in Britain has barely covered depreciation in industry.

We should remind ourselves that in 1960 Britain produced a third more vehicles—cars and trucks—than France. We now produce only half the number of vehicles produced in France. Fifteen years ago, we produced 2·3 million vehicles; we now produce fewer than 1 million. In mechnical engineering, we still have a surplus of £2 billion, but in electronics, which is supposed to be a more modern and thriving industry, we have watched rough equilibrium in balance of trade terms in 1970 turn into a £2 million deficit. In the key machine tool industry, Britain and France are the only countries in the OECD that have not recovered output lost in the recession of 1979. West Germany now produces six times as many machine tools as Britain, with a work force only three times the size. Little Switzerland produces three times more machine tools with a work force only half the size of ours.

A further interesting illustration is to be found in one of the few industries in this country that has been able to compete on the world market—the aerospace industry. In that industry, a turnover of £2 billion in the late 1960s has been increased to £8 billion and exports have quadrupled in 10 years, reaching £4·7 billion. That industry has probably had more state investment and state aid than any other. It has benefited in particular from state investment in research and development, because the vast majority of the Government's investment in research and development has been directed at the defence industry at the expense of the manufacturing and non-military sectors of the economy.

Even the successful sectors of our economy—chemicals, aerospace and mechanical engineering—are now suffering from a shortage of investment as compared with

our major competitors—the point that was made by the *Financial Times*. Those industries have also suffered directly through the lack of trained scientists and skilled engineers and technicians. Despite that shortage, the White Paper cuts £25 million from the pathetic youth training scheme and reduces the funds available for the employment training scheme. Virtually nothing is being done to retrain unemployed workers or re-skill older workers in declining industries.

What about education? More than half our pupils leave school at 16. In America, more than 80 per cent. of pupils stay at school until they are at least 18, and in Japan the figure is 95 per cent.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): Would the hon. Gentleman like to give us another statistic? How many of those Japanese pupils stay on at school at their own expense?

Mr. Wall: That is not the point at issue. It would be far better if education were entirely free, and if I were in Japan I would be a Socialist fighting for that cause. The point is that Japan has invested sufficient amounts of money in its industry to enable it to maintain an education system allowing pupils to be educated to the age of 18 and beyond and allowing workers to be trained, skilled and equipped. The lack of investment that the Government have encouraged and the mad flight of capital abroad have led to a deterioration not only in our industrial performance but in our social superstructure, in our competitiveness in the world market and in our education, training and skills. Our work force is underskilled, undertrained and under-educated. As a result of Government policy, we cannot compete with our major competitors.

Britain spends £265 per employed person on research and development; France spends £325, and Germany £432. The latest CBI *Industrial Trends* survey found that 42 per cent. of firms in the capital goods industry face a reduction in output because of the shortage of skilled workers. In its latest quarterly survey the British Chamber of Commerce pointed out that 65 per cent. of companies in manufacturing industry now have difficulty in recruiting skilled staff.

What is true of education, training and research is true of a wide variety of public services, which are inadequately funded. As I have probably said before, 40 per cent. of our sewers in the city of Bradford are more than 100 years old and 30 per cent. of our schools were built before 1906. Large areas of redundant industrial land are waiting to be cleared to make way for new industry. We now have a major trunk road—recently opened by a Minister—which goes nowhere, to the complete bewilderment of the local population and to the consternation and amazement of visiting drivers.

What is true of Bradford is true of all our major cities. Public investment in infrastructure—roads, sewers, canals, railways and new industrial development—is absolutely vital to the reconstruction of British industry. At the same time, they are not in any way inflationary and have a real contribution to make for the good of society.

That public relations exercise has been exposed by rising inflation and the enormous balance of trade problems. Even the modest increase in exports has been dwarfed by the gigantic expansion of imports and has not kept pace with the growth of world trade. Far from there being any miracle, far from there being the marvellous, thriving, competitive economy that has been described by Conservative Members, the current situation promises a nightmare future for working people in Britain and the possibility of a return to mass unemployment and reduced living standards.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said in his much-praised speech on 25 October, the Chancellor who claims success for that marvellous economy and for the first-ever success since the war got it wrong. He got the figures on inflation wrong, he got wrong by 400 per cent. the figures for the balance of trade deficit, he was wrong by 100 per cent. about the imports into the country and he got wrong by at least 60 per cent. the increase in currency within the economy. The Government, the Treasury and the Chancellor have been proved wrong about almost every major figure. It is clear that they have also been proved wrong about the developments in the direction of the economy in the past few months.

In my opinion, far from leading us to a new, miraculous future, private industry has failed to compete worldwide, even with its major competitors. The issue of public investment will not go away. On the contrary, it will return as a major factor on the agenda. As a Socialist, I believe that the question of democratically run public control will shortly return to the political agenda of this country.

8.11 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I must confess that the speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) reminded me of a visit I made to East Germany some years ago, but I fear that even East Germany is in better shape than the country he described.

The debate appears to have lost some of its importance in the parliamentary programme compared with previous years. That is because the Government have become too successful at controlling public expenditure by getting value for money from existing expenditure and limiting Government spending. It seems that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has too efficiently and effectively reconciled the competing bids of all the Government Departments and has denied us the thrill of battle. We all remember that, under Labour, that battle was more like a civil war.

The results of that well-managed position are low inflation—an average of 5 per cent. in the past five years. As we all know, under Labour, inflation increased to nearly 20 per cent. We have falling unemployment—no Labour Government have ever achieved that. Between 1974 and 1979, unemployment rose by two and a half times. We have a successful and expanding economy, with a new positive and entrepreneurial feeling throughout the country.

The Opposition are so desperate that they have had to find a new way to fiddle the comparative figures. We all welcome back to the House the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), but I notice that the new way that he describes some of the figures of the Government are as a percentage of gross domestic product. That enables him to say that in certain sectors expenditure has fallen because under this Government GDP has risen so hugely and rapidly that many areas of expenditure have fallen as a percentage of GDP. There has been real growth in the economy and there has been a real increase in income for those who are in work and for those

[Mr. David Shaw]

on social security or pensions. At the same time, there has been debt repayment. I remind my right hon. Friends that the Bow Group—I am chairman of its economic affairs standing committee—has issued its suggestions for the Budget, which include the proposal that the Government should seriously consider repaying the whole of the national debt by 1995. Certainly that must remain a real possibility on the agenda for economic success.

The fact that all those things have been happening in the economy and public expenditure has been so controlled means that, whenever one travels abroad, one finds that we are the envy of much of the rest of the world. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] Opposition Members may say, "Nonsense," but no one abroad would agree with them. That healthy position contrasts completely with the position under Labour in the 1970s, when the national debt increased by more than £100 billion. The interest costs incurred on that debt were very heavy, and every family in the land had to contribute to them through higher taxation. As has been said, expenditure was completely out of control, and the IMF had to put the handcuffs on the Labour Government. I well remember that Labour Ministers used to tour the trade union conferences promising money to every hare-brained idea that was discussed at those conferences. Did those promises of money buy anything? They brought the winter of discontent in 1978 and led to Labour's defeat in 1979.

One wonders whether Labour has learned anything since then. We noted a considerable lack of expenditure commitments in the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East—at least he did not put figures to most of his words. Of course, that speech contrasted with what happened while he was absent. During his absence, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) sang some beautiful songs, but he did not notice that the orchestra behind him was playing the music of more public expenditure with more state control. No doubt my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has an accurate total of all those expenditure commitments, but my personal estimate is that Labour Members made some £10 billion-worth of promises while the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was absent. We all know that to pay for it would require an increase of about one quarter in income tax. We all know that any future Labour Government would not be able to find the means to pay for all those promises and commitments. They would simply not keep many of their promises.

The public expenditure White Paper reveals many sensible areas of expenditure. For example, there is to be some £2 billion additional revenue expenditure on health this year. In regard to law and order, we shall have more police on our streets. The country villages in my constituency are particularly concerned that they should have more policemen available.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Tell us why.

Mr. Shaw: We all know that, because of the education policies pursued by the Labour Government in the 1970s, there was not enough discipline in the schools; therefore, young people today are not properly educated not to commit crimes.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the saddest aspects of the breakdown of discipline among young people is when politicians, in fact one hon. Member who is present in the House today, encourage them by making vicious attacks on a dead policeman?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend has made a very strong point, which cannot be refuted.

The Health Service has benefited more than anything else from the Government's increase in expenditure. There has been considerable additional investment in hospitals and other sectors of capital expenditure. Over the next couple of years, my constituency expects to be especially grateful to the Government for a third operating theatre in its second hospital. One of the Government's major achievements has been capital expenditure on the Health Service.

More value for money must be achieved in other sectors. The Government must answer why the expensive administration costs of the dock labour scheme are being incurred. It is forecast that the national dock labour scheme board will cost £4 million a year. More important, when will the sentence in the expenditure White Paper that refers to parliamentary approval being required for expenditure of £44·5 million on the national dock labour scheme be made subject to parliamentary approval? It is amazing that the dock labour scheme is still incurring so much expenditure, with much debt to be written off and forgiven by Parliament.

Considerable expenditure is incurred by the Department of Employment on wages councils. One wonders why we are spending so much money on them, when they have done more to increase unemployment than to reduce it.

Further improvements can be made by the Government as an employer. National wage bargaining could be a means of reducing inflexibility in the public sector, and if it were abolished it might reduce disincentives and disadvantages to recruitment. That could also lead to greater efficiency in the public sector and better distribution of its labour force.

That could be achieved by decentralisation, and I welcome the suggestion in the newspapers that the Government are considering further decentralisation. There are too many civil servants at too much office cost in London. I do not understand why the Civil Service should be exempted from private sector practices. The private sector pays people according to their performance; civil servants should be paid in the same way. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may make statements. I will gladly give way if they will put their mouths where their minds seem to be.

Another aspect of Civil Service efficiency that the Government must consider is self-assessment for income tax. About 80,000 people still work for the Inland Revenue, which is far too many. The United States Internal Revenue Service manages with the same number of staff but handles four times as many taxpayers.

An increase in Government expenditure on port health charges would result in reduced local government expenditure. The Government get off cheaply, which is unfair on constituencies with ports, of which mine is one. Dover must pay 100 per cent. of the cost of checking food, which is distributed throughout the country. The Government must face up to their responsibilities, because it is ridiculous that Dover has to foot the bill for the whole country. This work benefits everyone, so the burden should be more widely shared.

I ask the Government to note that there is considerable uncertainty in Whitehall about how the port health charges structure will continue, especially once the Channel tunnel comes into operation. I do not understand why the people of Dover should pay the full cost of port health charges for the Channel tunnel and the port of Dover.

I have suggested a number of issues that the Government should consider. The Government can obtain better value for money for the taxpayer from the pounds that the taxpayer pays for the public sector. They must be vigilant and maintain control over public expenditure. The public expenditure White Paper will result in the Government maintaining their high popularity, and the economy will continue to expand and be successful under them.

8.24 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): It is an experience to follow the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw). He addressed us in his normally aggressive manner, for which we are grateful; we should hate him to be inconsistent.

Throughout the debate, I have been amazed at the way in which Conservative Members are prepared to put only one side. It is as though we live in different countries. The descriptions given by the Minister and Conservative Members bear little relationship to the reality of people's lives in my constituency. We are told by Conservative Members that, whenever we talk about reality, we are running our people down. I resent that enormously, because I never have and never will run down the people of the north. They have contributed to Britain's wealth and prosperity more than anyone, but are paying the price of the Government's economic development of that region. For me not to represent the needs and aspirations of those people, who feel cheated by the Government, would be dishonest. For the Government not to acknowledge the costs of their public expenditure policy is short-sighted and a reflection of the short-term manner in which they have conducted the economy.

Anyone who tries to follow the logic of the Government's argument becomes highly confused. They constantly attack the principle of public spending and seem to work on the principle that anything public is bad but anything private must be good. They should be considering needs, demands and opportunities and matching them and developing an economic policy around them rather than dogmatically acting as though everything in the public sector were evil. Whenever the Government's public expenditure policy is attacked, Conservative Members say how much expenditure has increased. The Government clearly find it difficult to live with those contradictions.

We have an uneven economy that is riddled with differences, which are experienced as divisions and massive inequalities. The Government's priorities have not been determined by a cool assessment of needs. They have been determined by whomever has the most sway in Government or by whoever has committed a gaffe that must be put right. Earlier this year, the Chancellor had a difficult time with journalists. No one knew whether what the Chancellor said was on or off the record, and that resulted in a commitment to more public expenditure. That had not been planned; there was no order of priority and no question of it meeting the need that it was supposedly addressing.

Mr. Major: Purely for the sake of accuracy, I must tell the hon. Lady that the package to assist elderly pensioners on low incomes that was announced, and to which she referred, was a matter that was under discussion between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security and myself for some months before the press conference to which she referred. Her comments in that regard are wholly wrong.

Ms. Armstrong: That is a matter of judgment.

Mr. Major: It is a matter of fact.

Ms. Armstrong: The facts were not placed before the House at that time and it took some time for the story to be given to the House.

Mr. Major: I have just placed the facts before the House. I invite the hon. Lady to accept them.

Ms. Armstrong: I am happy to accept the Chief Secretary's assessment of what happened, but other people will have their own assessment and history will decide.

It is clear to the Opposition that priorities have not been assessed in a clear, cool way, in which it is decided what the needs are and what is the most effective way for a civilised society to meet those needs. An example is the way in which the Government have responded to the crisis in the Health Service. Some of my hon. Friends were concerned that the review of the Health Service had been created by the Opposition and by the rather painful experiences that the Prime Minister had at the Dispatch Box at the end of 1987 and the beginning of 1988. As a result of very unequal decision-making processes, we have, therefore, an unequal and divided society.

Our society is divided between north and south and between those who are doing well under the Government's economy and those who are not. For the Government not to acknowledge that substantial numbers of people in our society are paying a very dear price for the successes of the economy is staggering; that is what I was angry about earlier this evening.

Often, what is seen as efficiency by the Government is experienced as real deprivation by the people who happen to be at the other end of it. I shall give an example. It was decided to close small unemployment benefit offices in villages in my constituency. The Government have done that as a matter of efficiency, and they are saving the magnificent sum of £2,000 a year. The cost to those unemployed people, just in bus fares, is about £11,000 a year. That means that those individuals will have to pay additional bus fares out of their benefit. A bus fare of £1·50 will not kill the Chief Secretary or myself, but if one is on unemployment benefit, the loss of that money every week or fortnight is significant. The Government are telling us that they are being efficient and saving money, but the cost to the individual is substantial. There is also a cost to the local economy and, therefore, to the ability of the local economy to regenerate and build up. It may be short-term efficiency for the Government, but in terms of the economy overall, it is a short-sighted, puny and vindictive measure.

We have heard something about squalor. I am not so interested, in this case, in the litter problem. I am interested in the squalid society that we seem prepared to tolerate. I

[Ms. Armstrong]

have spent my lunchtime talking to people from the National Children's Home and Dr. Barnardo's and we talked about those young people who have left care and who are trying to live in the community. If they are not on a youth training scheme, they are entitled to nothing from the state and they are the victims. It is not their fault that they have ended up in care. Most of them ended up in care for a series of reasons over which they have little control, but they are being punished now. They are being punished in a way that I, as a politician, am ashamed to even have to discuss with them because I find it completely indefensible in a society that proclaims itself to be successful and prosperous.

Of course the economy of the north has been growing and changing. It has been changing significantly, and we welcome many of the changes. We welcome the diversity in the economy and we welcome an economy that is moving towards not being dependent on one industry; but I would also argue that we could have moved towards diversification without destroying some of our industries and without destroying the skill base. We have benefited from the drip-down effects of prosperity elsewhere, but the effect is that in my constituency the level of skills is lower than it ever was. There has been investment through the Manpower Services Commission and the youth training scheme. The Chief Secretary will know that there has been a relatively high proportion of investment through the MSC in my constituency, but we have not ended up with the quality of training and the quality of skill that we should be demanding of any training programme that we are developing in this decade or century.

In my constituency, the level of wages is significantly lower than it was 10 years ago. Conservative Members may be confused by that, so I shall give an example. A man who was a labourer in the steelworks is today earning what he earned eight years ago. He is now a foreman in one of the new factories and his take-home pay is exactly the same. No hon. Member can tell me that that is prosperity. What is the role of public expenditure in that? We have been arguing consistently with the Government that the economy is not at a stage where it can take off in the north.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Armstrong: No. I have given way once, and I know that other hon. Members want to speak.

The economy is not yet at that level. We have been arguing consistently for more expenditure in economic development. The authorities in the north have committed themselves without hesitation and with enthusiasm to working with the private sector to achieve a reasonable economic development programme. They have invested in the Northern Development Company as have the trade unions. They have not abandoned private industry; they have tried to work with it. All of them, inlcuding the private sector, have told us that they need to continue to have investment in, for example, large factory space and to continue to be able to spend money through section 15 on European regional development fund schemes and if they cannot do that, we know, as the private sector tells us, that we shall not be able to achieve the level of investment that will allow us to take off.

The Government say that they still cannot do that and that by now things should be running on their own. In reality, people from all sectors are telling us that that cannot happen in the region. We have low wages, low skills and high credit levels. The commitment and determination of people to hang on and to continue to live there is matched by their fear about the future for their young people and about the future opportunities for young people.

Public expenditure is still too low in our region to enable it to take off economically. As long as that is so, its Members of Parliament will have to come here to represent the prosperous and the growing industries, but also those who are far from prosperous—those tens of thousands of people who are still living on benefit and whose benefit is being cut; those young people who are still fearful about a future of real opportunity, and a region which is determined that it will not give way. The north has never been a dependent area. It has always been strong, contributing to Britain's economy. But we know that that requires work from all of us, from the public and the private sectors, and the Government are still selling short the people of the north.

8.40 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) has just spoken with considerable conviction. I profoundly disagree with much of what she said and I intend to try to answer some of her points in a moment, but first let me make some general observations on the economy.

When I was a management consultant I learnt that one of the tests of a good well-run company was that it is rather boring for an outsider to visit. There is no sudden excitement from a crisis. There can be no more eloquent testimony of the Government's successful economic policies than the sheer emptiness of the Chamber. The Press Gallery and the Chamber have been almost completely empty because everybody knows that there is no crisis within a million miles and that the Government have the country firmly on course.

I want to focus on four statistics which say a great deal. The first relates to debt. There was a lot of chattering among Opposition Members when my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary commented on debt. I have spent a great deal of time in working men's clubs and pubs at both ends of the country and I know that many Labour party supporters started to come over to the Conservative party on that one issue. Again and again I heard people say that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had paid off the debts that had been run up. I am not talking only about paying off international debts—the transformation from being a debtor country to being the second largest owner of overseas assets. It equally importantly applies to the domestic level—the sheer wastefulness inherent in the fact that the second largest area of Government spending when the Government took office was not health, education or defence but paying back the debts caused by the profligacy of previous Governments.

What a contrast now. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), I would like to see a firm target date, albeit some way away, for paying off the national debt. I would not be quite as ambitious as my hon. Friend; I would be satisfied with the year 2000, and I am satisfied that there will be a Conservative Government throughout that time to do it.

The second statistic is that for inflation. The only comment that I would make on inflation is that ours is still a little higher than our competitors. It is the single aspect of Government policy about which I am most concerned and I am glad that the Government are giving it primacy. But, my God, any recent Labour Government would have been proud to have reduced it to the present level.

The third statistic that I touch on is growth. In his long speech, which cleared the last remaining members from the Press Gallery, the hon. Member who represents the Militant Tendency—I have forgotten his constituency—alluded again and again to our output falling further and further behind our European competitors. He must be joking. Our total national domestic product has grown faster since we took office, even allowing for the first poor 18 months when we emerged from the Labour-created crisis, than that of any of our three main European competitors—France, Germany and Italy.

The fourth of the key statistics is that for unemployment. The sad fact is that the unemployed today are the sixth largest state in the EC. There are more unemployed people in Europe today than there are people in Portugal, Ireland Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland and Greece. But that does not reflect a high level in Britain. We have only 7 per cent. unemployment. The average the other side of the water is 11 per cent. It is true that the unemployment figure today is a little higher than when the Government took office, but compared with the massive increase across the water, it is a remarkably small difference, and whereas our unemployment is falling fast, it is rising in almost every other country.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I remember the slogan, "Labour isn't working" when unemployment was at 1·2 million. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that even according to the Government's massaged figures, with 24 changes in the way that they are calculated, unemployment is well over 2·5 million? Will he condemn that figure rather than praise it?

Mr. Brazier: I confirm three things. First, unemployment is well below 2·5 million. It is more like 2·2 million. Secondly, at the time when those posters were put up, Britain's unemployment was among the highest in Europe. It is now among the lowest. Thirdly, the proportion of people who are in work today is not only substantially higher than it was then, but it is, as I have already mentioned, higher than that of any other EC country, except I believe Denmark and Luxembourg.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Is it not also true that at that time there was a tremendous amount of hidden unemployment which was one of the major problems in our economy that the Government have had to tackle?

Mr. Brazier: My hon. Friend makes a good point. To expand that, one of the features of a successful growing economy is that employment within manufacturing shrinks quickly. It is striking to note that even today with a move from 8 million in manufacturing when we took office, of whom perhaps 6 million were really necessary for the job, to 5 million now, we still have a much higher proportion of people in manufacturing than, for example, America or Japan. If one takes into account hidden unemployment, even on that one statistic the record is much better than it was then.

I want to deal briefly with the points made with such deep feeling by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West. Although I do not know Durham well, I do know two cities on either side. I know Darlington to the south, because my sister lived there for a long time, and Newcastle to the north where I worked for a client over a number of years. I fought a seat just to the north of Newcastle—Berwick-upon-Tweed—at the last election but one.

In both those areas public spending, for which the hon. Lady calls so vociferously, is vastly higher than that enjoyed by my constituents in Canterbury. Let me touch on just three areas. According to every set of statistics that I have seen, hospital waiting lists are much shorter in the north-east than they are in my health district. Secondly, road provision in the north-east is excellent, but in my part of the world it is crummy. I hope that it will get better and I welcome the decision to develop the Thanet way which will make a big difference to us. Thirdly, investment in schooling in the north-east has been higher than in my constituency, and not just under a Labour-controlled authority. A lot of investment was made by a Conservative-controlled Northumberland county council. The national constraints applied in the south-east mean that our investment in schooling has been low.

I have argued with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that the time will come when we must have more of the cake, but part of the reason for that is precisely—*[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Durham, North-West want to hear my point? We all listened to her. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. One at a time, please.

Mr. Brazier: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Government's priority has been precisely to ensure that the hon. Lady's constituents get a decent share of the growing cake. That is why jobs are moving up to the north and why firms are relocating there.

Ms. Armstrong: I represent not the city of Durham but part of Durham county. We have been deprived of all of the special grants because we are not a city, which adds to our problems. Part of the special investment in the city has now gone from such areas as mine, because they are considered to be essentially rural areas.

Mr. Brazier: I have heard the hon. Lady's point. The same point applies to my constituency. When the hon. Lady comes to see the beautiful city of Canterbury, I shall ask her to walk with me through some of the deprived streets that are literally a stone's throw from the cathedral. We do not qualify for inner city relief either. The rural areas in the hon. Lady's part of the world—I know the areas a little further north than her constituency a little better—have much better facilities, especially health care, and roads than my constituency.

I hope my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will forgive me if I ride a few hobby horses—that is what these debates have become now that the days of economic crises are over—and mention a number of specialist areas. While we have turned round our overall economic performance enormously, it is time that we focused a little more on the detailed ways in which we apply financial controls. I should like to mention four specific points of financial control and then one special case at the end. First is the

[Mr. Brazier]

issue of public sector pay. We must get closer to the market place. It cannot be right, for example, that in the south-east, where average private sector earnings, excluding London, are 30 per cent. above the public average, that so many public sector workers are paid the same as their counterparts in other parts of the country, and account is not taken of the enormously higher housing costs. It cannot be right either that people with critical and scarce skills in the public sector are not given extra reward to keep them employed within it.

I shall cite a couple of important examples. In my neck of the woods we are short of candidates for heads of department in local schools. A school head of physics recently told me that he applied for some posts in the north before he came to Canterbury. Each post that he applied for had more than 100 applicants, but there were only a handful of applicants for the post that he now holds. There are shortages, too, of people with key technical skills, especially those related to the sciences. I am pleading for better rewards for hospital physicists and the special laboratory staff who support our universities. They are a small number of people, but they are crucial to the running of the universities, and we would receive good value if we rewarded them.

Secondly, it is important that, if the Treasury is to have a modern approach to controlling capital spending, it takes full account of life cycle costing. I shall cite as an example the defence sector, which I know well. It is possible by spending extra money up front to save substantial sums of money later on. All too often pressure from the Treasury—under all Governments—has been towards trying to save the up-front costs, even if that meant having an armed vehicle which spent a lot more time being repaired. It is worth spending more money on designing in features which make repairs cheap and easy. That applies not only to defence, but to all forms of infrastructure. If one looks at the rebuilding programme on the M2—a post-war road—one can see that only a generation ago corners were cut. If they had not been then, we would have saved a great deal of money now.

Thirdly, it is important that, when we look at the way in which we control spending on research and development, we do not stifle innovation. When a man comes forward with a good idea, it is easy to shoot it down on financial grounds. One does not know whether it will work for certain until it has been tried. To some extent one must put faith in people according to a past record that has been tested over a number of years. I put it to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that to have 12 separate sets of accounting checks on some of our branches in the Procurement Executive is not the best way to control public spending within it. We would get much better value out of the Procurement Executive if we were willing to allow project managers their heads.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) made some interesting comments. Unfortunately, he has had to leave. He commented on the importance of getting better value for money out of our defence budget. I would just like to add two of my thoughts. First, there is nothing which could more effectively ensure an increase in waste in defence spending than allowing the takeover of Plessey by GEC to go ahead. A frightening situation is developing within the European defence industry. Electronics in Germany are now largely monopolised by Siemens. France is desperately trying to build up some competition for Thomsons—which is nearly a monopoly company—by getting Matra into a joint venture with a Swedish company, L. M. Eriksson. In this country, if GEC were to be allowed to take over Plessey, even if there was some palliative process of hiving off defence interests, it would be so overwhelming a market presence that those three companies, GEC, Siemens and Thomson stacked up and linked together, would be able to take on the Governments of Europe and ensure that they get their way. We would go back to the bad old days of defence contracting tail-wagging the Government dog.

I profoundly disagree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham about detailed parliamentary scrutiny of individual defence projects. The most interesting study on this subject was the Packard report, commissioned by the President of the United States in 1985. Seventeen experts drawn from a range of different disciplines looked into how they could get better value for money out of the American defence budget. It was a fascinating report. They concluded that the biggest single area of waste in the American defence budget came from congressional interference. The changes in Congress within the lifetime of 15-year projects resulted again and again in a waste of money. The way to get value is to let the projects have good project managers, pay them properly, keep them in their post for a long period and let them get on with it.

The fourth aspect of getting better value for money has long been the favourite subject of my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee. I refer to introducing a proper concept of modern accounting into Government finance, in particular, getting away from pure cash flow accounting. Nobody thinks that we should value every public lavatory and start writing them off over the years, but the key must be to allow true comparability. Looking at two hospitals side by side, we cannot tell which is more efficient at the moment. If we do that on a cash flow basis alone, there is nothing to compare them with. Unless we can take out capital spending and compare current items, and then get capital spending back in, in a depreciation form so that we have some kind of apples and apples comparison, the exercise becomes hopeless.

The last issue to which I refer is a hobby horse about which I feel particularly strongly. The defence budget has been mentioned three or four times in the debate, and always in an equipment context. We have a good record on defence spending, but, whatever, the level of defence at which we were aiming, it is essential that the men and women of the armed forces should enjoy the increase in the standard of living in the country as a whole, not just the increase in the cost of living. We have a good record on armed forces pay, but, sadly, it is not matched by all the other conditions of service. A rapidly increasing number of people are leaving the armed forces—some of them are desperately expensive people such as Harrier pilots, who cost £3 million to train—because of the deterioration in other conditions of service.

Some years ago, a friend of mine in the Army—it happened under the last Government, but it could just as easily have happened under this one—had his wife go into hospital to have a baby. Such is the shortage of gynaecological services within the Army medical services—they do not have an obvious wartime purpose—that she not only lost the baby but was sufficiently damaged that

she will never be able to have another one. The health service that is provided for our armed forces, particularly those abroad, is slipping rapidly behind the standards that are required in the NHS. The same applies to education.

Fifteen or 20 years ago, continuity of education was provided for many of the children of people of all ranks who moved every two or three years, as most service men do. It was provided largely through state-run boarding schools, which have almost disappeared. Today, instead, the service man gets an allowance which is supposed to help to send his children to a fee-paying school. The allowances are now so far behind real costs that the position is becoming hopeless. For a sergeant with three or four children, the position is desperate.

The third and worst aspect is housing. I referred to this matter in my ten-minute Bill last week, so I shall not dwell on it. Unless we give members of our armed forces an equal chance in the housing market with their counterparts outside, we will not retain the best people when the number of younge people is declining.

9.1 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I apologise to both Front Benches for not being in the Chamber throughout the whole of the debate. I spent the earlier part of the evening as a member of the Standing Committee which is considering the Social Security Bill. Opposition Members were attempting to get the Government to think again about their proposal to price people into work by forcing them to accept whatever low level of pay a prospective employer might offer an unemployed person. There is a clear link between the Bill and the public expenditure White Paper, in particular chapter 15, which deals with social security.

If, when they talk about tax cuts for the rich, the Government believe that there should be no floor for low wages, that they should abolish wage councils, and refuse to accept that there should be minimum pay levels, people will be asked to work, as they are in my constituency, for rates of pay of £2 an hour and, more recently, £1 an hour. It is absolutely unacceptable to ask people to accept that level of pay when others get high wages.

Ministers may say that no one in Britain will be expected to starve, because families will be expected to take up family credit. As we all know, the take-up level for family credit is 36 per cent. If the Government are prepared to build an economy on low wages, family credit would be a clear but indirect subsidy to employees who are paid low wages.

So much for the Government's argument that there is no intervention in the economy. So much for the argument that free forces should be allowed to play, when the Government will be using social security to underpin the funding of employers who pay low wages. Instead of doing that, and fostering a low wage policy, they might be better off spending money on restoring the regional support grant for proper investment in chapter 9 of the public expenditure White Paper.

I should like particularly to confront the Government's view that all are participating in the increasing wealth of our economy. We have heard tonight hon. Gentlemen calling for the continuance of tax cuts. There is a real deception concerning the figures that the Government are presenting to the people of our country. I urge hon. Gentlemen to get hold of and look very carefully indeed at "Social Trends 19", which was published recently, because that demonstrates, in the small print, that at the same time as wealth is increasing and more people have switched to mortgages, inequalities in Britain are deepening. Britain, the Government may say, is not divided. I would be tempted to agree in the sense that it is not *divided* in the past tense, but "to divide" is an active verb and it is *dividing* into the rich and the poor now.

To take the figures in "Social Trends 19" for gross weekly earnings, the official record supports the Government's assertion that incomes have been increasing. But, as the tables dealing with gross weekly earnings show, those at the top have done much better than those at the bottom. In 1981, the top 10 per cent. of male earners received 168 per cent. of median earnings. By 1987 their share was up 8 per cent. to 176 per cent. But for the bottom 10 per cent. it is a very different story: in 1981 they received just 64 per cent. of median earnings, and their share went down by 5 per cent. to 59 per cent. in 1987.

Then we see what happens after income tax and national insurance are allowed for and benefits are added. In 1976 the top 20 per cent. received 38·1 per cent. of all disposable household income, and the bottom 20 per cent. received just 7 per cent. of the post-tax and benefit income; yet by 1986 it was down to 5·9 per cent.

How do such income inequalities affect daily living? Looking at "Social Trends 19", if we take expenditure on food, housing and fuel as representing spending on the basics, the top 20 per cent. of income earners spent just 36 per cent. of their total expenditure on these items. By contrast, for the bottom 20 per cent., 56 per cent. of their expenditure went on the same items. In other words, the cost of living for them was higher. So the real distribution of wealth under this Government has been among the well-off, not from the well-off to the poor. The top 10 per cent. is still owning 54 per cent. of the total wealth. Any trends to greater economic justice in Britain certainly died with the 1979 election of the present Government.

In 1981, the bottom 50 per cent. owned just 6 per cent. of all marketable wealth, and by 1985 that share had increased to just 7 per cent. So much for the noise from the Government Benches about the increasing property-owning and share-owning democracy.

What is noticeable in "Social Trends 19" is what it does not tell us about inequality. It does not spell out the fact that the poor are being written out of the text and not even left in the margins. That disparity in income and wealth in our society is being hidden by the Government, often behind the myth of the average wage. What this Government, perhaps above all others, realise is that they can hold on to power by manipulating image and presentation. It is government by sound bite and photo call creating the illusion of truth by devising statistical fictions. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) put it well when he said that it was developing into a marketing and PR exercise.

With regard to the chapter dealing with spending on the environment, I should like to give three examples. The Department put out rather illuminating press releases in the wake of the publication of the public expenditure White Paper. I want first to quote from the press release about the package for the inner cities. It states that a £4·3 million urban programme package is approved for Leeds. Run-down areas of Leeds will receive £4·3 million. The Minister comments:

[Mr. John Battle]

"The resources we have allocated demonstrate the Government's continuing commitment to the revitalisation of our inner cities."

What the Minister did not say in the press release was that that figure is exactly the same as it has been now for four years. Perhaps the word "continuing" in the press release means the same as "as of now" when the Government said that they would continue to pay child benefit "as of now". In other words, it would be frozen as inner city funds are frozen.

Another Government press release refers to continuing the fight against dereliction. It states:

"Resources available for derelict land grant in 1989-90 will be about £67 million. It will be about 50 per cent. higher in real terms than the £23·5 million available in 1979-80."

That press release did not tell us that there is actually a £7·2 million cut in relation to last year's figure for derelict land grant. Let us not hear about continuing the fight or continuing the expenditure in inner cities when the Government are really making cuts.

More recently, the Government issued a press release which welcomed the Audit Commission's report on housing the homeless. The Minister stated:

"It is clear there is considerable scope for local authorities to improve their performance in the use of their stock."

However, the Government's press release did not have the courage to take on board the criticisms in the report about the fact that the Government have prevented local authorities from building houses. Perhaps that is the most significant point in the White Paper. It is demonstrably the case that the number of houses to be built in 1992 will decrease to 6,000. How can the homeless be provided for when the White Paper ensures that homes cannot be built for them? Local authorities cannot tackle homelessness if they cannot build.

So much for the Government's view that we will become the best housed nation in Europe which was vaunted in the 1979 Conservative election manifesto. This country is developing the record for having homelessness visible on the streets in 1989 when other societies do not.

Chapter 15 of the White Paper contains a catalogue of cuts in public expenditure. There are cuts in benefits to the poor, cuts in assistance for the inner cities and in housing. No matter how many press releases the Government might issue giving half the story, effectively the poor in economic and housing terms are written out of the text of the White Paper. I urge hon. Members to vote against the White Paper tonight.

9.12 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): In his exciting and elegant opening remarks, engaging, as they did, the attention of the whole House, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury introduced the White Paper by telling us about its physical size, the way in which it is sub-divided and the printing costs. He then told an agog House about the importance of the colour of the cover. At that stage, I feared that the Chief Secretary was in danger of becoming what I believe is referred to in the Conservative party as a "future Home Secretary". However, he redeemed himself. He pleasantly welcomed the return of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). It is a substantial tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend that welcoming him back was one of the few things upon which the whole House agreed in the debate tonight.

I do not want to attribute unworthy motives to the Chief Secretary because, in spite of my joke, I have high hopes of him. However, it must have at least crossed his mind that the return of my right hon. and learned Friend would spare him another pounding from my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown). As it turned out, the Chief Secretary got a pounding from my right hon. and learned Friend instead.

The debate brought a mixed response from the Government side. On the one hand, Conservatives are keen to take a firm line on public expenditure; on the other, they want to encourage the Government to spend more money on things which they consider important, like prisons, or, in the case of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), justices' clerks. They want to believe that inside every Nigel Lawson there is a John Smith trying to get out. My hon. Friends have echoed Lou Reed, urging the Chancellor to take a "Walk on the Supply Side" in fiscal drag. Inevitably, the debate on the Labour side has been dominated by education and the Health Service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), in an excellent contribution, referred to the state of play in education. He pointed out that, as a proportion of the gross domestic product, Government spending on education has fallen from 5·5 per cent. in 1978-79 to 4·7 per cent. for 1989-90. With primary school rolls increasing, the Government cut the school budget by £45 million. The Government should encourage youngsters to make the most of the opportunities which higher education has to offer. Yet in the short term they find it cheaper to cut investment in universities by £9 million. It has often been said that young people are the country's future. If we neglect them now, there is a heavy price to be paid later. We need a new word for public expenditure foolishly and short-sightedly forgone. In that context I want to attempt to insert into the English language the word "Lamontable".

The same "Lamontable " state of affairs is to be found in the Health Service. An extra £210 million in the White Paper for hospitals and community health has to be set alongside and against a projected fall in the real value of capital investment in the NHS between 1989-90 and 1991-92. It also has to be set alongside the Government's proposed changes for general practitioner services. What sort of Government place financial penalties on general practitioners for spending too much public money on patients? What sort of Government would devise a system of health care with built-in disincentives for general practitioners to have old or permanently sick clients on their lists? What sort of Government require general practitioners to choose for their patients the hospital that is not necessarily the one with the shortest waiting list, the one with the most skilful treatment available for the ailment or even the one that is nearest, but one that is most definitely, presumably, the cheapest? Only one sort of Government would behave in that way—this Government, who believe that there are only two categories of desirable patients, those who are not ill and those who can afford to pay for private treatment.

What are we supposed to make of the proposal to give tax relief on the cost of pensioners' private health insurance? Tax relief is public expenditure forgone. The proposal is targeted towards those who already have extra

money to spend. Surely, if money is available, it would be fairer to spend it on health care for all of us, not on incentives for the more affluent. *[Interruption.]* The Chancellor laughs, but he will be elderly one day, sooner rather than later if he carries on as he is doing now.

Why should elderly people, who have paid taxes and national insurance during their working life, have to pay for private health care at the very time of life when they are most likely to need medical services? It is surely legitimate to ask the cautious, steady—I hesitate to say parsimonious—custodian of the public purse how much the tax relief will cost. The representatives of prudence surely know the answer. The scheme could not have been announced without an estimate of the cost. I shall willingly give way if someone from the Government Benches will tell me what it is *[Interruption.]* The Chancellor sits there muttering. If he finds it difficult to get to his feet, I will give him a hand. There is no reaction. Silence sometimes tells its own story and may even be the wisest course.

There are those on this side who harbour suspicions about the explanation for the Government's advances. To those of my hon. Friends who have advocated extra public expenditure, I have to give this advice: there seem to be only two ways of securing extra public expenditure. The first and easily the most efficacious way—in spite of what the Chief Secretary said to my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong)—seems to be to lure the Chancellor into an off-the-record press briefing with Sunday newspapers about his real plans for the service in question. Experience shows that the resulting outcry will gain extra money from the Treasury. *[Interruption.]* I heard what the Chief Secretary said, but I do not wish to get into an argument with him. My hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West was right when she said that the public would draw their own conclusions.

The second method of obtaining extra public expenditure is to persuade the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) to make a speech about the desired area of expenditure, and wait for the Government to use public money to buy their way out of the damage caused. I have to say to my hon. Friends contemplating using that technique that it does not always work. When the hon. Lady described the people of Newcastle as ignorant, we did not get extra money towards the cost of education. It is fairly obvious that we are not the farming lobby.

Recently, the hon. Lady has been saying, "I want to be alone," echoing Greta Garbo—not, as is often thought, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). She has been alone in the Grand Committee Room. I was told that the hon. Lady wanted to be alone with her memories but we now learn that she wants to be alone with her memoirs instead—*[Interruption.]* I thought that was quite good. The Chief Secretary groans. I was not sure about including that, but when I heard his joke about Arthur Daley I felt much better about my own.

Far and away the most damaging blow to an area of public expenditure is for the Prime Minister to take a personal interest in it. Last year, we were told that the Prime Minister was intervening personally in the Government's science policy. We learn from the public expenditure White Paper that the science budget is set to fall by 3 per cent. in real terms. Our national commitment to research and development, expressed in terms of national income, is less now than in 1979. The number of Government employees in that area has fallen by 12,000 since 1979, and another 700 are due to go by 1991. Even the Confederation of British Industry has complained.

The Prime Minister declares herself an environmentalist but we learn from the White Paper that the budgets of the Countryside Commission, the Rural Development Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council have all been reduced.

The Prime Minister took charge of the interdepartmental committee on women, but child benefit has been frozen. The Government say that they want to help working women, yet they have taxed the provision of workplace nurseries as a benefit. Even the Treasury—if we are to believe last week's *Evening Standard*—says that senior civil servants are being charged £5 a day for the use of the Treasury creche. I am not making a dig at the Box, but I am talking about a facility that, I understand, is provided inside the Treasury—at what strikes me as quite a reasonable rate. We may be able to explore that further when we debate the Finance Bill.

The Prime Minister intervened to attack football hooliganism, but the Government provide a solution to the problem that attacks football rather than hooliganism. The climate of fear, once ascribed to inner city areas alone, has now spread. Rural and surburban communities are overshadowed by acts of hooliganism, which are regarded by those communities as a new phenomenon, and certainly have nothing to do with football.

It is no good for the Government to point to extra provision in this year's public expenditure round for more prisons and more police officers. The party that proclaims itself the party of law and order has allowed problems to develop over the past nine years. Policing the result is no substitute for dealing with the cause.

The Prime Minister decides that there is too much litter lying around, so there is a well-publicised photo opportunity, giving the clear yet obviously misleading impression that she is going to pick up a fair bit of it personally. Once the stunt is over, the Prime Minister sweeps on; the litter remains.

Perhaps the cruellest stunt of all was the Prime Minister's assertion after the 1987 general election that something would be done for the inner cities. The public expenditure White Paper shows that the overall value of Government programmes dedicated to inner-city areas is to be reduced by £17 million, and reduced again by £30 million by 1992. Alongside that is the drop in rate support grant of about £100 million for those local authorities that have to cope with the problems of inner cities. The total fall in rate support grant to those local authorities is £318 million since June 1981. Alongside that we must set the reduction in regional development grants. Indeed, the entire budget of the Department of Trade and Industry is due to fall by 30 per cent. over the next three years.

The Government believe that it is not what—*[Interruption.]* Share what? This could be a very damaging allegation from the Chancellor—*[Interruption.]* Thank God, it is just a research assistant we shared. The Government believe that it is not what they do but what they tell people that counts, which is why I was so worried about that intervention.

In line with this philosophy, expenditure on Government advertising has dramatically increased. The advertising is insulting. The employment training advertisement, which invites the unemployed to dig a

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

round hole and knock the corners off a square piece of concrete to get it in, seems like an ill-conceived Keynesian joke, which might appeal to the Chancellor.

In my constituency, youngsters ask me how they can get a job that offers them a manual skill or a chance to serve their country in the armed forces or the police; a chance to go into nursing or, for the ambitious, a chance to go on to higher education; or even to get an office job. In better times these were sensible, worthy and realistic ambitions. They cannot be fulfilled, because the opportunities are not there.

There is no point in telling such communities that the economy is overheating. The only time that the economy overheated in my constituency was when somebody burned down the Department of Employment offices off Shields road. Labour MPs will understand me when I say what a bitter and painful thing it is to have visited local schools five years ago and seen youngsters with vigour and enthusiasm, personality and energy, having had all of that knocked out of them after a year on the labour market. It offers them nothing but unemployment or a patronising Government scheme. It is a hurt that carries a price tag that cannot be expressed in money alone. The problems that are created feed upon themselves, and get harder and harder to resolve.

It is certain that more policemen and prison places are not the answer. The Government, with their slogan, "Go for greed", have brought us higher interest rates and inflation, and an unacceptable balance of payments deficit. The White Paper says little about economic efficiency and nothing at all about social injustice or the quality of life.

Training, research, skill shortages and overcrowding, congestion and pollution are all issues that are as important to the efficiency of the British economy as the need to encourage private investment—I should have thought the Chancellor would agree with that.

Mr. David Shaw: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: Yes, if the hon. Gentleman is quick and amusing.

Mr. Shaw: I shall try to be as amusing as I can, but the hon. Gentleman has made some serious accusations. Can the hon. Gentleman reconcile what he said with my understanding, that we have in this country one of the highest growth rates in any of the OECD countries over the past five years? We also have the greatest fall in unemployment and the creation of most jobs of anywhere in Europe.

Mr. Brown: It will take more than the six or seven minutes left to me to reconcile my understanding of the situation with that of the hon. Gentleman—and I also regret his lack of humour in his intervention. His points might apply to parts of the economy, but certainly not to the whole economy.

It is the Labour party's case that public expenditure underpins the fabric of our society. I shall give an example that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) would do well to heed concerning an injustice that arises from the Government's revised social security regulations. A single person on income support who is in hospital for more than six weeks has his income reduced to £8·25p—which is probably less than the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) spends on cartridges for one weekend. That £8·25p is supposed to cover all that claimant's outgoings, including any accumulated debt, fixed costs on his home —such as 20 per cent. of his rates—water rates, and any other standing charges. If the same individual is in receipt not of income support but of housing benefit, a six-week hospital stay will wipe out that benefit, leaving rent unpaid and the prospect for that patient of no home to return to, or substantially enhanced rent arrears.

How can a society as wealthy as ours bring such pressure to bear on people when they are poor, ill and at their most vulnerable? The savings to the Treasury from that meanness are not large, but the pain inflicted on the people affected is considerable. It does not make any sense to tell such a person that the economy is overheating. It is surely legitimate to ask what kind of society the Government are trying to shape. Their public expenditure plans, set alongside their taxation policy, produce a vision of tax cuts for the wealthy, service cuts for the poor; public squalor and private affluence; tax relief for private health care, fear and uncertainty for the public health sector.

Above all, there is the widening of social divisions by region and by class. To tell the people of this country that the quality of their lives is about nothing more than what they personally can consume insults their intelligence. That insult is a strategic mistake, and it will be the Government's downfall.

9.31 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): First, I join other right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken in this debate in welcoming back to the House the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Although we disagree strongly with what he had to say, we are delighted to see him fully recovered and in sparkling form.

There seems to have been confusion between the official channels as to whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) or the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) was to wind up the debate. The fact that I spent the entire weekend reading the biography of Maxton by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East is entirely coincidental; I did it for my own edification and education. Much as I enjoyed reading that autobiography, I am not sure that it profited me very much. I was astonished to discover that not one opinion was expressed in its 300 pages.

Today, we have heard not facts but what I call factoids paraded by the Opposition—factoids about investment, about living standards, and about the public expenditure White Paper. That has been combined with the complete absence of any proposals from Opposition Members. At the start of the debate, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury took up comments made in recent articles by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East concerning central Government investment and public expenditure, and about gross domestic fixed capital formation. My right hon. Friend clearly demonstrated that whatever measures one takes—gross domestic fixed capital formation, general Government expenditure net of privatisation receipts, or the total for public sector capital expenditure—the fact remains that Government investment under the present Administration has sharply increased, whereas it sharply fell when Labour was in power.

It was all the more surprising that after my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary had explained this very carefully, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East repeated the error. He claimed that the public expenditure White Paper showed that public sector capital would not increase in real terms next year compared with this year. But my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary had carefully explained that, in fact, the figures for last year included provision for capital expenditure by the Rover Group and that, once that was taken out, there would clearly be a real increase in public sector capital next year compared with this year.

The right hon. and learned Member gave expenditure on transport as a particular example of the savage cuts that he thought were embodied in this White Paper. He talked about departmental spending coming down from £5·4 billion to £4·8 billion. But that merely represents the privatisation of various public transport industries and the improved performance of British Rail. Once those factors are taken into consideration, it is clear that there has actually been a 38 per cent. real increase in the Department of Transport budget since 1978. Furthermore, the White Paper provides for a further increase of some 21 per cent. over the plan period.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) also pointed out that expenditure on roads had gone up. We have heard that there has been a decline in expenditure on maintenance and that most of the money has gone on capital works. It is not surprising that we have had to allocate large sums for capital expenditure on roads when capital spending by the last Administration was cut by some 41 per cent. between 1973-74 and 1978-79. That is why capital spending has had priority. That is why it is given priority in the White Paper.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Minister kindly tell us whether we are to believe the chart—I suppose one might call it a "chartoid"—that appears in the White Paper. It shows quite clearly, in graphic terms, that the roads were always better under Labour and have always been worse under the Tories. What is the point in publishing a chart like this for our edification if the Minister does not support it? Will he admit that this is a correct statement?

Mr. Lamont: The right hon. and learned Gentleman should also believe the gross figures that I have given him —for public sector capital, for the increased provision for spending on roads, and the increased provision for spending on transport generally.

My hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) mentioned the need for increased investment in railways. Of course, he is quite right to say that we ought to look at the return that can be had from railways in terms of reduced congestion. That is precisely what the Government and the Department of Transport do. I am sure my hon. Friend will welcome the fact that there is to be a very considerable increase in investment in the railways, as the plans referred to in the White Paper imply. He may know that there is going to be a real increase of something like 35 per cent. in rail investment over the period of the White Paper. That is the biggest railways renewal programme that this country has seen since the 1950s.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East put forward the doctrine that tax relief given is public expenditure forgone. That certainly enables us to understand the attitude of the Labour party towards tax cuts: it just regards them as public expenditure forgone. The hon. Gentleman asked about the tax relief for private health care. That relief will, of course, be provided for in the Finance Bill. It will be legislated for in the normal way. The cost will be contained in the normal way in the FSBR and will not be announced now. This debate and this White Paper are about public expenditure, and the cost of the tax relief will be revealed in the usual way.

Mr. John Smith: Is the Minister serious? He has announced a scheme of tax concessions but will not tell Parliament what the consequences will be. Is it because he does not know, or is he refusing to answer reasonable questions in Parliament?

Mr. Lamont: Parliament will be told at the right time and the measure will appear in the Finance Bill. That is the normal way in which the cost of tax reliefs is announced to the House of Commons.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East claimed that rate support grant in the inner cities would fall next year. That is a surprising claim. If we allow for the transfer of responsibility for the polytechnics away from local authorities, we find that all the inner London boroughs will receive more grant next year—they will all do well—except for the City and Westminster. Moreover, with the exception of Solihull, all the metropolitan districts will receive more. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East should look upon the City and Westminster as hard-hit inner city areas.

A remarkable feature of this year's White Paper is that general Government expenditure has been reduced as a proportion of GDP—from more than 46 per cent. in 1982-83 to less than 40 per cent. That is the longest and most sustained fall since the wartime economy was unwound.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East suggested that the figure of 40 per cent. was an arbitrary and dogmatic figure and that it made no sense to go on reducing public expenditure as a proportion of GDP. In one sense, of course, any public expenditure figure is an arbitrary figure but the right hon. and learned Gentleman seems to have forgotten the warnings given by Lord Jenkins—if I am allowed to mention his name—when he was a Labour Chancellor. Lord Jenkins said that if public expenditure went on increasing indefinitely and became too high a proportion of GDP, it would become a threat to the values of a plural society and to freedom of choice. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East also ignores the fact that in recent years many previously state-owned industries have been transferred to the private sector and that more are to be transferred. It therefore seems appropriate that the proportion of GDP taken up by Government expenditure should be very different from the proportion that pertained in the days when the Government owned and operated vast state industries.

We also believe that our policy is better and will allow more freedom of choice. Better decisions are likely to be made if more decisions are made by individual citizens and by the private sector. As this year's White Paper clearly shows, limiting the role of the state is not inconsistent with substantial increases in the main social services and on infrastructure. Of course there are things which only the state can do, and which only the state ought to do, but the

[Mr. Lamont]

state should not over-extend itself. It is most likely to do things properly if it confines itself to doing what it is essential for it to do.

One reason why the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East wants to increase public expenditure is that he believes that it can be used to remedy the defects of the private sector. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Members say "Hear, hear". I suppose that that is the meaning of the strange phrase that emerged from Labour's weekend at the Rottingdean retirement home, when we were told for the first time about supply-side Socialism —a curious paradox, like democratic Socialism or boiling ice. For most of us supply side measures mean free markets and stimulate competition and measures to remove burdens, restrictions and bureaucracy. It is not surprising that supply-side Socialism, in the newspeak of the Labour party, means precisely the opposite—more intervention, more spending, more taxes and more bureaucracy. When applied to training it presumably means Government-controlled and Government-financed training on the model of the 1960s. That is not the way to achieve training related to the needs of markets and the needs of industry. It means investment financed by regional development agencies and national enterprise boards. It means state direction and state subsidy. That is hardly a recipe for profitable or efficient investment.

Of course there is another way to remedy the defects of the private sector and that is directly to encourage the private sector and instead of taking over the functions of the private sector giving it the opportunity and wealth to carry them out. That is what the Government have done and that is why the profitability of industry is at the highest level for decades. That is never mentioned by the Opposition because it proves that we have a real, genuine, supply side revolution in Britain.

Opposition Members seem to suffer from a misapprehension. They believe that unless the Government do something, it cannot and will not happen. They talk about cuts in the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry. There have been some cuts. We have removed support from many nationalised industries which are much more profitable as a result. We have cut certain grants to industry, and industry is doing far better without the crutches that it needed when the Opposition were in power. Opposition Members go on about investment, presumably implying that investment needs Government stimulus. But although we have cut Government grants for investment, private investment is at a record level and the highest ever proportion of GDP.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East goes on about the ending of automatic regional development grants, which were a wasteful misuse of resources. But that has not for a moment prevented investment rising, and output in the regions rising, and unemployment falling in every region over the past year. Unemployment has fallen fastest in the west midlands, the north-west and Wales and by more than two percentage points in each case. In every region long-term unemployment has fallen faster than unemployment as a whole, demonstrating that such things can happen without grants and without Government intervention, given the space, freedom and incentive. That is what our policies are designed to do.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said that the Government are not giving training a high enough priority, but nothing could be further from the truth. The White Paper provides for Department of Employment Training Agency expenditure of £2·9 billion in 1989-90—a doubling in real terms over 1983-84. There are more people on the Department's employment training schemes than ever before. The employment training programme, launched last September, will raise the skill level of the adult work force by giving longer-term unemployed people the skills that they need to compete for jobs. The plans in the White Paper provide £1·4 billion a year for that—enough for up to 560,000 trainees. That is the evidence that the Government take training seriously and have provided the resources for it to happen.

We should not lose sight of what employers are doing. A recent study shows that in 1986-87 employers were spending some £18 billion on training. Employers and employees are getting the message. The most recent figures show that half a million more people are in job-related training than two years ago—a 25 per cent. increase. That is a considerable and welcome development.

Opposition Members have given us a long list of factoids—misleading facts. But certain facts have been increasingly and significantly absent from their speeches —the facts relating to living standards. Opposition Members go on about interest rates and investment, but they seem to forget that the object of economic policy is improved living standards. Those are the most appropriate criteria on which to judge it. Investment is not the object of economic policy; it is the return from that investment and the impact on living standards. Under this Government, living standards have risen dramatically.

On television the other day, the Leader of the Opposition dismissed living standards by saying that they had increased in every decade and had done so automatically. I am not sure why we have debates on the economy year after year, week after week if living standards increase automatically. It is a curious view that one need argue only about the distribution of wealth because the creation of it can be taken for granted.

The Leader of the Opposition was right. Living standards have increased in every decade, largely because in every decade there have been a few years of Conservative government. The rise in living standards under Conservative and Labour Governments is dramatic and instructive. Since the war, the Labour party has held office for 17 years, in which time living standards increased 13 per cent. The Conservative party has been in power for 27 years—one and a half times as long—in which time living standards increased 72 per cent. There is nothing coincidental about that; it occurred because of our public expenditure policies and realistic control of them.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East was coy about the Labour party's policies. We know that it believes in massive increases in expenditure. In his 35-minute-speech, sparkling and welcome though it was, the right hon. and learned Gentleman spent the Government's entire surplus. He prefers to call it public investment because it is a better contrast with private consumption. He and the Labour party are determined to increase public expenditure whatever the economic circumstances. That is the fatal mistake that the last Labour Government—and the Labour Government before that—made. Labour Governments begin by

increasing public expenditure massively. They push it to the limit in the first few years, but cuts follow—the big dipper effect.

As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said, in their first year, the last Labour Government increased public spending by 12 per cent. in real terms, but then the misery began. After that, cuts followed in capital spending on hospitals, on roads—about which Labour Members have been grumbling today—and on schools and education. My hon. Friends may wonder where all the money went. While they were making these cuts, public expenditure continued to increase. The money was spent on current expenditure. It was spent on wages, but it did recipients no good because it was accompanied by massive inflation, which lowered their living standards.

The other day, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said that what the last Labour Government did was not relevant. It is relevant as long as Labour Members are prepared to make the same mistakes as their predecessors. All the signs show that they are on the same road.

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary referred to the pledges that the Labour party has made on science, health charges and overseas aid. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East added pensions to the list. The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), who is an Opposition Front Bench spokesman, told the Standing Committee considering the Water Bill that when the Labour party is returned to office there will be no external financing limits on capital spending by trading organisations in the public sector. That could be an expensive pledge. The hon. Gentleman also told the Committee that the last Labour Government had lost the election because they had not spent enough money. That certainly is a speech to distribute to the markets.

There could not be a greater contrast between the White Paper and the one published by the Labour party in 1978. The 1978 White Paper admitted that for four years there had been no increases in output and that real national disposable income had fallen by 2¼ per cent. That 1978 White Paper pointed out that public and private consumption had grown at the same rate for a decade, but had diverged since the Labour Government had come to power. It pointed out:

"Personal consumption actually fell between 1973 and 1977 while public authorities' consumption rose at an average annual rate of 2·5 per cent. The fall in real take-home pay was even sharper than the fall in personal consumption."

Those are the consequences of excessive growth in public expenditure and they are consequences that fall on ordinary people through increased taxes and falls in living standards.

We know that we cannot expect the Labour party ever to understand that. We cannot expect it to understand the dangers of the public sector crowding out the private sector. We cannot expect it to understand the wealth-creating role of the private sector. The Labour party's problem was revealed last year in a report by its co-ordinating committee, of which the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) was a part author. I understand that another member of the co-ordinating committee was the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). Some people might think that another co-ordinating committee would be needed to co-ordinate those two hon. Gentlemen. The committee's report said:

"Many party activists are positively hostile to the idea that the party should have something to say about productivity, competitiveness, efficiency or enterprise."

The report, part of which appeared in *The Guardian*, then went on to make the most astonishing admission of all. It said:

"it often comes as a shock to party members that public sector employment is not the norm in society."

If that is the Labour party's attitude, how can we expect it to have a realistic attitude to public expenditure? We do not expect that.

This White Paper is the fruit borne from a decade of successful economic management and prudent budgeting. To listen to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East one would think that nothing had changed since 1979. Year after year, Labour Members pray in aid economic ruin and social collapse. Year after year, they predict rising unemployment and industrial decline. Year after year, the British economy continues to expand, its finances are in better shape and its provision for priority services increasingly improved. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has described the growth of the economy in recent years as a short-term boom. It is a short-term boom that has continued for eight years and that is the longest period of growth on record since the second world war. The right hon. and learned Gentleman calls for an investment boom. He is apparently unaware of the 18 per cent. rise in manufacturing investment over the past year.

Yet the firm management of public spending has not prevented an extraordinary and unprecedented investment in priority programmes. The Government have managed to reduce public spending as a proportion of national income and, at the same time, they have increased health spending massively with the largest increase ever given. They have increased considerably spending on science in this year's White Paper, despite what Opposition Members have said. Everyone but Opposition Members can see that those increases are the product of an economy that is expanding. Everyone but Opposition Members realises that the growth in the economy has been facilitated and accelerated by the reduction in overall Government borrowing. Yet Opposition Members cling to the nostrums and policies of yesterday—policies that would produce not a dash for growth, but a race to ruin. It is ironic that Opposition Members today have criticised high mortgage rates and have exploited the concerns of those paying them, for they are the country's true mortgagors. It was their reckless economic management that mortgaged this country up to the hilt.

The one thing that we might have expected Opposition Members to remember was the ruinous effects of their own policies, such as punitive taxation that drove businesses and management abroad and lowered living standards in this country.

Opposition Members' belief that only public money can get things done is false and destructive—false because it ignores the significant changes that can be brought by private spending; destructive because it crowds out private investment and enterprise.

The plans put forward in the White Paper are realistic and will underpin the stability, the financial security and the Government's tremendous economic achievements, and I commend them to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 165, Noes 256.

Division No. 88] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert

King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory
and Mr. Michael Fallon.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans for 1989-90 to 1991-92 (Cm 601-609, 611-619 and 621).

Credit Institutions

10.15 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4794/88 on credit institutions, 9224/86, 4339/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Treasury on 22nd July 1988 on the Own Funds of credit institutions and 6033/88 on a solvency ratio for credit institutions; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that the Commission's action in this field takes full account of United Kingdom interests.

I welcome the opportunity to debate these complex measures, which together will establish a single European market in banking. I take the opportunity to pay a tribute to the ever vigilant members of the European Select Committee, who have helped bring about the debate today. These are important measures. They will bring a significant benefit to a major British industry.

I will endeavour to be reasonably brief, in view of the obvious great interest in this subject in the House. These are complex measures, and to understand such measures it is often helpful to contrast them with the alternative approach that could have been taken.

There were in theory two paths that the Community could have followed to create a single market in banking: the path of harmonisation and the path of deregulation.

A harmonised banking regime would have meant each country discarding its existing regime, which had evolved to meet national needs and to which its own banking industry had adapted. To replace them it would have been necessary to agree on uniform procedures for authorising banks, common systems of prudential supervision, common rules for depositor protection, common standards of capital adequacy and solvency, and so on. There might even have been calls to establish a new central regulatory authority to ensure uniform application of those many standards which require subjective interpretation.

The chances of ever reaching agreement on such a harmonised regime by 1993, if ever, would have been slim, if not non-existent. If agreement had been reached the outcome would have been rigid and unadaptable. The transition to the new regime would have been very disruptive. Such a harmonised regime would have fitted each country's banking industry as badly as if everyone were obliged to wear the same sized shoes. Fortunately, the Community has trodden the alternative path of deregulation and has achieved it by two major steps.

The first is the mutual recognition of each country's banking authorisation. This is enshrined in the second banking directive. It ensures that a bank authorised in any member country can operate in any other member country without further authorisation—the so-called banking passport Communitywide.

Secondly, minimum standards are to be agreed for initial authorisation and continuing supervision. So the purpose of the own funds directive and the solvency ratios directive, which are before the House tonight, is to set the minimum standards for capital adequacy. The directives will prevent any regulatory undercutting. That is, they will prevent any country from giving its banks an unfair and distinctly unwise advantage by setting capital adequacy requirements below the agreed minimum. The British Government consider it important that this capital adequacy regime should be compatible with the international standards agreed in Basle at the Bank for International Settlements last July, based on the earlier work of the Committee chaired by Peter Cooke of the Bank of England.

Under the proposals before us, member states will remain free to set stricter standards of capital adequacy if they so wish. They will make their own arrangements for prudential supervision and authorisation, subject to the minimum requirements of the directives.

We believe this approach should be the paradigm for extending the single market in similar areas. I welcome the Commission's adherence to this approach in its White Paper concepts of harmonisation of minimum essentials, mutual recognition and home country control, both here and in other sectors.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I wonder whether my hon. Friend can tell the House whether these measures can be adopted simply by majority vote or whether it is necessary to have unanimity in the Council of Ministers before they can be implemented?

Mr. Lilley: This is not an area where we or any member state has a veto. It is on majority voting.

In the first place, the approach that I have outlined—that of mutual acceptance of authorisation in the home country—makes it far easier to achieve an agreement. That is not to say that it is easy and my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) has just said that he recognises that there may be difficult issues at stake which will affect a country's national interests. However, it is far easier to agree on mutual recognition and minimum standards than to agree to a common standard on every particular aspect of banking regulations. Under the approach adopted by the Community, states are free to retain most of the systems that they already have.

More important than the ease or difficulty of achieving agreement, we believe that a single market, based, as these directives intend, on mutual recognition of different systems and common agreement on minimum standards, is superior to one based on a common regulatory regime. That is because, in a single market with different regimes, there is competition not just between banks but, to some extent, between banking regulatory regimes.

It is sometimes assumed that such competition between regulators must automatically lead to a reduction in standards. A sort of Gresham's law is thought to apply, whereby bad regulation will automatically drive out good. That is not so. It is of course necessary to set minimum regulatory standards to ensure the continuing soundness of financial institutions and to safeguard the interests of depositors. However, it is a mistake to suppose that a good regulatory regime will generally make banks authorised under it less competitive than those authorised under a weak regulatory regime. On the contrary, most customers would prefer to deal with banks which they know to be authorised and supervised by a strict and prudent regulator rather than banks authorised by a lax and incompetent regulator.

No supervisor, however good, can supersede the customer's ultimate obligation to be cautious about who he deals with. Caveat emptor still applies. However, he will be guided in his judgment by the standards applied by the

supervisory body. The expression "as safe as the Bank of England" still quite rightly carries weight in people's minds. It lends an extra attraction to British banks.

People like to do business with those they can trust. I remember when I studied economic history being taught that the reason why the Quakers prospered was not that they were particularly assiduous in pursuing material wealth, but because they were known to be scrupulously honest and people liked doing business with them because of that. Therefore, in general, a good, strict regulatory regime may be a competitive advantage for those who are authorised under it.

Although we fully endorse the general approach of these directives, there are a number of issues about which the United Kingdom is concerned. The most serious issue is reciprocity. The provision as drafted requires that before a credit institution whose parent company is outside the Community can be authorised by any member state, the Commission must first decide whether the country concerned offers reciprocal treatment to Community credit institutions. No non-Community bank could be authorised to establish a subsidiary in London until the Commission was satisfied that its home country offered reciprocal freedoms to banks from each and every member state. The Commission inserted this provision into the draft directive without any consultation and at the last minute before submitting it to the Council last February. The result is that the draft provision is muddled and unclear. But it is clear that the Commission's proposals are potentially very damaging.

The potential for delay is horrifying. The potential for protection is even worse, and the threat to London's position as a major international financial centre, should the provisions in the draft directives be accepted, would be incalculable.

London has built up its pre-eminent position in this time zone by attracting banks from all over the world. Indeed there are, for example, more American banks in London than there are in New York. But although London has the most to lose, all EC countries are likely to find that foreign financial institutions were more reluctant to operate in the Community if the reciprocity provisions were incorporated in the final directive.

What is more, British banks operate throughout the world. They might face retaliation in non-Community countries if access to the British market were restricted because the Commission felt that particular overseas countries were not offering satisfactory reciprocal freedoms in other member states which have traditionally been more restrictive themselves.

The Commission has argued that the reciprocity provision is essential to strengthen its negotiating hand in the GATT Uruguay round. This I find a very worrying argument. It would be perverse in the extreme if the Uruguay round were to become a pretext for erecting new protectionist barriers.

All member states have indicated that they consider the Commission's proposals on reciprocity to be impractical as drafted. We have expressed the view that the second directive would be a far better measure without the Commission's proposed reciprocity provision and that we would like it removed. In the light of these comments, the Commission will be revising its proposals over the coming months.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Can my hon. Friend indicate the balance of opinion in the Council on majority voting on reciprocity? Has he any idea how it might go?

Mr. Lilley: *As I mentioned, every member state was* critical of the provisions, to different degrees and not always on the same aspects, but all found it unsatisfactory. Therefore, my hon. Friend can be reasonably confident that the Commission went away well seized of the need to change its initial proposals. We look forward to the Commission coming back in due course.

Our second main concern is the interaction between the second banking directive and the investment services directive which is on the stocks. On the continent most investment services are provided by banks, and the Community passport created by the second banking directive will enable banks to offer services throughout the Community. In the United Kingdom a large part of our financial service industry is not part of a bank. It is carried out by specialist investment institutions. Non-bank financial services firms will be given a similar Community passport under the investment services directive. But if the second banking directive were enacted before the investment services directive, continental banks offering investment services could be given an unfair headstart over the specialist firms. Fortunately we have been reassured by the Commission's clear statement that its intention is for both directives to be implemented at the same time.

We have one final concern which relates to the procedures to be adopted for amending the directives. Member states have unanimously rejected the Commission's proposed amendment procedure, since it fails to reflect the complexity of banking issues, and risks the adoption of new prudential requirements without the full agreement of banking supervisors. For the own funds directive an interim solution has been found, which reserves to the Council of Ministers the right to amend directives. For the other directives, we are now awaiting new proposals from the Commission.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): My hon. Friend has said that he is unhappy about the reciprocity provisions in the directive. What is the position of the Government generally on reciprocity? Are they unhappy about the reciprocity provisions? If so, have they second thoughts about the provisions on reciprocity in the Financial Services Act 1986?

Mr. Lilley: The provisions in the draft directive are substantially different from those in our Financial Services Act or elsewhere on our statute book. They give the British Government the right to take a decision which will be politically sensitive—the Government taking the decision if there is even a need to do so. But we have never seen the need to operate those provisions. The provisions in the draft directive require in every case, prior to authorisation by a member state, the Commission to take a decision, for which it has three months in the first instance and longer in many circumstances. That is plainly a potential nightmare recipe for bureaucratic delay.

These are important measures which give the British financial services sector a chance to build on its strengths. We must ensure that the important reservations that I have discussed frankly this evening are put right, and with the support of other member states which feel as we do on such subjects as reciprocity we shall be negotiating hard to achieve that result.

[Mr. Lilley]

We have been helped throughout by comments from and discussions with banking practitioners in this country, and it is right that that should be so, as it is on their enterprise and initiative that the success of the single market will depend.

10.30 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): The Economic Secretary to the Treasury has just lauded reward for effort, and I certainly congratulate him on the effort with which he has stated his case.

While the proposals appear technical, they amount in fact to the terms and conditions under which finance capital will operate in the Community from 1 January 1993. They are therefore not simply matters concerning credit institutions: they are of major importance. Let us take, for example, the solvency ratio for credit institutions. The Economic Secretary addressed that in a rather effortfully laid-back way, considering only the technical questions, but the solvency conditions of financial institutions in the Community are of the first importance as we approach the 1990s.

It is a long time, for example, since major banks in western Europe went bust. It is over half a century since the Kredietanstalt failed in Austria, with repercussions not only in Europe but in the United States. At present, however—as hon. Members know very well—the United States banking system is in considerable difficulties. It owes as much in farm debt as it owes to developing countries. It is important for the Community—certainly its Finance Ministers—to address solvency issues, not simply in terms of harmonising down to, or up from, 8 per cent. or any other percentage but in the context of what problems banks in Europe will face in relation to banks in the United States or elsewhere in the 1990s.

The latest press reports on the committee reporting to the President of the Commission—a committee composed mainly of governors of central banks—say that it is considering United States Federal Reserve-type arrangements, but with the powers that the Federal Reserve had prior to the Roosevelt new deal reforms in the 1930s. That should also be considered in relation to solvency questions, and I urge the Government to bear in mind the fact that such a Federal Reserve bank proved impotent to counter the collapse of the United States banking system or the ensuing slump in the 1930s.

I am not saying that we shall have a slump in the 1990s, but we may have a considerable protracted period of recession in the world economy. If we are to take advantage of a European dimension to conditions involving solvency in financial institutions—this, of course, concerns all financial institutions in the Community: banks, credit institutions, building societies and so forth—we should address the likely creditworthiness of Europe's private financial institutions through a decade that could be one of very low growth in the world economy, or one of considerable pressure from developing countries on the debt question and other such issues. Ultimately the subject concerns not just the big investors —the big banks—but the small-league investors: the wage and salary earners making monthly payments to a mortgage account or pension fund, or weekly payments into a building society.

That brings me to the second provision, on the co-ordination of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to the taking up and pursuit of credit institutions, and the amending directive before the House.

The provision suggested by the Commission is potentially very powerful. First, I believe that it gives the power, in essence, to block authorisation of the takeover or establishment of a financial institution by a company from a non-EC country. If the Minister believes otherwise, I should be glad to hear his views on that point.

The useful Treasury briefing paper on the matter says that, as drafted, the provisions would appear to prevent further subsidiarisation or takeovers by third country banks even when they are already established in the EC. Perhaps the Minister will clarify whether that is the Government's interpretation of the provisions.

Some people are understandably concerned. As ever, we are grateful to the Select Committee on European Legislation for giving some information about other people's views. My original understanding was that the briefing came from the Treasury Select Committee, perhaps because of the difference between the in-depth analysis from the Treasury Select Committee and the briefing documents relating to this regulation.

The third report of the Select Committee on European Legislation has a very brief summary of a submission made by the American Banking and Securities Association of London, expressing its concern on reciprocity, and a submission by the Bank of Tokyo Ltd., which welcomes the move but is very concerned about the reciprocity conditions.

It is clear that if the provision is passed there could be constraints on banks such as Namura, which has perhaps $30 billion of assets in the latest figures I have seen, extending their operations in the European Community.

I would not share, nor do the Opposition share, the Minister's attitude towards this, or the sort of observations he made about the Uruguay round of talks. Let us not be naive about this. In the Uruguay round, the United States has chosen to insert into all those negotiations intellectual property rights, which should not normally come within the GATT procedures. In other words, the United States wants access to Latin American countries and others for patents and licences of United States companies, with a comparative technological advantage in relation to Latin America.

We should have a much fuller debate on the open question of what role Europe should take in relation to foreign investment and/or takeovers of its financial services sector by other financial institutions based in other countries. That is so not least as the Japanese in particular have built up such a massive structural surplus in their visible trade and are seeking outlets for it. They have been creating financial institutions in the past 15 to 20 years so that they are now the leaders in financial operations, including credit institutions and insurance, on the world markets.

I should like to deal with the provisions for disclosure of anyone holding more than 10 per cent. of the capital or voting rights in a company. I do not recall that the Minister addressed his remarks to that issue. This should be debated in detail and considered seriously. Many people would regard it as a worthwhile move that nobody should be able to hold more than 10 per cent. without that

matter becoming transparent. But evasion in these matters is notorious, through nominee holdings in financial institutions.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): I am puzzled, because the hon. Gentleman does not seem to be talking about the documents before the House. Since he and I sponsored the early-day motion, if he had been able to make those free telephone calls to Brussels, and speak to officials there, presumably he would have been able to find out what the documents were about.

Mr. Holland: I am glad to give the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to raise so important a matter as right hon. and hon. Members having the advantage that even an executive officer in the Treasury may enjoy, of telephoning someone to clarify a particular point. The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue. If any right hon. or hon. Member, other than those on the Government Benches, were to seek the views of members of the Bundestag or of the Assemblee Nationale on the measures, they could do so only at their own expense. Those of us having inner-London seats who do not enjoy the additional cost allowance find that difficult to do.

The point I make is raised in the explanatory memorandum from the Treasury. In that sense, it is either directly relevant, or we are not getting a decent brief from the Treasury. I do not wish to impugn people who cannot answer for themselves—unless the Minister himself claims responsibility for the words in question. In taking that responsibility, perhaps the Minister will say what his views are on the provision.

Our view is that the provision is worth while but easy to evade by using nominee holdings, and so on. What consideration has been given to those aspects by the British and other Governments, in relation to other Governments, to ensure that transparency can be achieved in respect of the Community's financial institutions? It is nothing less than that point which we address tonight.

Given the transparency insistence of articles 85 and 86 of the treaty, how relevant are they considered to be in relation to the provisions for harmonising conditions for the operation of finance capital in the Community from 1992 onwards? What transparency do the Government or the Commission seek to achieve? One of the problems arising from the concentration of financial institutions in western Europe is that the speculative operations of leading banks or the foreign exchange departments of manufacturing firms—one is speaking not only of financial institutions—in hedging, and in the leading and lagging of payments, can force a currency that is under pressure to depreciate further when the Government do not wish that to happen.

Inversely, and as the Germans know very well, those practices can force a stronger currency into even further revaluation when the Government may not need it. It is on those aspects that we want a Government response. They are aspects that relate to monetary policy and monetary management in a wider sense. Nothing in the provisions or in the Minister's comments suggests that those issues have been addressed.

The European Parliament amendment, for example—which I understand will be accepted—suggests that, pending translation of the directives into international legislation, the specific accounting techniques used should be left to member states. What accounting techniques will be adopted in the final proposals? On what will they be based? It may be a fine, sensible and pragmatic measure, but when will the House have an opportunity to examine the accounting proposals? As any accountant will agree, accounting is not just a technical matter but the basis of accountability. The institutions' accountability is of the first importance in a Community that has wider objectives than simply serving the interests of the institutions themselves.

There is also the question of the relationship between the proposals and economic union. I was interested to hear the Minister's remarks, but their meaning was not entirely clear. Is he arguing that this is harmonisation or that it is not harmonisation?

Mr. Tim Smith: I am astonished that the hon. Member did not understand what my hon. Friend was saying. My hon. Friend made it absolutely clear at the beginning of his speech that this was a measure of deregulation and not a measure of harmonisation.

Mr. Holland: I am very glad, although perhaps the Economic Secretary would like to confirm that. His confirmation would be very useful.

Mr. Lilley: We have always known that the hon. Member has difficulty understanding things, but I do not think that any hon. Member on this side or any of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends has the least doubt that what I said was exactly as has been so succinctly summarised by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith)

Mr. Holland: Allegations about what one understands or does not understand are fine at this time of the night. By all means let us have more of them, and perhaps we can get further from the subject.

The point is precisely that, by our interpretation, these are measures for harmonisation. I really do not understand why the Minister says that they are not. What is he going to say, for example, about the 8 per cent. reserve limit? Is he going to say simply that that is the minimum limit, that anybody can have any higher reserve he wishes? If so, what is he going to say about the provisions for third parties from other countries establishing or taking over financial institutions in the Community? Is it up to any member state to do what it wants? That is not what is in the proposals before us.

Mr. Lilley: Perhaps I can enlighten the hon. Member on that point. The provisions to which he refers fall under the reciprocity rule, about which I made my views very clear.

Mr. Holland: I do not want to suggest that the Minister is misleading the House, but I must say that by any normal standards these provisions are for harmonisation. We have the benefit of the Treasury's own briefing on the matter. At the moment, it appears that if any party from a non-member country wishes to set up a financial institution in the Community it can do so and thereby gain access to the rest of the Community market.

It is also clear from the provisions we now have that from 1 January 1993, this procedure could be blocked by any other Government not actually approving the establishment of the financial institution. The Treasury briefing says that authorisation could be delayed indefinitely by the failure to reach a consensus view. If that is not a harmonised policy, what is? Or are we to consider that these briefings, for which, after all, the Minister has

[Mr. Holland]

said he is responsible, are not relevant? We are not talking simply about clearing the playing field and having equal opportunity for competition; we are talking about harmonisation of the terms and conditions on which non-Community finance capital can operate in the Community.

In effect, these provisions fall within what is still widely recognised as an analytic and policy framework of negative integration. Basically, they are breaking down barriers to the free movement of capital and are not matched by measures for positive co-operation between Governments to build up from below rather than to harmonise down. What we need, in European financial terms, is the matching of a harmonised market for private finance with the capacity of Governments both to monitor such flows better, with better information, and to ensure a joint management of monetary policy in the Community itself. That, of course, is the bottom line, about which the Government are not clear what they want to do. In other words, they are proposing, in effect, to harmonise financial provisions in the Community at the private sector level without being at all decided on whether or not they actually want to join the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS.

Finally, I want to make an observation about the manner in which these proposals have been formulated and how they have been considered by this House. I am glad that they have been considered on the Floor of the House. Nonetheless, in terms of questions put to the Minister, I had to treat this virtually as a Committee stage because so much is unclear about the proposals and their implications. *[Interruption.]* No, it is not a superficial point, although I realise that Ministers would prefer to be in bed.

There are many unanswered questions in relation to the proposals. Arguably, the documents—which will affect the way in which financial markets will operate for all member states—are as important as any Finance Bill considered in Committee or on the Floor of the House. Yet in this case the Select Committee has given us the views of a handful of interested parties on a couple of pages. These measures deserve proper scrutiny, yet we have been given only an hour and a half to consider them, when most hon. Members have already gone home.

The Europe of 1992 as it is popularly known—1 January 1992 is not the key date except in respect of some of these documents; what is important is what is achieved before 1992—will be created, but it will be created less with a bang than with a whimper. That whimper is hardly even being heard in this House, and it is being heard in only a few circles outside it.

10.50 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): As the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) said, this important debate takes place late on Thursday evening, when speaking on any motion, let alone a motion to take note of European Community documents, is unpopular.

There is a vital role throughout the EC for the banking and financial services, which represent about 7 per cent. of the Community's gross national product and provide about 3 million jobs. Therefore, any potential directive is important to many people, and not least to the treasuries of the member countries, which are concerned with the flow of invisible earnings. It is because the London market is the most important market in the EC in that respect that the House should be particularly concerned with the contents of the documents. It is because invisible earnings are so vital to this country that hon. Members are in the process of forming an all-party committee to consider them. I hope that that will improve our debates on this very important subject.

The banking and building society industries represent a problem within the EC single market because there has to be regulatory control somewhere. This time—perhaps one might say "for once"—the Commission has done exceedingly well in its recommendation. This time it has not centralised regulation in some new central bureaucracy but instead has adopted the principle of mutual recognition of regulatory systems in individual member countries. In other words, in this case the single banking licence represents the minimum harmonisation based on home country, not Brussels, control. It is a commendable move with wide implications in the Community.

Mr. Fitchew, the director-general of DG 15 in Brussels, commented in September 1988:

> "The Commission has neither the capacity nor the wish in current circumstances to become responsible for the authorisation and supervision of banks and insurance companies throughout the Community."

That is very good news, and very sensible. I wish that the directors-general of certain other DG groups would take note.

Mr. Fitchew continued:

> "The host country, as the issuer of licences, would be incompatible with the idea of a single market because it would leave the host countries free to continue imposing all the barriers and restrictions on market access which we want to remove. So the only solution compatible with a single licence and a single market is home country control."

I can only say a profound "Hear, hear" to that. I hope that those in Brussels are taking note. The Commission is suggesting opening up a further aspect of the European Community to competition. I was very glad that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary drew attention to that. There has to be competition between companies and institutions, but how much more successful the Community will be if there is also competition between regulatory systems within the Community, highlighting contrasts between Governments and between the various industrial and financial organisations such as the banking systems.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary that competition in regulations does not necessarily mean that the ultimate winners will be those with the least protection for the consumer. Given the advertising and public inspection of the services provided by institutions, "caveat emptor" is increasingly the order of the day. Therefore companies which trade out of countries which are known to have a strong regulatory system will do very well throughout the Community compared with companies trading out of countries which may not have reached a reasonable standard. Obviously we must pay attention, and I am glad to note that the European Community is maintaining some supervision to ensure that there is no exaggerated competition in deregulation, but that ultimately the market will work intelligently and banking institutions in Britian will not suffer because of our very strong statutory, self-regulatory system. I endorse the words of my right hon. Friend the Economic Secretary

about the European Community draft directives on bank capital and solvency which play an integral part in the minimum regulations.

The host countries have some control over advertising and marketing rules. The drafts of the banking directive contain a clear implication that the host country's powers in terms of monetary responsibility and other aspects related to the Consumer Credit Act 1974 would not be impinged. There is an overriding interest in the public good. That will be welcomed by people in Britain who will be pleased that we have a way of preventing institutions with dubious techniques from trading within the City.

Major questions remain about reciprocity. There have been justifications for reciprocity and there are different ways in which it can be used. As Professor Curzon Price stated in a recent Institute of Economic Affairs pamphlet, reciprocity of opportunity is preferable. However, I believe ultimately that even this is bound to be used in a protectionist manner. I endorse my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary's comments about the danger of reciprocity being used as a tool on the GATT and Uruguay rounds. It is almost inevitable that it will end up enforcing the views of the outside world that we are attempting to erect a fence around Europe and create a fortress Europe.

However, in the draft documents before us, the reciprocity provisions are a good deal weaker than those put forward some five months ago by Commissioner de Clercq who was talking about a fierce form of protectionism that now appears to have been dropped. The House must recognise that London would suffer disproportionately if virtually any reciprocity arrangements remained in the final directive.

We will endorse the Minister's statement that he will put a very strong case for the removal of such provisions. If there is a difficulty obtaining that, the only solution that could be acceptable to Britain is for London to be able to accept any bank's subsidiary from a non-EEC country and for the Commission to withold a licence pending its own clearance procedure to prevent that bank then trading through a further branch or subsidiary in any other European country.

I urge my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to consider that closely. Bearing in mind majority voting in the EC, it is sometimes useful to be armed with a positive idea that enshrines a principle but nevertheless protects our national interests. There are occasions when the Government—at least from what they reveal publicly—do not note that point. If one absolutely rejects something that will eventually be decided by majority voting, one may not be negotiating in the right frame of mind to win colleagues to one's point of view.

Mr. Dykes: What policy has my hon. Friend in mind?

Mr. Taylor: The policy of least resistance. I have advanced a view on reciprocity, but if my hon. Friend is talking of other policies, we may need to have further discussion on the witholding tax idea currently being proposed by the Commission, which may cause less damage to the City than has been implied.

We must be careful to ensure that the timing of the investment services directive is co-ordinated with the banking directives. They are being discussed at different times but they must be enacted at the same time because severe damage could be done to banking institutions that have securities business vis-a-vis those that are pure securities houses. The fair trade aspect of this must be carefully considered. I understand that the Commission has it in mind, but I urge my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to keep his eye on it.

The banking directive and other related documents are much needed as it has been agreed within the Community progressively to abolish exchange controls. There will, therefore, be flows of capital between member countries. The fact that the Commission, instead of erecting new bureaucracy to deal with it, has adopted the minimum harmonisation, adopting the home country and mutual recognition principles, bodes well for the way that it will approach other matters resulting from exchange control deregulation.

11.2 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): As the House knows, the Select Committee on European Legislation, which is commonly known as the Scrutiny Committee, has been considering various documents relating to this subject over the past year. My initial remarks are related to the quality of scrutiny that we are able to give the documents and the way in which we can help the House in this most important debate.

I say "most important" because I fancy that in three or four years' time somebody trying to discover why certain things are happening will refer to this debate and read it with some concern. I recall that in 1974 I attended a debate even more thinly attended than this, when the House unknowingly amended the treaty of Rome. It was not on the Order Paper; it was not mentioned on the statutory instruments that we were considering. It was buried in 700 pages of one of the treaties that we were designating a Community treaty. I hope that the results of this debate will not be so drastic, but nevertheless we do not know.

The Scrutiny Committee has issued no fewer than 10 reports since November 1986 on the documents that we are considering. In addition to the reports, with which the House has been efficiently furnished by the Deliverer of the Vote, we have five memoranda from the Treasury—not to mention the four texts, adding up to 100 pages of future statute.

I hope to take the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) with me when I say that the Scrutiny Committee does not have the power to consolidate the 10 reports that we have made on the documents. We can only report on each document, amendment and issue as it comes up. The House has not given us the power to consolidate. Even if we had it, I could not promise that we would be able to consolidate reports, although it is likely that we would, because most of the basic work would have been done on the documents as they came into our possession. Had we had these powers, we could have provided the House with a much better guide.

At least two years ago the Committee reported that it would like an adjustment to its terms of reference to enable it to fulfil the sort of tasks that I have mentioned—

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Gentleman is well known for his fair approach to these matters as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, despite other views that he may hold about the EEC, and he is held in tremendous respect by hon. Members on all sides of the House for the immense amount of work that he does.

[Mr. Dykes]

Is the hon. Gentleman implying that it would be useful if Government motions on these subjects referred to the contents of the report that applied to the debate? Of course, the Committee only recommends a subject for debate; it does not go into its merits. Should Government motions refer to the subsequent report on the implications of the matters under discussion?

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. The Government can table whatever motions they like, and hon. Members can table amendments to them. Sometimes references to procedure or to the Committee's reports can be included in motions and amendments. That would not be out of order, but it would depend on the circumstances and not on a change in the terms of reference. It can already be done—yet we cannot help the House by providing it with a consolidated report on these technical matters.

I speak here not as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee but as the hon. Member for Newham, South. I do not claim to be an expert in banking. I contribute to pension funds, and like many people I have a bank account. Occasionally, we borrow money. We are told that one of the curses of our day is the amount of indebtedness into which people have fallen. This debate has to do with credit institutions in general. Sometimes they are politely called banks, sometimes credit houses, sometimes money lenders. Hon. Members will know from listening in their surgeries of the problems associated with the lack of credit controls, now and in the past.

Mr. Wells: I want to take up the hon. Gentleman's point about our being able to amend the Government motion. The motion is

"That this House takes note of European Community documents",

and so on. We cannot amend a take note motion or direct the Minister on how he should vote when he discusses this matter in the Council.

Mr. Spearing: I would not make a procedural ruling. That would be up to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can tell the hon. Gentleman only of my experience. Ten years ago I literally sat where he is sitting. The hon. Member for Harrow, East will confirm that I and my hon. Friends frequently tabled amendments to our Government's motions on this sort of subject. On one occasion we sought to delete the words "take note" and insert "disapprove" and to add some words. Whether such amendments are selected is a matter for the Chair, but between 1974 and 1979 such amendments were frequently selected, debated and voted on, and, on occasions, Her Majesty's Government accepted them.

Therefore, I see no reason why amendments should not be tabled and, if proper, selected, and, if necessary, moved and voted on. Unless the House does that on EEC matters and is shown to be alive to its opportunities, the House is not using its scrutiny opportunities properly. A debate on the amendment, even if it is withdrawn, can sometimes pinpoint a weakness or particular aspect of the matter in hand which is for the illumination of all.

So far, much of the debate has been about reciprocity, which I shall come to, but let me continue with a not very controversial comment about credit, which I was about to make when the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) intervened. There was a document in the early 1970s, which became well known after its results became apparent, called "Competition and credit control". Purely as an amateur—hon. Members will correct me if I am wrong—I would say that that document changed the Bank of England's attitude to the control of credit institutions and changed the nature of the banks. We all know that subsequently there was a property boom, some property scandals and the lifeboat, and Britain's economy took quite a knock, which, unfortunately, coincided with the oil price increase. Britain's economy was gravely influenced thereby.

Lord Barber was the Chancellor of the Exchequer at that time and it was up to Her Majesty's Government to encourage or restrain the then Governor of the Bank of England in respect of that document. Although there is some option in regulation, I take it that the nature of credit control and the measure of stimulation or restriction of competition is, to some extent, not in the hands of Her Majesty's Government in the same way as it was then.

We do not know about the central European banks. Mr. Delors's committee may make great suggestions, or there might be an informal committee based in Basle with the Bundesbank to the fore, which may exude influence over the climate of credit control even if there are no formal statutory powers in the regulations. Therefore, there may be a risk of the sort of influence that was or was not exercised by Her Majesty's Government in that unhappy period of our national finances not just being repeated but being beyond the control of the House or even of a strong majority Government. I put that to the Minister because I am not sufficiently expert to provide the answer, which is important.

Let me deal now with scrutiny, and, perhaps putting back on that label of which I spoke, draw attention to some of the points to which my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) referred, which give me some cause for anxiety.

There is a Treasury memorandum dated 24 March 1978, signed by the Economic Secretary, relating to document 4794/88, which says in its heading:

"the Co-ordination of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions relating to the taking-up and pursuit of the business of credit institutions".

Paragraph 13 relates to authorisation. It says:

"authorisation could be delayed indefinitely by the failure to reach a consensus view on whether it had or had not been achieved. The nature and scope of the measures which the Commission may propose to secure reciprocity are not defined or constrained in the directive; and the procedures do not appear to have been fully thought through."

Paragraph 15 is entitled

"Impact on United Kingdom law".

It says:

"As currently drafted, the directive would require changes to the Banking Act 1987, the Financial Services Act 1986 and possibly the Building Societies Act 1986. Some can be made by secondary legislation, others not but further detailed scrutiny will be needed to establish the full implications."

It is not detailed scrutiny to decide the detailed amendment, but it says:

"detailed scrutiny will be needed to establish the full implications."

The Economic Secretary may correct me, but I am not aware of a further explanatory memorandum, which goes into those detailed implications. I believe that the fact that that was written at all is important.

Paragraph 18 says:

"The restrictions on third country banks were introduced at a very late stage, and without prior discussion in the Commission working groups or with the Banking Advisory Committee. These raise substantial issues of principle and practicalities which will have to be considered . . . fully and discussed in detail with other Member States, but the Commission's proposals are unacceptable . . . and almost certainly unworkable as drafted."

Those are important qualifications, even though, as a non-technical banking person, I do not know their full impact. We repeated some of those sentences in our report HC 43-xx 1987-88.

We included in our last report, HC 15-iii of 7 December, some of the evidence that we received from interested bodies. The British Bankers Association, again on a matter of reciprocity, said:

"The Association comments that this goes too far in inhibiting legitimate transactions, and may be incompatible with GATT obligations, but it concedes that there is a dilemma."

Of course, it is a matter of dilemma for London, with its world links as well as links with the Community. I have no brief for the Bank of Tokyo—I am not sure whether its activities in this country are beneficial or not—but the report says:

"the procedures to be applied to acquisitions and participation in Community institutions by third country banks could lead to 'unnecessary delay in transactions and place unfair restrictions on non-Community banks'".

I might be in favour of what they say are unfair restrictions, but I do not know. Our closing summary, however, says this:

"In the light of the evidence it has now received, and the suggestions that the reciprocity provisions relating to third country banks wishing to establish or acquire banks in the Community could have a damaging effect on London as a whole financial centre, the Community recommends further consideration of the draft Directive by the House".

That is what we are doing.

It may be that for political reasons, which hon. Members will understand, I do not mind that this directive has an adverse impact on London as a world financial centre. I am not as great an enthusiast for that as some Conservative Members. But that is not the point of the debate. We are debating, or attempting to debate, the legal and political impact of these documents on the future financial mechanisms of our country. Whether or not we like those financial mechanisms, we are attempting to grapple with the effect of adopting the motion unamended. I do not know the answer. So far, I have heard nothing tonight that helps me to get the answer. If nothing else, we do not know what the eventual outcome will be.

The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford asked the Economic Secretary whether the measure is subject to a majority or unanimous vote. Of course, the memoranda tell us, quite properly, that it is subject to a qualified majority. Some of the problems to which the Economic Secretary referred in his opening remarks may remain. More problems could be added. I have no idea what other nations think. It might be said that, if our fears are correct, the interests of the City of London might be prejudiced. I do not know which countries may be considered favourable. I suppose that some countries would not mind if they were. We just do not know. Even if the measure is accepted unamended, we do not know the effects. Of course, it can be amended at a later stage or changed by a vote of the Council of Ministers. A common position has not been reached.

I have grave doubts about whether the House has sufficient information and has been able, with the documents placed before it, to understand the implications of the proposals, still less to assess what they will be by the time they are adopted by the Council of Ministers and appear as laws of this land in the official journal of the Community.

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Gentleman should not get too carried away with the lugubrious, pessimistic view about our not being able to scrutinise. We all would like more time. The hon. Gentleman and I would like more European Supply days, and so on. The Banking Act 1987 was before the House, as a result of the Johnson Matthey collapse and the abolition of such things as Ltds and banks proper. How many hon. Members on the Floor of the House and in Committee took an interest in the subject? They were doing it on behalf of the whole House. The same applies to this type of legislation, which is developing in an evolutionary way. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman finds that more difficult to absorb and understand.

Mr. Spearing: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says. The Banking Act was a British domestic Act, and it was subsequently amended. I take his point that it may not have received proper scrutiny by ourselves or by our colleagues. All that I am pointing out is that there could have been some improvements in the proceedure that would have enabled tonight's debate to be a little more effective. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that those suggestions were constructive.

Mr. Wells: Does the hon. Gentleman support the Economic Secretary's argument that the present proposals, particularly on recognising third country banks and reciprocity, are unacceptable not only to Conservative Members but to himself? Will the hon. Gentleman back the Economic Secretary, so that the Economic Secretary may refer to that when he presents his arguments to the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Despite the fact that I said that I was not speaking with a label on, I would not, and cannot, commit Opposition Members. That is the task of my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall who led the debate for the Opposition. I do not have the technical knowledge with which to make a technical assessment of that point. Therefore, I regret that I cannot accede to the hon. Gentleman's request.

11.24 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Among other things, the motion states that we should support

"the Government's intention to ensure that the Commission's action in this field takes full account of United Kingdom interests."

I commend the Economic Secretary and the officials in his Department for their hard work in attempting manfully to deal with some very intractable problems. The plain truth is that the Commission seems to be dead set on these reciprocity provisions.

I raised earlier in an intervention the question of what is going to happen in the outcome. There is a possibility that, at the end of the day, this directive simply will not go through because the Council of Ministers will dig in its heels and refuse to accept the proposals of the Commission. But I do not think that is really likely to happen.

What I am concerned about is the fact that, despite the numerous reports of the members of the Select Committee

[Mr. William Cash]

on European Legislation and despite the insistence of different Government officials in different member states, the Commission is obdurate on this question, although it is quite clear that it will cause very serious difficulties, not only for the United Kingdom but also, apparently, for the other member states.

One is bound to ask what the Commission represents if it does not represent an interest reflecting the combined views of the member states themselves. I believe that the members of the Commission must start taking note of the views expressed by member states not only in camera within the working groups and COREPER—the Committee of Permanent Representatives—but in the parliamentary institutions, as they are being expressed here today.

This brings me to my second point—the manner in which we scrutinise this legislation. I do not want to labour the point that has already been made, but at a conference I attended recently in Berlin which was addressed by Emilio Colombo, this was described by the ex-Prime Minister of Italy as the most important directive, in his personal opinion, to go through the European Community institutions since the treaty of Rome, because at the root of it is the whole question of capital movements and liberalisation of finances throughout the Community.

It really is not good enough for us to be discussing a matter of this importance at 11.30 on a Thursday evening. In my judgment, and I believe in the judgment of many other hon. Members, it should be discussed in prime time, and we should be given an opportunity to consider it properly.

Reference has been made to the Banking Act 1987. I happened to sit on the Committee on that Bill and I can assure the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that it was considered very carefully and thoroughly by the Committee. The Economic Secretary, in another incarnation, was sitting just along the Bench from me, and I am sure that he will back me up. Furthermore, amendments were made, with the co-operation of Government Back Benchers, to ensure that we had adequate protection for British banks from our predators abroad.

The reciprocity provisions in this directive are very different from what we were considering in the Banking Bill as it applied specifically to the United Kingdom. The Commission really must be given some very firm instructions—I repeat, "instructions"—by the national Parliaments and by the Council of Ministers. It must be told that we are simply not going to be pushed into accepting provisions which lead, for example, the American Banking and Securities Association of London to say the following with regard to this proposal:

> "The Association is therefore extremely disappointed that the Commission is souring the opportunity to create a free market by insisting on a single, uniform reciprocity clause to determine who may access the European market. It states that European financial markets are very demanding and competitive and domestic firms are growing in strength daily . . . The Association states that many American firms have chosen London as their headquarters for European activities and London therefore stands to lose the most investment as a result of reciprocity problems."

Mr. Holland: The hon. Gentleman has called for the Government to instruct the Commission. He must be aware that by treaty the Government cannot instruct the Commission. The Commission formulates proposals which are accepted, rejected or amended subject to the qualifications of the Single European Act. This is precisely the constitutional question and problem about which many hon. Members expressed concern a long time ago. Governments cannot jointly put forward proposals for amendments to the Assembly. This is not only one of the most important issues about the Community before the House, but one of the most important constitutional issues.

While the hon. Gentleman is so concerned to endorse the views of the American bankers, surely he realises that in a large market those banks are going to get in one way or another. Much of the concern that has been generated is not for real.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman noted that I used the word "instruction" because I wanted to seize on that constitutional question. I believe that the procedures available to the Council of Ministers can be used, because they have the ultimate say, to tell the Commission that if it persists in taking such a steadfast line and is so obdurate, at the end of the day, the Council of Ministers will refuse to accept the proposals. Therefore, there would be a trade-off.

I also believe that British interests should be protected and that is why I wanted to refer to the point made by the American banking association. We must look after the interests of the United Kingdom in this House. When the Minister returns to the Commission, he will know that in taking note of this proposal we want to ensure that the Government's intention to look after British interests will be properly and effectively safeguarded.

11.32 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I welcome the fact that the directive is being discussed in this take note motion at this early stage before a common position has been reached in the Council of Ministers and before the matter has been discussed in the European Parliament. It is very important that we should understand what our Ministers are having to grapple with in the Council of Ministers and to show our support, or lack of it, for the policy that they are following.

Unfortunately, most hon. Members have not had sufficient briefing or time to consider the matter. It is strange that, apart from the report from the Select Committee on European Legislation which went out for evidence which is before the House, no banks that I am aware of have briefed hon. Members for the debate tonight. Building societies and banks must support the House to assist hon. Members to understand the legislation that is going through Europe and so help us to form a view which will assist the Minister when he is debating in the Council.

I agree with the points that were made so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) about the stand that the Minister is proposing to take, I hope with the majority of our colleagues on the Council of Ministers, in respect of the reciprocity clauses. Clearly those proposals would be particularly damaging to British banking, and damaging to Europe as a banking centre. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that the Commission does not adopt those proposals.

I invite my hon. Friend to say a little about how the discussions on the draft directive on own funds are

progressing in Europe. Equally, I hope that he will tell us how the discussions are going on the draft directive on harmonised solvency ratios. Those directives must clearly be read in association with the directive that we are considering tonight. Will the Minister return to the House, after matters have progressed further, so that we can consider these issues before an agreement is reached?

11.34 pm

Mr. Lilley: This has been an interesting and valuable debate. I paid tribute to the Select Committee on European Legislation before its distinguished Chairman, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) entered the Chamber. I repeat that tribute in the light of his remarks. I will endeavour to respond to the points that hon. Members made in the debate.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) indicated that there had been difficulties of communication in the course of the debate. I failed to explain clearly to him the points that I was endeavouring to make, and I failed also to understand the questions that he was asking me. None the less, I will do my best to answer them. I suppose there was at least reciprocity between us on that front.

The hon. Gentleman raised the specific question whether reciprocity applied to takeovers by third countries of banks owned within the Community. The answer is that, as the directive is drafted, it would require the implementation of the reciprocity procedures in such cases. He also asked us to take into account potential changes in the American Federal Reserve system. That goes beyond the scope not merely of the debate but of the powers of the Community.

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I will give way in a second, but what I am about to say may answer the hon. Gentleman's point. I said that it was important that the solvency and capital adequacy criteria incorporated in the directive should reflect and be compatible with international standards. Among those agreeing to the standards will be the United States, as well as Japan and other major financial countries. That has already been worked out within the ambit of the Basle agreement. It would be sensible to build on that.

Mr. Holland: My point was not there there are prospective changes forthcoming in the United States Fed, but rather that the proposed "European central bank" may well appear, we are told, in a form with powers comparable to those which the Fed had until the 1930s and the New Deal. The point that I was making was that those powers were insufficient to address the problem of insolvency in United States banks at the time or to remedy the crisis.

Mr. Lilley: I do not think that there are any plans to model the European financial system on the pre-slump American financial system. Should any be presented by the Commission, we shall notify the House and perhaps discuss them at another date.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of accountancy standards. There is another directive dealing specifically with that matter, which will come into effect in 1993. It will set common accountancy standards for banks. I believe that it is broadly satisfactory and has met with little criticism.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) gave welcome support to the principles that I enunciated and that lie behind the basic framework of the three directives. I am grateful to him for his support. He recognised that the directives are based on the principle of mutual recognition of home country control. That is a valuable principle with application probably to other sectors beyond banking and financial services.

My hon. Friend also made an interesting proposal which will merit study. I shall read with interest the report of the debate.

The hon. Member for Newham, South raised a number of questions about the manner in which we consider important measures like this and the substance of the measures themselves. He asked whether another explanatory memorandum had been or should be presented to the House since the one which I presented in March 1988. I agree with him that the original memorandum stated that further work was required; since then, however, the Commission has itself agreed to reconsider the reciprocity provisions in that memorandum. There would clearly be little point in giving more explication of the meaning of the existing provision before any further thought is brought to the attention of member states and thereby immediately to the House's attention, as a result of reconsideration by the Commission.

We do not know what the final legislation will be like, but we must make a judgment in the House about the point at which we debate it. I think that, in general, it is preferable to debate earlier rather than later, and I welcome the fact that we are debating this issue tonight.

We heard an interesting contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who reinforced concerns that I had expressed about reciprocity. I am grateful to him for that. He also made the important point that the Commission must listen not just to the voices of Government but to voices heard in national Parliaments in the course of debates such as this. He quoted Mr. Amato as saying that this was the most important set of directives since either the Single European Act or legislation made under it, and I agree that it is extremely important. It is important in itself and particularly important to the United Kingdom, because it affects an industry that is very significant for employment, and not just in London. We often refer to the City of London, but we forget that the industry is also the biggest in Scotland, and that we have in the United Kingdom not one but two major financial centres—the two most important in Europe—and that the industry employs people throughout the country.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the concern expressed by American banks and the American chamber of commerce, and by other countries, about the impact of reciprocity on their banks already established in this country, or wishing to become so. That is an important and genuine concern, to which I hope the Commission will listen. Although it is right and proper that each member state in the Community as a whole should put self-interest first, we must recognise that our self-interest is always best served by our working together in an open and free-trading framework, not a protectionist and restrictive one.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) re-emphasised the importance of pressing hard on the reciprocity issue, and I can assure him that we shall continue to do so. We are grateful for the

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backing that the debate has given the British Government's position in the discussions which will continue in Europe.

The Cecchini report, which endeavours to quantify the benefits to member states in the Community as a whole from the various measures to create the single market, makes it clear that in the sphere of banking—and the related sphere of financial services that will follow from it—there is a priori evidence that restrictions exist on trade between member states, and that Britain is potentially one of the greatest gainers when those restrictions are removed. It appears on all the evidence that we have not only the largest but one of the most efficient and lowest-cost industries in most sectors of banking and financial services, and consequently stand to benefit when a single market has been created in which our banks and financial institutions can operate more freely and use their services to benefit consumers in other countries.

That is why we wholeheartedly support the underlying thrust of the directives, although we have some reservations about one major aspect—reciprocity—and important objectives to pursue in the negotiations. We want to ensure that the directives are introduced simultaneously with the investment services directive, and that the arrangements for subsequent implementation and amendment are satisfactory and allow the highest prudential standards to be maintained.

I hope that the House will support the motion and, in taking note of these documents, will back the Government in their negotiating position for the further negotiation of these valuable directives.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 73, Noes 10.

Division No. 89] **[11.44 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkinson, David
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Mans, Keith
Maude, Hon Francis
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Paice, James
Portillo, Michael
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Gordon, Mildred
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Pike, Peter L.
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4794/88 on credit institutions, 9224/86, 4339/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Treasury on 22nd July 1988 on the Own Funds of credit institutions and 6033/88 on a solvency ratio for credit institutions; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that the Commission's action in this field takes full account of United Kingdom interests.

PETITION

West London Assessment Study

11.58 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I am grateful for the opportunity to present a petition signed by almost 10,000 residents of the constituency of Richmond and Barnes and the surrounding area. If I catch your eye on the Adjournment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will elaborate on the arguments behind the petition, but at this stage I will let the prayer suffice.

The petition states:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House: urges the right hon. Paul Channon MP, the Secretary of State for Transport, to recognise the fear and blight being caused to the communities of Barnes, Mortlake, Palewell, East Sheen and Kew, by the publication of the "Executive Summary of Option Identification Working Paper" of the West London Assessment Study by Sir William Halcrow and Partners, and to bring forward his decision for considering which options should go forward to further study and which are clearly unacceptable on the grounds of environmental damage and inordinate cost both to the community and the taxpayer, and specifically to dismiss any option that creates new roads or would necessitate major road-widening in the parliamentary constituency of Richmond and Barnes.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

South-West London (Traffic)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Stephen Dorrell.]*

11.59 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): In 1984, in the face of rising complaints about traffic densities in London, the then Secretary of State for Transport commissioned the London traffic assessment studies. The main areas giving rise to concern were split into four and the west London traffic assessment study was granted to Sir William Halcrow and Partners. Part of the area covered by that study is south-west London, containing the constituency of Richmond and Barnes which I have the honour to represent.

I would add, however, that although I speak tonight specifically on the issue as it affects my constituents, I have the whole-hearted support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) the Minister of State, Department of Health. Many other right hon. and hon. Members from all round London have expressed their agreement with the basic arguments that I shall be putting forward tonight, and tomorrow, as the Minister is well aware, those directly affected by the east London traffic assessment study will be confirming their support in their own debate.

In November 1984, Sir William Halcrow and Partners were asked to undertake their assessment of the main traffic problems as they affected south-west London. Stage 1 was to research and list in careful detail the traffic problems as they affected each community—indeed, almost all roads within those communities. The results of the study were published in admirable detail in November 1986. Very few queried the results at that stage as they were merely setting out conditions that were evident for all to see.

Stage 2 of the study was to determine the most likely and acceptable solutions to those problems, and is split between stage 2A the assessment and publication of various options to be presented to the Department of Transport so that in Stage 2B the Minister can sift out the options that are clearly unacceptable on the grounds of cost or environmental damage.

At the end of June last year, Stage 2A was published with remarkable openness, reversing the practices of generations, whereby reports would lie hidden in some bottom drawer in the Department of Transport, giving rise to rumour and counter-rumour as certain details leaked out during the Departments negotiations with local authorities. It is ironic but true that this laudable example of open government has actually helped to fuel the problems and cause increased blight.

When my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State announced these options in June my constituents felt the reaction almost immediately. One or two found that eagle-eyed estate agents and solicitors were aware of possible new roads through residential areas. *The Guardian* carried an article two weeks later stating that 5,000 homes could be destroyed if the worst of the options were turned into proposals and acted upon. The Secretary of State stated in the House following that article:

"I aim to promote measures to help the existing traffic to flow more freely. The measures that we are taking are

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improving trunk roads to take traffic round, rather than through, London; promoting the use of new technology to improve traffic management; encouraging more effective parking controls; and working with British Rail and London Regional Transport to improve the quality of the rail and Underground systems."

He went on:

"It is absolutely essential to increase investment in public transport. I am determined that we should have a better commuter service into London and a better Underground service."

Indeed, for the Underground, my hon. Friend has been true to his word as investment is running at £365 million a year which is 60 per cent. higher in real terms than when the GLC had control of the Underground. But he also labelled as "sensational" the story in *The Guardian* published on 11 July, which he said

"merely repeats an answer that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport gave to the House on 27 June and information that was placed in the Library over two weeks ago."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1988; Vol. 137, c. 3-4.]

I would not normally leap to defend *The Guardian* but I feel that I must in this instance. The truth behind the dates that I have just mentioned is that my hon. Friend the Minister answered a written question dated 27 June 1988 but it was not published until 30 June and *Hansard* was available to Back Benchers on Friday 1 July. In his answer, my hon. Friend stated:

"Copies of the consultants' working papers can be purchased from them. I have arranged for copies to be available in the Library."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1988; Vol. 136, c. *122*]

Some of the documents arrived in the Library on 29 June but the remaining documents were not available until 4 July. Allowing the next two or three days for an assessment of the four very large documents, the publication on 11 July seems not unreasonable and hardly, as was claimed, a sensational rehash of old information. Also, the Department of Transport did not send a copy of my hon. Friend's answer to interested Back Benchers until 11 July, received on 12 July. Therefore, the Secretary of State should have expected the reaction, when it came, to an assessment of the maximum damage that could be caused by an enactment of those options.

But my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement that the Government believed not in grandiose new roads but in sensitive and sensible traffic management schemes on existing roads and that an even greater concentration and investment in public transport was the main answer to London's traffic problems gave many of my constituents a ray of hope. We felt that my right hon. Friend surely could not take from July 1988 to July 1989 to make a decision on those schemes which were clearly ridiculous, some bordering on the realms of fantasy.

During August last year it became almost impossible for those who needed or wanted to sell their homes to find a market. One constituent, a surgeon, found that he could not move to an area that desperately needed his skills. He came to my advice session last week; he still cannot sell. A retired couple, unable to afford the expensive upkeep of a large house in London and needing to move to the country in their retirement, were trapped. I heard today of a teacher who has had to move to Salisbury. He now has to pay for two houses on a teacher's salary.

So a group of local residents, totally united and drawn from the widest political and social spectrum, was spontaneously created. The damage to the environment on Barnes common, the destruction of at least 70 houses and flats, the eradication of a railway line carrying thousands of passengers per day, a new bridge across the Thames and a new road cut through the heart of a community and across the green open spaces of Chiswick, was such an outrageous and very real threat that the Barnes and Mortlake traffic action group had no difficulty in attracting thousands of members.

I suggested to the group that we should seek an immediate meeting with my hon. Friend, the Minister for Roads and Traffic, and he kindly consented and met us at the Department of Transport on 12 September. That meeting was not by any means an unqualified success. The Minister accused BAMTAG of exaggeration in a leaflet that it had put out, and protested that the proposed new road was not a four-lane motorway as had been feared but a two-lane highway and therefore the blight that was being caused, and for which evidence was presented, was being self-generated.

Indeed, while the road technically not a motorway, with a road built above ground level with two traffic lanes, one in each direction, no doubt with hard shoulders equivalent to two more lanes, no entrances or exits along its length and with the possible volume of traffic, it is easy to liken it to a motorway. Whatever its technical description, a new road is a new road and communities are destroyed, the nature of the area is permanently reversed, the houses are blighted and misery is caused to thousands.

The Minister's letter of the 27 September said:

"I have sympathy with those who believe that they are adversely affected: there is no reason for them to feel so. By conducting the Assessment Studies in such an open way we rely on the responsible actions of those who have access to the study documents."

Tell that to the estate agents and solicitors. Tell that to those who are trying to sell houses and flats in the area. Tell that to the local council which was given advice by the Department of Transport recently that should it receive any query about the proposals that it should deny that they exist as they are not really "proposals" but "options" by a consultant. Surely options are taken as proposals until denied, and the council must have a moral obligation to let prospective purchasers know of material matters that should be taken into account before buying a house in the option areas.

The time scale between June 88 and what now seems to be slipping to October 89 was perhaps a reasonable time only if in the Minister's and his Department's belief that no blight can be caused by options as they are not Government proposals. That would be great, if it were the truth, but most emphatically it is not. Blight has and is being caused and therefore the timescale which was once considered reasonable must now be seen in a totally different light.

The Secretary of State must accelerate his dismissal of those schemes which seem to indicate that they should be rejected according to the criteria set down in the Department of Transport's "Report on Problems" published in November 1986, where it says that the task of stage two B is

"To assess the merits of these options having regard to the Government's general transport policies including those for public transport, and policies for roads and traffic in London, the Department's continuing concern to secure value for money in its spending on road improvement schemes, and the sensitivity of the environment and the social fabric of the areas concerned."

On the same page of the report, the then Minister of State for Transport was quoted as saying:

"These studies are about making London a more pleasant place in which to live and travel. They are not—"

"not" is underlined—

"about reviving the old motorway box or ringway proposals."

What adds, therefore, to the anger caused by the blight and threat to the communities is that according to the consultants' figures there seems to be no need for a projected new road from Barnes common across the river at Barnes bridge and through Chiswick.

In a publication entitled "Transport Related Problems" —I referred to it earlier as stage one—it is clearly stated that only 31 per cent. of the traffic passing along the Upper Richmond road, which would be by-passed by the new road, starts and ends outside the immediate area. The publication goes on to say that only 2 per cent. of the traffic using this part of the south circular has its origin and destination in the M25 corridor or beyond. Surely a new road costing, at its lowest estimates, over £500 million would have to satisfy more traffic than that. While I am not in a position in this debate to discuss the merits or demerits of the western environmental improvement route —a proposal that is well advanced and which radically alters the traffic flow between Shepherds Bush and Wandsworth—if that scheme goes ahead, surely this new road is an expensive redundancy.

Following the meeting on 12 September with my hon. Friend, a number of television programmes showed an interest in this matter, and the Minister spoke both on television and radio to ease public fears. As a result of his words, a condition close to panic occurred in many of the areas affected.

A meeting was called in Kew on 22 September because of the possible effect that road widening, which is mentioned in many of the options, would have on the Mortlake road section of the south circular. It would sever the community in two if the 9 m width, which seems to be the planner's ideal, were enforced. Conservation areas, trees, gardens and houses would be threatened. This issue, therefore, affects directly over half of my constituents and shows why the petition, which has been signed by almost 10,000 people with many more to come, covers not only new roads but road widening, which can have as catastrophic a result on the quality of life.

On 4 October, BAMTAG called a public meeting in Barnes. No one in the community had ever seen anything like it. At least 2,500 people turned up, filling the streets in their concern. We had to hold two packed meetings, one after the other. The Minister may feel that these figures are fishermen's tales, but even disinterested observers confirmed the estimate. This reaction has been mirrored recently when a meeting held by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney—the scourge of fishermen's tales—attracted almost 1,500 people. Again, those unable to enter were forced to come back later for an emergency second meeting. In Kew last Friday, where, as I have said, not a new road but road widening is the issue, a hall that was meant to take between 200 and 300 people had over 500 inside, and it is said that the same number were struggling to get in.

Only two weeks ago, I led a delegation to the Minister from four London boroughs, consisting of eight hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington), 14 local councillors, drawn from the three major parties and many senior council officers, representing almost 3 million voters. My hon. Friend must therefore understand that these schemes are far too expensive to the environment, far too expensive to the taxpayer and, candidly, far too expensive politically. Therefore, the disadvantages far outweigh any marginal benefit there might be to the flow of traffic in the area.

As the Minister knows, new roads attract more traffic. The construction of the M25, which has certainly benefited traffic densities on the south circular road, has attracted more traffic than ever expected. The fact that it is so busy for such long periods of the day is, I admit, a justification for its construction, but new roads breed traffic and do not simply alleviate the existing or future level of traffic densities. To build a new road from A to B causes chaos at both A and B and is not the answer for an urban environment.

Where do the answers lie? The Secretary of State was right on 11 July, and the published objective for stage two under the heading "To improve the Environment" is right. It said that an objective of these studies is

"To conserve and improve the quality of the environment"

and went on to define environmental factors as including "noise, pollution, visual impact, severence, townscape, ecology".

On any of these criteria the new road, or the widening of existing roads along the south circular road must be rejected.

The building of new roads must be the answer of last resort—not first. We all want cars but we must learn to change our habits. Certainly sensitive traffic management schemes in local communities can help traffic flow, but far more fundamental are those policies, many of which I feel my hon. Friend must support. Inconsiderate and illegal parking has become a plague on London's roads. A increase in traffic wardens and further powers being granted to local authorities would improve the prompt treatment of parking offenders. Gradually, the deterrent effect would work.

Another fact agreed by the studies of Sir William Halcrow and partners is that more than 80 per cent. of all cars crossing London's bridges have only one occupant. That cannot be allowed to continue, and it does not need new roads to solve it. We need sensible park-and-ride schemes as so many other countries now have, with licences, or fines, for those who occupy cars containing fewer than three people coming into an area from outside.

Another possible solution is already, with the wholehearted co-operation of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, well under way. He has more than trebled the taxation of those who benefit from company cars and his intended progress in this area might help to persuade even more executives to take to public transport. More minibuses, too, have proved extremely popular, as has easier through-ticketing; but one day, however unpalatable it may appear, road pricing must be seriously considered. There has been a 60 per cent. increase in the demand for the London Underground in the past few years, and at Mortlake station alone in the past two years a 15 per cent. increase in demand for commuter rail services. That must be further encouraged. It is crazy that the possible new road contained in Halcrow options 3 and 4 could have the effect of scrapping the Hounslow loop line, which in itself helps to keep thousands of cars and their commuters off our roads daily.

So what is so special about the area that I am so fiercely defending? Why is it environmentally so important? It is

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an area that has been correctly described as a place where the countryside meets the town. Residents and visitors alike marvel at the way the communities, while so close to the centre of London, maintain their almost rural feel. The Minister knows the place well. We prize our green open spaces and broad tree-lined avenues for the quality of life that they bring within the urban sprawl. The villages that form the area may now be almost interlinked by houses, but they are still distinguishable by a deep sense of individual community spirit. When threatened, they react with immediate impetus, borne out of a passionate desire to protect their special nature.

In Richmond, we have learnt to live with the necessary evils of modern society, enduring inordinate and ceaseless aircraft noise, and suffering, as do all parts of the metropolis, the pressures of the motor car. My constituents readily admit that they drive motor cars. Some of them own more than one, and many of them enjoy holidays and business abroad in a world in which demand for travel is ever increasing. But the main argument of tonight's debate is about how long we should continue to build new roads through the middle of harmonious communities merely to accommodate more and more cars; or should we learn to control our natural instincts and habits and learn that we must control traffic rather than allowing it to control us?

We have in the Minister for Roads and Traffic a man who has gained nationwide respect for his dedication to his portfolio. His tireless struggle to persuade the irresponsible driver to resist drink before driving has hit home hard, and the Secretary of State's White Paper, clearly influenced by my hon. Friend the Minister, further tightens up on the behaviour that society now regards as unacceptable when using the road. He is known as a determined individualist, as his humanitarian speeches when on the Back Benches clearly showed. Famous for what some might call a stubborn streak, he is vehement in defence of the underdog and is a noted conservationist.

I should have thought that, with the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend at the helm, the residents of Britain were in the right hands, and that the correct balance between needing to accommodate our society's rapacious demand for travel, by air, train or road, and the need to preserve our ever more important environment would be established. Surely my hon. Friend must understand that the assessment studies have affected the lives of millions of people over a wide area of London and that it is his moral duty, since the impact of the studies was not what he expected, to accelerate his decisions and so relieve the vast majority from their continuing blight at the earliest possible moment.

The threatened new roads and road widening are unnecessary, undesirable, over expensive and damaging, and seemingly contrary to the Government's stated policy. From three further meetings with the Secretary of State, I can draw the conclusion only that he agrees with me. For the Minister to scrap these schemes immediately is probably more than those affected could expect, but they have suffered long enough and he must dispose of the options that are clearly unacceptable without any further delay. He must collect further evidence on the less ridiculous schemes over an accelerated time scale, and then he would earn the gratitude of countless thousands throughout London.

12.19 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) for the way in which he has introduced this important subject. He made some unnecessarily generous remarks about me. I used to bicycle down Vine road and turn left into Woodman road to meet the person who is now the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). I know Barnes station and there are various other areas in his constituency which I know and admire.

There are also many people in my hon. Friend's constituency whom I know and admire. They are well represented, but they will not get any fishermen's tales from me. For example, when the chairman of Richmond's planning committee writes to me suggesting that I have not read Richmond's transport policies and programmes, I want to say publicly, as I have told him privately, that I have.

When I say that the official policy of Richmond council is a NIMBY one, I mean it. If Martin Elengorn wants to have a look, he can find it in paragraph 4.16 where there is rephrased what was elegantly said to be the previous policy, "Orbital roads yes; in Richmond no; into orbital roads no, unless they are outside Richmond." That is a different way of saying the same thing. It is inelegant and it is wrong.

The fact is that 67 per cent. of Richmond's population use cars for journeys longer than walking distance. As my hon. Friend said, we are not talking about people who are commuting to work in central London. The Lex gallup poll survey which came into my hands today asks what people use their car for nowadays. The replies showed: shopping for groceries 87 per cent., visiting family and friends, 86 per cent., shopping for consumer goods, 76 per cent. Those are the three highest categories before we come to journeys to work.

My hon. Friend referred to one of the many meetings that he has had, some of which I have attended. He will remember that I met the Barnes and Mortlake traffic action group and I asked how people got to Heathrow airport. They had many different routes. Rat-running is not quite the right phrase because there are not that many bridges over the Thames, but it is difficult to get from my hon. Friend's constituency to Heathrow airport. It is an unsatisfactory journey. When the consultants are considering options for such journeys we should not dismiss the search for ways of solving some of the traffic needs.

I agree that we should not try to cope with all potential road movements in London. Road construction is not the answer to most of London's traffic problems.

Mr. Hanley: I have already taken up a lot of time and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Would he admit that not one person in Richmond would get to Heathrow via a new road across Barnes?

Mr. Bottomley: I am not sure. Starting from the south-east corner of my hon. Friend's constituency one

conceivably could if there was access near Barnes, but that leads me to argue for the option presently being considered.

I hope that my hon. Friend will convey the following points to the thousands who come to his meetings. I wish that I were as popular as he is in his constituency. Incidentally, if he is in favour of public transport, he could try swapping places with me for a week. A railway line is proposed for my constituency. Perhaps he would like to come and explain why railway lines are so good and I could come to his constituency and explain about roads. I might repeat in public the offer that I made in private about his other problem, the future of Richmond theatre. Why does he not sell tickets at £10 a piece to all his road protesters to come and listen to me give an explanation of Government policy? That will help Richmond theatre and perhaps help those who have come to listen. I am not sure whether that will help me, but I make that as a reasonable offer to my hon. Friend.

Let me deal briefly with some of the documents that have been circulated which may be one reason why so many have been coming to my hon. Friend's meetings. BAMTAG has said in a leaflet that those who do not want a motorway slicing through Barnes and Mortlake should do what it suggests. All the people must do is listen to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have said, which is that there are no motorway proposals within London.

Prospect, the newsletter of the Barnes Community Association, makes seven references to a motorway on its front page. However people misinterpret the David Hencke article in *The Guardian* on 11 July, they cannot possibly go that far unless they are deliberately making a mistake or trying to stir up unnecessary worries.

As my hon. Friend said, there are many people whose worries should not be stirred up until they actually know that there is a proposal. My hon. Friend asks whether we can accelerate the work of the consultants and the Department's consideration of the results of stage 2B. We shall do that.

My hon. Friend made reference to *The Guardian*, but he did not make reference to *The Guardian* leader of 31 January 1989, which says:

"What the Government should be doing with the burgeoning billions is spending on roads".

The Guardian, of course, speaks with a forked tongue, and when I enter David Hencke for the *United Kingdom Press Gazette* award of journalist of the year, I shall not use that editorial because it is not signed. I shall use, however, some of his other articles. My hon. Friend has referred to some of the timings of the announcements. The fact is that the David Hencke article, which on the front page referred to

"London road schemes threaten 5,000 homes"—

which is not even believed by Sally Hamwee—was tied in with the Kensington by-election. It was published on the last Monday of that campaign.

My hon. Friend has said that the Department has been more open on the consultants' work on options in London than anywhere else. It would be one of the paradoxes of modern journalism if the behaviour of *The Guardian*—which is the source of many of the reports in the locality—was the reason for us not repeating this procedure. I believe in open government. I believe that there is very little information that the Department has which should not be shared with the local highway authorities. I made it plain that the consultants would be working with the local boroughs, so they could put forward their views at stage 2A.

It was then asked whether we tried to keep it a secret between us and the local authorities, which was impractical and wrong. Perhaps, next year or the year after when we look back, people will say, "Peter Bottomley was wrong and those who believe in secrecy, like *The Guardian*, were right." I hope that that will not happen. I hope that *The Guardian* will come to believe that the way we have approached this matter is the right one. The David Hencke article turned what quite clearly are options into what they called proposals.

I would like to come to one point on which my hon. Friend fairly reflected Government opinion, which again concerns *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. They said that the Department instructed local boroughs to hide the fact that options were being considered. We have done precisely what local boroughs agreed—they were not forced—and what the GLC used to do and what any other local authority does when it considers options. When options move to the proposal stage, they appear on land searches. If local authorities want to talk about the options which the consultants are considering and tell prospective purchasers or inquirers about them, we are happy.

I want to nail the lie that in any way we have ever asked local authorities to do anything different from that which they were doing themselves. It is the sort of example—there may be another one tomorrow—where people have gone out of their way either to lie or cheat—I do not accuse my hon. Friend of that at all—or to seriously mislead. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue, so I could make plain what I have previously made plain in parliamentary answers and to the press too.

There are people who will go to any lengths to suggest that the Department is trying to cover London with concrete. We are trying to obtain studies to see what can be done to improve mobility and the environment in London and to reduce road casualties. There is no doubt that the ownership of cars will increase, there will be massive investment in public transport and there is the need to consider not just local road improvements—perhaps for casualty reduction—but to see whether there are other links which could be built.

We must keep a sense of perspective. At the moment we are spending less than £100 million a year in London, which does not buy very much. There are proposals such as the WEIR proposal, and I have noticed that my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) has been listening attentively and, no doubt, if there was time, he would have intervened. I hope that he will not intervene on a point of order, because when the last Member for Fulham, Nick Rainsford, intervened on a point of order to say how unpopular the WEIR proposal was, he immediately lost his seat to my hon. Friend.

I hope that my hon. Friend and his constituents will argue for environmental protection and, like my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, for getting information through, options considered and proposals put forward as soon as possible so as to relieve uncertainty. Uncertainty is the worst aspect. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond that motorways should not go through London and that we will continue to do all that we can.

Mr. Hanley: Will my hon. Friend confirm that he will accelerate the time scale of the decision on these options?

Mr. Bottomley: Everything I can, I will do to that end. How successful I will be, we shall have to see, but I will do all for which my hon. Friend asked.

The Motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 10 February 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

House Sales (Bradford)

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I have much pleasure in presenting a petition signed by over 200 residents, and their friends and relatives, whose homes are under threat of sale by Tory-controlled Bradford council. It calls for the homes to be held in public ownership and not sold to the private sector. It urges the Government to oppose Bradford council's plan to sell the homes.

The petition is accompanied by 15 letters from residents and I shall quote briefly from one. It says:

"Dear Mr. Cryer,

I am distressed to hear of the privatisation of this home"——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is presenting a petition, not individual letters.

Mr. Cryer: Quite so, Mr. Speaker. When I received the petition, 15 letters accompanied it. I am not presenting the letters but showing that this 81-year-old person——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The rules lay down that the hon. Gentleman may only describe the petition.

Mr. Cryer: The petition says that the Secretary of State for the Environment has the power to stop the sale. I take the view that, if he had any decency or concern for the plight of the elderly, he would use his powers. I regard it, as do the petitioners, as a scandal that valuable public assets are being sold off complete with the people living in them, which is reminiscent of the slave trade. The petition says:

"To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of relatives and residents of homes for the Elderly sheweth

That the homes be held in public ownership and not sold to the private sector. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do urge the Government to oppose any measures by Bradford Metropolitan Council to sell the homes."

I support the petition and have much pleasure in presenting it.

To lie upon the Table.

BILLS PRESENTED

ABORTION (RIGHT OF CONSCIENCE) (AMENDMENT)

Mr. David Amess presented a Bill to require doctors and nurses to give a positive indication of assent before being required to perform or assist at an abortion: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 28 April and to be printed. [Bill 71.]

ABORTION (TREATMENT OF NON-RESIDENT WOMEN)

Miss Ann Widdecombe presented a Bill to require, subject to certain exceptions, a medical practitioner treating a woman not resident in the United Kingdom for the termination of pregnancy to give notice of such treatment to a medical practitioner in the country in which she is ordinarily resident: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 7 April and to be printed. [Bill 66.]

ABORTION (AMENDMENT OF GROUNDS)

Sir Bernard Braine presented a Bill to amend the grounds specified under the Abortion Act 1967 on which an abortion can be carried out: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 May and to be printed. [Bill 72.]

ABORTION (RIGHTS OF ANCILLARY WORKERS)

Mr. Ken Hargreaves presented a Bill to require ancillary workers to give a positive indication of assent before being required to perform or assist at an abortion: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 21 April and to be printed. [Bill 70.]

ABORTION (FINANCIAL BENEFITS)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett presented a Bill to amend section 2 of the Abortion Act 1967: And the same was read a First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 14 April and to be printed. [Bill 67.]

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am wondering whether the five hon. Members who just presented those Bills are the same five hon. Members who not long ago were among a group of people talking about parliamentary skulduggery and blocking the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of the reason why hon. Members present Bills, but they were in order in doing so.

National Identity Card Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.38 am

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: I have been unable to select the reasoned amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

Mr. Howell: I thank my sponsors for all the help that they have given me in drafting the Bill. I also thank the Clerks of the House, the staff of the Library and several other people who have helped me.

The principal reason for introducing the Bill is that crime is increasing at an alarming rate despite all that the Government have done. This Government have done more than any previous Government because they have spent more money on improving police and prison officers' pay and recruiting more police and more prison officers, and we have the biggest prison building programme ever. Yet, year after year, crime increases; and in the past 10 years, it has increased by an alarming 50 per cent.

Even more alarming is what has happened since an identity card system was abolished in 1952. The crime rate today is seven times as great as it was in 1952. The time has come when the people of this country have had enough of lawlessness. They want to be able to live their lives in peace and something more must be done than has been done so far.

We are having this debate today because a mistake was made in 1952. Although is is understandable that unnecessary regulations should have been abolished after the war, that provision should not have been abolished, and it is time now for us to correct that mistake. The Bill is based on the wartime measure. It is relevant to say that, after years of appeasement and failing to face up to the threat of Nazi Germany, the first measure presented to the House on 3 September 1939 was a National Registration Bill. It passed through all its stages on 4 September and 5 September and registration was effective from 29 September. We acted quickly then, and it gave a great psychological uplift to the whole country. At last we were galvanising ourselves into taking adequate action. Although that measure alone did not win the war, it would have been foolish to attempt to fight the war without such national registration.

We are fighting a different problem now, but the whole country must be brought in to fight crime. We can increase the police as much as we like, we can increase prison building as much as we like, but, until the whole country declares war on crime, it will continue to rise. An identity card scheme would be the first and most positive step and would give tremendous hope to those who suffer so seriously, especially in inner-city areas, from present-day lawlessness.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: No.

Mr. Skinner: I have an important point to make.

Mr. Howell: I shall give way in my own time.

The Government are taking a neutral attitude to the Bill, and that is something to be grateful for. At least they are not opposing it.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): *indicated assent.*

Mr. Howell: I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Minister of State is nodding agreement.

However, the Government have proved the case for me. We have already introduced the Football Spectators Bill, which proposes indentity cards; that proves that the Government believe that some measure of protection will come to law-abiding football supporters through indentity cards. I do not want to go into the matter deeply but my criticism of that Bill is that only 1 per cent. of the population attend football matches and they attend football matches for only 1 per cent. of the week. It seems hard on the other 99 per cent. of us who want protection from crime that no provision is made to help us by means of identity cards. Furthermore, although the Football Spectators Bill seeks to stop people going abroad to attend football matches, we are doing nothing about the lager louts on their way to Spain, who discredit this country.

The Government should recognise that public opinion is very much on the side of the Bill. A public attitudes survey, published this morning, shows that 57 per cent. of people support an identity card system, 37 per cent. oppose it and 6 per cent. do not know. It is not very dignified for the Government to be with that 6 per cent. of "don't knows". The Government should know one way or the other.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, despite the publicity, there has almost been an absence of protest from constituents? The matter received considerable publicity in a national daily newspaper in Northern Ireland, but there was not a single protest.

Mr. Howell: That is an interesting point, and the leading article in *The Times* bears it out.

There are other interesting points in the survey. Of those who have an opinion, 61 per cent. are in favour and 39 per cent. are against. Of those who support the Labour party, 47 per cent. are in favour and 47 per cent. against. The Opposition must take note of what is being said, because the reason why they are condemned forever to opposition is that they do not reflect the opinions of the great proportion of voters.

Mr. Skinner: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: I shall give way in a minute. The hon. Gentleman must be patient. The point that I want to make before I give way is that 53 per cent. of union members support an identity card scheme.

Mr. Skinner: It is quite conceivable that one of the reasons why there is a difference of opinion in the country and among political parties and why even the "don't knows" are concerned, is that people are worried about the photograph that would be needed for identity cards. Some people might think that others would submit their sons' photographs for their identity cards. In the latest issue of "Dod's Parliamentary Companion", it seems to me as if the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) has sent in his lad's photograph. If that is the case, no wonder there is confusion.

Mr. Howell: In a few years' the hon. Gentleman may look as young as I do. But what a frivolous remark.

As I have said, the public at large support the Bill. Moreover, we are approaching 1992, when we shall have to do something about this matter. We are committed to the EEC and we shall remain in the EEC, and we know that the intention is to do away with passport control within the EEC. When that happens, it is not conceivable that other members of the EEC will operate an open-door system without any control, as we do for the Republic of Ireland, because that would open up the whole of the EEC and no one would know who was in the country and who was not.

Let me describe what the Bill is designed to do. It is intended that every person ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom shall have a numbered identity card and that there will be a register of all the persons who ordinarily live in this country. That is a necessary and important measure.

Clause 1(1) sets 12 years as the age at which a person must possess an identity card. Some people will think that the age limit is too low, and I am prepared to be flexible on that point, although to start with I was advised that it should be 10 because that is the age at which young persons are held responsible for their actions before the courts. Under the wartime provisions people were registered at birth and parents were responsible for children's identity cards until they reached the age of 16. The age of 16 is obviously too high today; we have all witnessed awful scenes in which very young children have thrown petrol bombs in Northern Ireland.

At the age of 12, young people generally go to secondary school and are capable of looking after bus passes and rail passes. The other day someone telephoned the Jimmy Young show to say that it would be a positive advantage for children to have a form of identification as at present many of them have none, while the rest of the population carry large numbers of cards.

The fine for failure to possess an identity card will be a maximum of £400—level 3.

To those who think that the Bill would give the police extra power, I want to make it abundantly clear that that is not what is intended. Clause 1(4) says:

"A constable, if he has reasonable grounds for doing so, may require any person who is in a public place to produce his identity card for examination so as to enable the constable to ascertain its validity."

That leaves the law as it is. The sus laws passed in 1824 were abolished by this Government in 1981; all Labour Governments kept them in place. Under the Bill, the law will remain the same——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, for a long time, the sus laws caused no problem but that towards the end their excessive use brought the police into a lot of disrepute in some areas? It was a very enlightened step by the Government to get rid of them, and the police have made no representations to the effect that the loss of the sus laws has caused them problems.

Mr. Howell: That is the very point that I am making. Under the Bill, that improvement in the law, for which the Government can take credit, will remain. The law will be exactly as it was before. The police will have no right to ask to see an identity card unless suspicious circumstances surround the person.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in general, the police favour such a Bill? Will he repeat to the House the figures that he cited at the beginning of his speech, which show that public opinion is overwhelmingly in favour of identity cards of the kind he has described? That gives the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) his answer.

Mr. Howell: I am grateful for those remarks. The Police Federation is firmly in favour of this measure and has been firmly in favour of identity cards for a considerable length of time. I am sure that we would find the vast majority of members of the Association of Chief Police Officers in favour if we knew that body's views fully, although the issue has been fudged and somewhat clouded, perhaps because the Bill is before the House.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I do not follow my hon. Friend's reasoning. He says that the law will not be changed, but clearly it will. At the moment, we have no sus laws and a police officer may not stop a pedestrian in a public place and demand his name and address. The Bill would introduce such a provision and reasonable grounds would include the constable wishing to ascertain the validity of the card.

Mr. Howell: I realise that it would have been better to include the words, "to ascertain the identity of the person" rather than the words in the Bill. I accept what my hon. Friend says on that point. But he is completely wrong that the Bill will alter the law, except by requiring a person to possess an identity card. It is intended that there will be no change whatever in the power of the police to stop a person who is not considered to have done something unlawful or to stop a person who is considered to be about to do something unlawful. My Bill may not be drafted perfectly; it is difficult to draft a Private Member's Bill perfectly. I am prepared to accept any amendment that will make matters clearer, but I repeat that the intention is not to give any extra powers to the police.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am listening to my hon. Friend's explanation with interest. Does he agree that, no matter how the Bill is redrafted, the inescapable fact remains that it will be creating an entirely new criminal offence?

Mr. Howell: I accept that. I believe that we need an identification system and that we need a register of persons ordinarily living—that is, permanently living—in this country, and that everybody else in the country should carry a passport. That is the order of the day in practically every other country of the world. Why should we believe we are so different?

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my hon. Friend please not be too contrite about any minor imperfections in the drafting of his Bill? It is not unknown for Governments, with all the vast resources at their disposal, not to get the drafting of Bills—even Bills presented from the Treasury Bench—absolutely perfect. Some of my hon. Friends believe that the Official Secrets Bill, for example, is not in every respect a model of parliamentary drafting.

Mr. Howell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I would like to draw the House's attention to clause 1(5).

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): It is to my hon. Friend's credit that he has given way so often. As a former police

[Mr. John Greenway]

officer in the west end of London, who has used the sus laws many times, I can say that the objection to them was that people could be convicted of not even attempting crime, but of merely being a suspected person. Nothing in this Bill creates that sort of offence.

Mr. Howell: The sus laws are out and this Bill will not bring them back. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments.

It will not be an offence to be without the card on one's person when one is stopped, but one must possess a card. The law will be the same as that applied to the production of driving licences. A person will have seven days to produce his identity card to his nominated police station. If he cannot produce it, however, he will have committed an offence, which will be provided for in this Bill.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: No, I shall not give way. I should like to get on.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Howell: Will the hon. Gentleman let me finish?

Clause 2(1)(c) says that we are instructing the Government to produce numbered identity cards. The card will include the name, sex, date of birth, residence, photograph and signature of its holder. I have been assured that cards with photographs and signatures are as safe as any card can be against wrongful use.

Those are the main points about the Bill. The remainder are concerned with forgery and false applications, which are quite obvious.

Mr. Gow: Will my hon. Friend accept my congratulations—and I am sure those of my hon. Friends—on the provisions of clause 6, which rightly, but unusually, extends to Northern Ireland? I congratulate my hon. Friend on that, because the more we can legislate for the kingdom as a whole, the better we shall secure the acceptance of Northern Ireland as part of this kingdom. Has my hon. Friend had any discussions either with the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary or any other of its officers to discover whether this Bill would be welcomed in the Province?

Mr. Howell: I have not had any consultations with police officers in Northern Ireland, but I too believe that it is important that the Bill should cover the whole of the United Kingdom. This is the first time that such a Bill has been proposed in the House in 50 years, although our former colleague the right hon. Enoch Powell suggested that there should be an identity card for Northern Ireland alone. It is important that this Bill, and all other Bills, should cover the whole of the United Kingdom, because we could then save valuable time.

An identity card would be a tremendous asset to every law-abiding person and it would be something of a hindrance—I make no apologies for this—to the criminal. If we are to restore a peace-loving country and have law and order, where people are not afraid to walk the streets, something must be done.

I received a letter from a gentleman of 93 years. He told me that he had been in some of the heaviest fighting in two world wars and he regretted the fact that he was now afraid to go out at night. That is a terrible indictment of our society.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I have been following my hon. Friend's argument carefully. Can he tell us approximately how many cards would need to be issued, the cost of so doing and how the cost would be met? Many people will be concerned to know whether they will be paying for them or whether the cost would fall on the taxpayer.

Mr. Skinner: And who would get the contract?

Mr. Howell: I shall come to the main point about the overall cost, but the intention is that initially the card should be issued by the Government free of charge to every citizen over 12 years. I have not worked it out, but there would probably be 45 million cards. However, if one lost one's card—as happens when one loses one's credit card—a fee would be charged for a replacement.

I shall now cite the advantages of an identity card system. It would save police time. It is ridiculous that the police must ask all the questions that would be contained on an identity card—perhaps out in the cold and rain—when a parking offence or a speeding offence has been committed. They must write it all out in longhand, just as they did in Queen Victoria's day. We can imagine what would happen if every time we made a bank transaction, instead of using a credit card, we had to go to the counter and watch the cashier writing in longhand all our details. The absurdity of that system is obvious.

Another advantage would be that it would help to detect crime, because many people would volunteer to show their cards. If there was a rumpus in a group of young people, there would be one or two ringleaders, but the more lawful people would be ready to show their cards and identify themselves. It would be a great deterrent to young people setting out on a course of crime for the first time.

Let us imagine, for example, the case of a youth who had decided that the time had come to snatch a handbag. The first thing that he would do before he set out—probably terrified himself, but being egged on by his mates—would be to empty his pockets so that he carried no form of identity.

Mr. Skinner: The first thing that he would do would be to empty someone else's pockets.

Mr. Howell: I am afraid I did not catch that.

I believe that that would be a deterrent, and some young people would never start out on a course of crime.

It would be of immense assistance in detecting social security fraud as well as other frauds. Our present system is archaic. We all have—if we are drivers—five sets of numbers. We have a national insurance number, a National Health Service number, a passport number and a driving licence number. As Members of this House, we must carry identification to enter this Chamber. Those cards to not deprive us of our freedom in any way.

An identity card would help the fight against drugs and against illegal immigrants. I believe that if the Bill had been in operation, the gentleman from Sri Lanka, Mr. Mendis, who was our uninvited guest for 13 years and who cost us a great deal of money, would not have been allowed to stay here for so long.

The card would also help us to deal with the even more serious problem of terrorism. In recent months, we have had examples of such terrorist attacks, especially the awful Lockerbie disaster. I do not intend to talk about that disaster, but I am concerned about the two journalists who posed as cleaners to get on to the aircraft at Heathrow. That was most worrying. I believe that the identity card system would be a tremendous help in finding out who has access to such sensitive sites as airports.

The identity card system would be a much more practical and sensible approach to the problem of football hooliganism than that outlined in the Football Spectators Bill. I believe that some Ministers are not altogether happy about that Bill. An awful lot of parliamentary time and aggro will be expended before that Bill reaches the statute book. The identity card system will be 100 per cent. effective against under-age drinking. Although I have not spelt it out in the Bill, there will be one coloured card for everyone under 18 and a different coloured card for everyone over 18. Therefore publicans and club owners would be able to identify under-age drinkers immediately and in a much more effective way than at present.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): My hon. Friend says that he is concerned that two journalists and others had had access to London Airport and access to aircraft. He said that an identity card scheme would help to overcome such problems. I do not understand how. Is he saying that the information on such cards should be backed up by a lot of information held in some data bank? I do not see how an identity card would help without that other provision.

Mr. Howell: I am sure that the card would help employers to know more about the people they are employing. The fact that we would have a register of all persons "ordinarily" residing in this country would be an immense help.

An even greater problem than terrorism is the increased fear in which many of our citizens live. Crime has increased sevenfold. Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people are living in fear. One of the most shaming things for this House and the country was the recent incident that occurred in Camden when a lady was burnt to death in her council flat because firemen were unable to get through the steel door that barricaded her home—the rest of the flat was also barricaded. That lady had lived in awful fear because we have been unable properly to enforce law and order. Instead of the Englishman's home being his castle, that home had become a prison and, eventually, a hell. We should think just as much about crime as we do about even more dramatic events such as terrorist attacks.

I have had little experience of inner cities, but I canvassed Bermondsey during the by-election there a few years ago. There I encountered the fear in which some people live in some of our housing estates. I did not feel comfortable all the time I was there. I believe that we must take this matter seriously because the time has come for positive action.

I believe that the Home Office has done some work on this card—I am delighted that it is thinking seriously about some sort of identity system. That is good news. It has calculated that such a system would cost about £350 million. I have no means of knowing, and I accept what the Home Office says. I believe that it would be the biggest bargain that we have ever had. One need only consider how much we are losing through social security fraud and all sorts of other fraud, such as tax evasion. Money is also lost through fraud because of the inefficient operation of other computers connected with finance. A national insurance card is issued to anybody over 16 which has a name and number on it—those of us who are more than 16 years old also have such a card on request. We can have three replacements before any questions are asked, and if that is not an open invitation to defraud, I do not know what is.

Mr. Cryer: As the hon. Gentleman is so keen on this matter, I wonder whether he can tell us whether Lloyd's, of which he is a member, and other financial institutions in the City of London have introduced such cards to stop the fraud that he has talked about? He knows that the City has been rocked by fraud and scandal month after month. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and his cronies would like to set an example for the nation. Have they done so?

Mr. Howell: I am here to advocate a Bill that I hope will help to stop fraud and tax evasion generally. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would applaud my efforts.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department has said that a voluntary system might be best, but how do we legislate for such a system? What possible sense could there be in it? My researchers and I contacted the French embassy to find out about the French system. Everyone from the ambassador downwards insisted that there was a compulsory system in France, but we eventually persuaded them that the system was voluntary. Everyone knows that the French identity card system is far more rigid than anything I am proposing. I think that it is ridiculous to argue that a voluntary card might be all right, but not a statutory one. The possession of a card would not take any rights away from law-abiding people. It would simply make things slightly more difficult for the rest.

In conclusion, the Bill would be the first really positive step to galvanise the whole nation into joining in a major attack on crime. Until we are all involved with reducing crime, it will never be reduced. The Bill would give tremendous hope to those who live in fear. It would improve our national security. Above all, if the Bill were passed, it would provide a great psychological uplift and the country would feel that it was doing everything in its power to help to improve the position. I commend the Bill to the House.

10.20 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I congratulate the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on introducing his Bill. It will be extremely useful if the House has a thorough debate on the idea of identity cards because a lot of people feel—perhaps glibly—that they would solve many of the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred. However, I believe that once people start to consider the full implications of the scheme, they will realise that such identity cards would do nothing to solve crime. Although they might—perhaps for only a brief time—reassure one or two people that it is safer to go out on the streets, once people realised what was involved they would lose that reassurance. Although the debate is

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

useful fully to inform the House and the country, I very much hope that the Bill will be defeated when we come to vote on its Second Reading.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend accept that the opinion polls that have been referred to would change radically after the first few cases of 12-year-old children being prosecuted because they had lost their card or because some other person has defaced it and they could not prove that they were not in breach of the legislation? The measure would potentially criminalise all children above the age of 12.

Mr. Bennett: I accept my hon. Friend's point, but opinion polls would change even more quickly once people had to complete the application forms for the cards.

Identity cards would be a nuisance to the vast majority of the public. As we have already heard, they would be expensive and a major invasion of privacy. The cards would have those three problems and, I suggest, no benefits. They would increase crime rather than reduce it. They would lead to increased alienation between the police and certain sections of the community, probably young people and people with dark skins.

The cards have the potential for a great deal of increased state control over the individual. The areas that the hon. Member for Norfolk, North mentioned as being nice ways of reducing crime, would lead to greater state control over individuals. The House should think carefully about that.

I shall deal briefly with the question of nuisance. We must accept that we all have a portfolio of identity cards at present. I checked last night and I have a trade union card, a card to get into Brinnington Labour club, a Labour party membership card, a savings book, a cheque book, a House of Commons pass, a National Trust card, a kidney donor card, an AA card, a driving licence, a Co-op book, a video shop card and a library ticket. I suspect that many hon. Members may have more cards than I do and that many people will have fewer.

The attraction of all the existing cards is that we have total choice about when we present the cards and about the services that we wish to get from them. If we happen to lose one of them, it is usually possible to use one of the others to establish one's identity——

Mr. Cryer: Unless it is a credit card.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, unless it is a credit card, but even then it is relatively easy to get——

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we have no choice when it comes to using our identity cards to gain access to the Palace of Westminster and that that is a compulsory card? I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has ever refused to enter this House because he had to use an identity card.

Mr. Bennett: I do not wish to get drawn into that. I do not think that it is a compulsory card—I believe that it is voluntary. I have seen many hon. Members enter the building without displaying their card. That makes it a little awkward on occasions for the policemen. It may be a little below the dignity of some hon. Members to be asked for their card. They assume that because they are on national television, they are well known and do not have to produce a card. As it is difficult to draw the line between someone who is readily recognised and somebody else who is not, there are often embarrassments about producing the card.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's experience has been like mine. Although I do not claim in any way to be as instantly recognisable as many hon. Members, I have never once in my entire period of membership of this House—since 1983—been asked to show my card. The Bill claims that the possession of identity cards will aid the police and reduce crime, but the only possible way in which that could work would be if cards were asked for of virtually everybody on virtually every occasion. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is the only way that the cards that we carry would be of tremendous value to security.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, I accept that. I used to have rooms at Abbey gardens, and when I had to run across to vote, no policeman on the door ever stopped me to ask me to show my identity card to get in. I admit that I have lost my parliamentary identity card twice. On one occasion, I was changing my jacket and put the card down on the mantelpiece. It slipped between the wall and the fireplace. I had no intention of removing the fireplace to get it back so I simply reported its loss and got a replacement. On the other occasion, I was driving into the car park and can remember having laid the pass on the dashboard. I did not know where it had gone. So again, I simply asked for a replacement card. About a month later the other card reappeared from the bottom of the dashboard having slipped down.

There is no real problem in losing those identity cards because they are easy to replace. A problem with the system is that if the cards are easy to replace, there will be little inconvenience to anybody, but if identity cards are difficult to replace, they will be a considerable nuisance.

On one occasion my credit card was damaged by the machine that it went through in a shop. There was some inconvenience in getting it replaced. I have also managed to damage my driving licence because of a leaking biro in my pocket. I do not think that I am particularly incompetent, but I challenge any hon. Member who votes for the Bill to be absolutely certain that he or she has never lost any card and had to have it replaced. If they can demonstrate that, on occasions, they, too, lose identity cards of one sort or another, they must recognise the problems that some people will experience if a national scheme is introduced.

Another problem is that some individuals like to change their appearance from time to time. I went through quite a difficult period when I had a passport with a photograph of me without my beard. My passport used to be scrutinised carefully, with the immigration officials looking at me and at the picture in the passport for quite a long time. Having looked at my employment, however, they would usually quickly let me pass. However, I am certain that many people will, from time to time, want to shave off a beard, grow a beard, throw away a toupee or want to change their hair colour from dark to blond. Obviously, it does not help if the photograph on one's identity card presents a very different image. Simple things like wearing or not wearing glasses can produce

considerable problems. I do not think most people would feel that they ought to have their card changed every time there was a detail change, small or substantial.

So far as I can see, the problem about cards is that if it is a cumbersome process to replace them they become a nuisance to individuals. On the other hand, if it is an easy process they increase the opportunity for fraud and for misuse. Let me put a question to the hon. Gentleman who is promoting the Bill. What would happen if one of my constituents came down from Manchester to work in London for three or four weeks and, fairly early on, had his card stolen? Would he have to return home to get the documents necessary for replacement, or could he be issued with a temporary card here? I suggest that it would be wholly unreasonable to expect someone to return home to get the documents necessary for replacement.

Mr. Skinner: I think it was established during the course of the speech of hon. Gentleman who introduced the Bill that there was going to be so much detail on the card that it would not be a card at all, but a Filofax, to be printed perhaps, by Rupert Mudoch and his friends.

Mr. Bennett: I am not sure whether it would be a Filofax, but one of the frightening things is that, while it might be a very small card, there might be a whole lot of computer-encoded information on the magnetic tape. In other words, although the card would not tell my hon. Friend an awful lot, it might well tell other people a lot of things—perhaps things that he did not know but that were convenient for other people to put on his card, identifying him as someone who should perhaps be treated very carefully by authority because he was likely to make a fuss.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Did the hon. Gentleman notice, as I did, during my hon. Friend's speech, how the purpose of this pass, or this internal passport, or whatever it is to be called, widened? It started off that a police officer was the only person required to see it. Then we got to the DHSS and a whole range of other people who are presumably going to be able to see it. A whole range of information will be on this card in one form or another.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, I can imagine all sorts of implications as to who should see it. Certainly there ought to be arrangements by which any encoded information on a card could be checked by the individual.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): What about the Data Protection Act?

Mr. Bennett: Obviously the hon. Gentleman is aware of the expense involved in that. All I want to say at this point is that the more information you put in, the more safeguards you provide, and the more you attempt to prevent people from misusing the cards, the greater will be the expense for the state and for the individuals.

There is also a major issue about privacy. How much information will go on the card? It is already accepted that details of appearance, national insurance number, address, car—if one owned a car—driving licence information, next of kin, blood group and so on would all seem to be sensible items of information to include. But ought a criminal record be included? Obviously, those concerned about cracking down on crime might consider that to be useful information. Where would we stop?

Mr. Cohen: That is a very good point. Has my hon. Friend considered another item of information that might be included is a person's poll tax number? Certainly, the Government are trying, under this poll tax, to take a lot of privacy away from people, and the poll tax officer, with all his powers, might be able to confiscate a person's identity card to stop him moving around the country, and might thus create all sorts of problems for individuals. Has my hon. Friend considered that point?

Mr. Bennett: I have not considered the implications of the poll tax for this Bill, but perhaps later on my hon. Friend will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bennett: No, I want to make a little bit of progress. It may be said that the points I made just now about what it is reasonable to include are all right—for instance, criminal convictions, if there have been any—but what about police suspicion about an individual? Ought that to be included? What about questions concerning an individual's health? It might be very helpful if various pieces of health information were encoded. But all of this starts to erode the rights of the individual.

Mr. Ralph Howell: The hon. Gentleman has reminded me of a little part of my speech that I had forgotten to include. This card, if it were framed as I have suggested, would have the information that I have spelt out, which would be readable by the individual carrying it. There could be a panel where information, such as blood group or allergies or next of kin, could be included voluntarily. But I am not advocating a card that would have information that was not readable by the carrier.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the hon. Gentleman. The trouble is that once an identity card system has been introduced, the pressure to put on all sorts of extra things, and to make all sorts of information available, will grow steadily. It will always be slightly more convenient for Governments to have information included than to resist having it included.

I want to pose this question: to what extent does an individual have a right to change his identity? The tendency is for most people to assume that it is only criminals who want to change their identity, but I do not accept that. There are occasions on which people may have very good reasons for wanting to change their identity. At the moment anyone trying to do so can find it a very difficult process, but I think people have the right to do so. Let me give two examples.

First, a constituent of mine came to me very distressed that, over the years, she had suffered a considerable amount of violence from her ex-husband. Almost every time he had a little to drink he would turn up at her house and be abusive. She got a court injunction, but it was not all that easy to enforce. In the end, she moved to the other end of the constituency. She changed her name, and for three years she managed to live at her new address with a totally new identity and without suffering any harassment or difficult. She was extremely relieved.

Unfortunately, her ex-husband was so persistent that, after three years, he managed to trick one of the very few officials who knew where she had moved into giving away the district. As a result, she found that he was going round that district regularly at the weekends asking if anyone knew where she lived. Fortunately, he did not know that she had changed her name, and so she was aware that he was looking for her before he had a chance to find her.

[Mr. Bennett]

What she was extremely upset about was the fact that some official had passed on information about where she was living.

Under this Bill would it be easy for someone to change his identity so that there could be a different name on the identity card? It seems to me that it was perfectly reasonable for the lady I have cited to want to change her identity. It was not a criminal thing at all; indeed, she was actually trying to avoid crime.

The other case I have in mind concerns a lad of about 13, who had been in a great deal of trouble in his local community. He had never been convicted of any crime, but the police had certainly come to the conclusion that he was one of the ringleaders in a lot of trouble on the estate. The community policeman very sensibly said to his father, "If this lad stays here, sooner or later he is going to be in the courts and in serious trouble. I suggest that you persuade him to go and live somewhere else. He might get a fresh start."

The lad moved to live with his married sister and he got into no more trouble at all. He grew up and came to me some years later about a different problem, and he mentioned this to me. When he moved and changed his Christian name information held by the police in Stockport passed to police in Tameside, and so he was able to start with a clean sheet. There are lots of teenagers who get a certain reputation in a particular neighbourhood and, perhaps rightly, they are picked on by the police. The big advantage to these young people is that they can change their identity. I could give other examples, but I believe that it is reasonable for someone to be able to change his identity for perfectly legal reasons.

The legislation will certainly increase crime.

Mr. Cohen: My hon. Friend made excellent points about people who legitimately want to change their names. Is he also aware that people might, quite legitimately, want to change their name and identity as a matter of personal choice because they do not like their name? I am aware of a former Minister whose brother did not like the name of his daughter.

Mr. Skinner: Was it Currie?

Mr. Cohen: No, it was Cohen actually. I think it is an excellent name, but the family did not like it, so they changed it—quite rightly, because that was their choice. We would surely not want to get people into trouble with their identity cards because they wanted to change their name for that reason.

Mr. Bennett: I accept that problem. Unfortunately one sometimes gets saddled with a name that suddenly becomes identified with someone who is daily hitting the headlines for criminal reasons. If one has that name, it can cause problems.

Mr. Ralph Howell: What, specifically, does the Bill contain to stop a person changing his name, as he can now?

Mr. Bennett: If the identity card carries a person's name and he changes his name so that he is commonly known by a different name, it is essential for him to change his identity card. If it is easy to change the identity card, people with criminal reasons for wanting to change their name will take advantage of that. The number on the identity card then becomes important and starts to count —not the name. If the number counts, the information held against it can cause problems.

If it is easy for people to change their identity, it becomes difficult to make the system stick. If it is made difficult to change identity, that will cause problems for some people who have every right to change their identity.

The Bill will increase crime because, quite clearly, stealing and forging identity cards for various purposes will hold attractions for some people. The measure will not stop terrorist activity and other serious crime. We know that terrorist groups can forge fairly complicated documents, such as passports, with considerable success. It will not be difficult for such people to produce forged identity cards and get round the legislation.

Mr. Beggs: I feel, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree, that there is more evidence of the illegal sale of legitimate passports in this country than there is of the manufacture of illegal passports.

Mr. Bennett: I do not think that that is very relevant. If people can get round the complicated problems of the forgery and illegal use of passports, a number of criminals will, fairly quickly, turn their minds to forging and reproducing identity cards. We are offering some entrepreneurial criminal the opportunity to set up in a new avenue of crime—the production of illegal identity cards.

Mr. Stern *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: I am conscious that I have been speaking for a long time but I want to complete my arguments.

The Bill will not solve crime, but increase it. It will increase alienation, too. If the identity cards are to be effective, people will have to ask to see them. I suspect that if a policeman sees a certain category of people he will be circumspect about asking to see their identity cards. Other groups of people, particularly youngsters and those from ethnic minorities, are likely to feel—even if it is not true —that they are being stopped much more frequently than others.

I could make much of the issue of state control. I was alarmed at the way in which Kent miners were, in my view, illegally stopped when going to picket in the north of England. I have also been concerned about the way in which people going to the summer solstice at Stonehenge have been stopped. If identity cards are introduced, police will be more likely to exercise that sort of state control.

I shall mention one or two specific problems: first, the matter of whether the Bill will solve under-age drinking. I do not think that it will. In my experience, it is a fair challenge to many youngsters to try to get round the present drinking laws and they will simply tackle getting round the identity card with the same enthusiasm.

In many pubs, at least in the north of England, youngsters have taken to carrying photocopies of birth certificates. The up-to-date landlord knows that photocopies of birth certificates are useless. Youngsters have developed two simple tricks. First, they copy a birth certificate, put a bit of Tippex on and then re-copy it. In that way they can changed their age by one or two years. The second common practice is to photocopy the birth certificate of an elder brother or sister. If identity cards are

introduced some under-age drinkers will use the identity card of someone else in the family who looks reasonably like them.

Also, publicans meet problems because they often face groups of drinkers, some of whom are under age and some over age, and they are not sure who is drinking what. The hon. Member for Norfolk, North said that there would be a card of one colour for those under 18 and a different coloured card for those over 18. If someone ends up having to show the card as he puts the glass to his mouth, that will not solve the problem.

The Bill will certainly not solve the problem of football crowds. Some newspapers said that it would solve the problem of people who travel from door to door. However, I suggest that it would be risky for anyone to allow someone into his house merely because he showed a national identity card. If he wants safety, he must make sure that the card is one issued by a legitimate organisation such as the gas or electricity board. It would be dangerous for anyone to be lulled into allowing someone in simply because they produced a national identity card. The Bill would have no impact on terrorists and in some cases might even produce false security. The fine imposed on somebody for not having an identity card could cause considerable hardship.

How much has the hon. Member for Norfolk, North looked at groups of people who already carry identity cards? He should spend some time considering university campuses, on many of which identity cards of some sort are already issued. Most universities and colleges have a problem because they contain certain facilities that students are entitled to use and others that they are not. One hall of residence might provide meals and another might be self-catering. There may be many attractive facilities on university campuses that people outside might like to use.

I have talked to many students who have told me about many dodges to get round student identity cards, and to many people who administer the cards. They all admit that it is a nightmare trying to keep ahead of all the dodges. Perhaps students are particularly enterprising, but I suspect that the sort of problems involving identity cards that crop up in most universities and college campuses would also crop up among the general public.

Within a short time of the cards being introduced they will be totally discredited and all we shall have achieved is to spend a great deal of money to no effect. I hope that the House will defeat the measure when it comes to the vote because it will prove an expensive nuisance and an invasion of privacy. It will increase crime and alienate many people from the police and law enforcement. It has much potential for creating a big brother state to control us all.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It will be evident to the House that there is a great deal of interest in the Bill, so I appeal for shorter speeches.

10.49 am

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on introducing the Bill. It will be the subject of discussion not only today but, I hope, when it goes to Committee and subsequently. Due to the attitude of the Home Office to a voluntary card system, this will be the first of many debates on the matter.

I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). The Bill is not ideal, but no Bill—even a Government one—ever is. We can improve the Bill in Committee and it will be the start perhaps not of a march but of a movement towards compulsory identity cards within a short time. Last year, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) introduced a ten-minute Bill, which was defeated by 172 votes to 114. The payroll vote, as some people call it, was not used. That shows that the majority of Conservative Members are in favour of identity cards.

European integration and 1992, whatever our views on those things, have been mentioned. Only Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland do not have compulsory or voluntary identity cards. A card would bring us more into line with Europe, which has easier frontier controls and tighter internal controls. We have tight frontier controls but much slacker internal controls.

The card would do many things. First, it will assist in easier identification. We have a massive crime wave, especially of violent crime, and many people live in terror. I shall talk about that later. In introducing the Bill, my hon. Friend was right to speak about fear and violent crime. The card will help in that respect, especially if it has a photograph and a signature. Later I shall say how I believe the addition of fingerprints would help in other ways. A photograph and a signature would help to identify people who have terrorist or violent tendencies. As my hon. Friend also said, it would reduce credit fraud, which is estimated to cost £20 million to £25 million a year. Those who behave properly always suffer because of fraud, and I am old fashioned enough to be on the side of those who behave properly, and on that basis I favour the Bill.

There are also problems with social security fraud. The genuine social security recipient suffers when other people exploit the system. In my view, some social security fraud can be as high as 20 or 30 per cent., and that means that money is not going to people whose families desperately need it.

An identity card would also help in accident identification. I was told by somebody in the Strangers' Dining Room last week that American bodies in the Lockerbie air disaster were identified using fingerprints. One family suffered in London because they did not have fingerprints of their son who had been killed in the crash. The police and investigators had to go round the family's house and dust everywhere until they found the son's fingerprints. That is the first time that I have heard of such a case. Fingerprints can help better than anything to determine identity.

A person's blood group should be on the card. If somebody is involved in a traffic accident and is bleeding to death, it is necessary to know the blood group immediately. The card would also help to control illegal immigration, and we know that genuine immigrants suffer because of the illegal ones. The card would help to control under-age drinking. My hon. Friend has suggested different coloured cards for those under 18. Licensed victuallers have sent out 500,000 cards for completion and only 13,000 have been returned. Hon. Members will agree that we have a responsibility to keep an eye on what is going on in the public houses in our constituencies, and they know that it is difficult to determine whether a person

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

is 18. People who are over 18 sometimes look younger and people who are under 18 sometimes look well above that age. That makes it difficult for licensees to comply with the law.

In Committee we could consider the use of the card to control truancy. It is estimated that in some London schools truancy in the fifth year can be as high as 70 per cent., and in ILEA there have been estimates that the average for the whole of London is 45 to 50 per cent. The card would identify children who are getting into wayward ways instead of being in school under some sort of discipline. There is no doubt that if we do not get things right in schools in the fifth year, we shall have major criminals later. The boredom of that fifth year could lead pupils to break the law and turn to ways of gaining money illegally.

I shall listen to all that is said in the debate because there will be continuous discussion on this topic until the matter is settled. The poll tax has been mentioned. In that context, identity cards would help to maintain electoral registers. In some constituencies those registers are appalling. I believe that they are worse than they have been for 100 years. What we now call our constituency agents were originally appointed to check the electoral registers, and before long they will have to return to that job, especially in marginal seats. Presumably all seats are marginal—even yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under certain conditions, though we would never wish that upon you. If I were in what is called a marginal seat I would be seriously worried about the state of the registers.

All the problems that I have mentioned can be eased by information placed on a card for everybody to see. We have heard about the possibility of secret information being put on the card. There will be a great divide there, even among supporters of a compulsory card system. Should the card carry only basic factual information or should it carry other information on magnetic tape? Instead of a kidney donor card, people might want to put on the identity card that they are willing to donate their organs in the case of sudden death. It is difficult to put all that information on the card unless magnetic tape is used, and that will need to be discussed. I have not made up my mind about that, but I am suspicious of it and it is not intended as the Bill stands. I would put more on the identity card than my hon. Friend suggests in his Bill.

What rational person could oppose the Bill? It will be opposed by many Opposition Members. I find it astonishing that Members of the Labour party, many of whom I admire, should oppose compulsory identity cards. The old philosophy of Socialism was to take from the person with ability and give to the person with needs. That requires information—more information than Conservative philosophy requires. The Opposition would need to know who people are, their income and everything else. It is not my job to help the Labour party, and I draw attention to the fact that in Brondesbury, in Brent, the Labour party lost a seat yesterday. I am sorry to upset Opposition Members, but they may have lost that seat because they are losing touch with their people.

Mr. John Patten: I apologise for interrupting my right hon. Friend in full flow, but I am curious to know who defeated the Labour party candidate in Brondesbury.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am sure that the Minister would like to know the party more than the name, but I can give him both. I will give him additional information, just as additional information can be put on identity cards. The party that won by nearly 400 votes and took the seat from the Labour party was the Conservative party, of which I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are proud to be members. The Liberal party came second and the Labour party, which has fallen on evil days—I am trying to help it to return to the purity of its early beliefs—came third, just ahead of the Green party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will return to the Bill.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: How wise you are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to call me to order.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, particularly as we pair with each other——

Mr. Skinner: What about a double identity card?

Mr. Sedgemore: As the right hon. Gentleman is so worried about what is going on in the Labour party, may I report that I have just returned from Pontypridd and everything there is super, smashing, stupendous, wonderful.

Sir Rhodes Boyson *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This shows clearly that one temptation leads to another. Let us now get back to the Bill.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I do not want to be led astray by the hon. Gentleman. I wish to help him, but I must get back to the Bill. I have some other good thoughts which I can offer the Labour party on another occasion.

Some people oppose the measure on libertarian grounds. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) may do so. But what liberty? The liberty that I am concerned about in my constituency is the liberty to travel safely on the Northern Line after 9 pm, to visit tower blocks and for the people inside them to leave them in safety, and to walk the streets in safety. That liberty is under threat in our society.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend makes the same point as my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). No hon. Member who supports the Bill has yet told us how identity cards will help to improve freedom and individual liberty by supporting law and order. There is certainly no evidence of that from 1952.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: My hon. Friend is probably more aware of what happened in 1952 than I am. Perhaps he will enlighten me as to what happened then. The fact that everybody will have to carry an identity card with their name on it will in itself deter. Deterrence is much better than punishment. I offer that to my hon. Friend as a title for a speech.

I will explain why I feel so strongly on this issue. As recently as 1 February the headlines in the *Evening Standard* were:

"Women in Fear on City Trains."

That is why the Guardian Angels have come on to the Tube. Vigilantes move in when security disappears. People give the Government the right to provide law and order in

society, but once that breaks down they will take their defence into their own hands, and rightly so. It is an old political philosophy and we are near it. There is a strange coincidence in the arrival of the Guardian Angels and the number of police that I have seen on the Tube in central London. In the past fortnight I have seen six, whereas in the past year I have seen none, so the Guardian Angels have already done something for law and order. I have never met any of them and I have no designs on becoming one, although I am a guardian angel to my constituency.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I give way for the last time.

Mr. Bennett: Will the right hon. Gentleman explain how a card will solve the problem? Does he expect a mugger to stop and show his identity card?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I have tried previously to explain this to the hon. Gentleman. I have a high regard for his intelligence, and he, too, is a northerner. I always find his speeches fascinating and interesting in every way. I pay him every tribute, although it may damage him in his constituency.

The fact that people know that they carry a card which identifies them will deter. My research suggests that 10·14 per cent. will never go on the streets again once they have a card. That is a major statistic. It is a personal one, as nobody has done the research but myself, but I have no doubt that that would be the case.

On 12 January the *Evening Standard* said that more than one third of women in one area of Tower Hamlets are now carrying weapons for self-defence, as are many men. I will tell the House of three incidents in Brent. An 81-year-old woman returning from the sales in January this year was mugged, left with two broken limbs and died. A disabled spastic 23-year-old with limited use of his legs had his special bicycle broken for the third time while he and his father were paying their weekly visit to the grave of his mother. On Christmas eve, an 83-year-old woman was kicked and punched and had her £15 taken from her when she visited her husband's grave, as she always has done on the eve of Christmas. Even her posy of flowers was taken.

Those are just three incidents, but they bring horror to everyone living round about. If we ignore this great concern, we shall ignore something that is strongly felt, certainly in inner-city areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North has already referred to the mother and daughter who died in Camden because they had literally made their home into a castle. Two people in Stockwell died because of the defences built into their home to stop other people getting in.

Mr. Cohen: Such cases are horrendous and appalling, but I cannot see how an identity card would make any difference because criminals would not carry an identity card. Identity cards could make the position worse. A criminal could steal an identity card and gain access to peoples homes on false pretences. Those cases would be made more rather than less likely.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: The hon. Gentleman talks about people changing their identity. Both he and I have done it in a hairy sense in our lives from time to time. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is also part of the secret hairy club in the House of Commons. A criminal would have to be clever to steal a card with a photograph which looks exactly like him. He would have to search for a long time and that would keep him out of mischief for many years. Obviously, there would be a line across the photograph to authenticate it. Perhaps that would be the answer. A criminal would have to spend his whole life going round the country. By the age of 65 he would have a free ticket to do that, and perhaps only then would he find somebody with an identical photograph. The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point.

What do the people at the bottom of the pile think about this? There is no point asking people who are driven around and live in salubrious areas. We need to ask what the grass roots think. I understand that a survey on truancy in schools is being carried out by a member of the noble House. I do not mean noble House in the Chinese sense, but the House that approximates to ours. If that survey asks not class teachers but headteachers what is happening, it may as well be burnt. Headteachers hoping for promotion will never say that there is trouble in their school until the day after they retire. We must ask the classroom teachers.

It is the same with the police. It is no use asking the chief constables. We must ask the constables on the beat in downtown areas. The 120,000 members of the Police Federation overwhelmingly want identity cards. Like me, they believe that this will help. Indeed, the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) may ultimately come to believe that himself.

We should also ask women. The Townswomen's Guild passed a resolution at the last general meeting for identity cards to be introduced to combat increasing problems of law and order. Mrs. Jean Ellerton, the national chairman, said:

"We had to have identity cards during the War because of the danger of Fifth columnists. The malaise of violence in our society is like a Fifth column, another enemy within the state."

Old-age pensioners suffer more than anybody from the fear of going out as they lose the ability to defend themselves. Mrs. Dorothy Rhodes—that is a good name and I shall repeat it in case any hon. Members missed it —*[Interruption.]* I will speak to the hon. Gentleman privately. I must not interrupt my speech because of his sedentary remarks. I will save the time of the House by telling him afterwards if there is any relationship. Last year, Mrs. Dorothy Rhodes, president of the Conference of Old Age Pensioners, said:

"Crime for the elderly is a very great fear. Fear is a killer, and imprisons pensioners in their homes, and something must be done to make them feel safer."

All of us carry credit cards—indeed, some people carry them like medals that they have won in the war. The wife of one self-employed building contractor told me that those contractors have to carry cards containing a photograph, signature and national insurance number. Those cards are issued by the Government and have to be renewed every three years, having been signed by two inspectors. I know that I must not go into the issue of which of us change our appearance or whether we may lose our identity, but if one of those contractors grows a beard or his whiskers fall out because he sits up too smartly in bed he has to get another card signed by two inspectors. The regulations covering those people are tight.

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

If that is done to ensure that we are not exploited for our money, surely something must be done to ensure that we are not exploited by crime.

My case is not based on the idea that secret information may be held on an identity card. Throughout Britain there is a great fear of sudden violence being inflicted on people going about their business. That fear is felt especially in inner-city and downtown areas. The legislation is one attempt to help. Right hon. and hon. Members who oppose the Bill, as is their right—I recognise the integrity of their views—must propose alternative legislation to lessen people's fear. The opponents of the Bill have asked us what it will do. I wait for any of them to tell me what magic formula they can produce to bring safety to the people who come to my constituency surgery about the problems on the Chalkhill estate and in other areas.

I welcome the Bill because it offers the beginning of a debate on safety and on law and order in inner cities. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have experienced the problems. We believe that identity cards will assist considerably, and I welcome the beginning of a debate that will continue for several months.

11.11 am

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I oppose the Bill on grounds of principle and utility. I do not believe that my hon. Friends who support it have looked into the background to the previous two national registration schemes as closely as they might have done and seen the problems then.

It surprises me that Conservative Members—we are united in our philosophy—who opposed and scrapped national registration in 1952 and who belong to a party which had a bonfire of controls and wanted to set the people free, should lead the campaign to bring back such restrictions. National identity cards are a profoundly unBritish idea which would lead to increased power of the state over the citizen. We must start from that position and ask ourselves whether what is suggested in the Bill is likely to improve law and order. If it is, is the price that we will pay in individual freedom worth paying? If it is not, should we have the Bill?

The history of national registration started, not in the second world war, as my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) said, but in 1915 during the first world war.

Mr. Pawsey: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Bennett: I should like to progress a little into the history of national registration.

Compulsory registration for people between 15 and 65 was introduced in 1915 and affected some 25 million people. The legislation made it clear that it would lapse as soon as the war ended, and it did. During the second world war, similar legislation was given a Second Reading in one hour and 18 minutes on 4 September 1939, and 46 million people came under the subsequent regulations. The legislation remained in place until 1952, when a Conservative Government, freshly elected to office, scrapped national registration and the national identity card as one of their first actions.

One can get a flavour of the period from reading the debates on the issue in 1945, 1947 and 1950, when Conservative Members repeatedly tried to pass Bills to scrap national identity cards. Aneurin Bevan, the Minister of Health, said:

"The National Register also renders valuable services to the Ministry of Food and the Board of Trade in connection with rationing of food and clothing, and to the Ministry of Labour in connection with the administration of National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939, and the Registration of Employment Order, 1941. Considerable use will also be made of the National Register for the purpose of bringing into operation the new scheme of children's allowances. The register has also proved valuable in re-uniting families which had been separated owing to evacuation and other incidents for the purpose of tracing individuals whose claims under the War Damage Act, 1941, have not been satisfied owing to their whereabouts being unknown, and in various other ways of benefit to the individual concerned."—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1945; Vol. 416, c. 2497-8.]

One can almost smell snoek and spam in that justification. I especially like the reference to using the card after the war "in various other ways of benefit to the individual concerned."

Not one of the reasons why we had national identity cards during and after the war is now valid. I cannot believe that we wish to set up a bureaucracy of the size expected and made necessary under the Bill merely to ensure that some people feel free from fear. They would be no less likely to be attacked.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): My hon. Friend has given a fascinating history from 1915 to 1952. Would he like to continue that history into the next 37 years, with the serious social and economic problems created by the crime wave? Of course that did not just happen in this country. The Bill must relate to the history of the past 37 years, not to the history of the years between 1915 and 1952.

Mr. Bennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I shall return to the issue of the card's utility and the grounds on which I feel that it will not do any good in improving law and order. The evidence of the crime wave, which continued after the war, shows that national identity cards did nothing to prevent crime. There is no evidence from other countries that it did.

Mr. Ralph Howell: How can my hon. Friend say that, because the cards were abolished in 1952, no good could have been done? My hon. Friend cannot prove that. We do not know whether the crime rate would have been as great as it is now had we continued to have those cards. Will my hon. Friend address himself to what he would do to stop the increase in crime—or does he feel that it is at an acceptable level?

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend says that the fact that the crime rate continued to rise during the second world war and in the 1950s and 1960s is not evidence that national identity cards did not work. I cannot see from the figures that those cards had any effect on the crime rate in those years, because it continued to rise. All the evidence from countries with national ID cards shows no diminution in crime.

I should be happy on another occasion to debate with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North the nature of crime and law and order. There is a plethora of measures that we might take, and which the Government have already taken to combat crime. I do not think that the national ID card had any effect on law and order. The bureaucracy involved and the cost of the measure are out of all proportion to the effects of the card on crime.

Mr. Waller: Was it not significant that our right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said that he would wait with interest to hear about some magic scheme from those who oppose the national identity card? Does that not reveal that the Bill's proponents see this is a magic scheme which will in some way solve all the law and order problems about which so many people are worried?

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend is right. That is why hon. Members who oppose the Bill have questioned the Bill's proponents about how they envisage old ladies living in council blocks in Camden being made more free and safe because they have to have a national identity card. For a start, we know that the first thing that criminals will do is to find a way around it. We will have a black market in identity cards. It is important to detect the criminal. We can carry all the cards we like in our pockets, but, if we cannot catch the criminal, it will not make any difference. Detection is all important.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bennett: I shall not give way at this point. I wish to continue my remarks.

I shall examine the principles underlying the Bill and where we should start. I start on the presumption that the state does not have the right to force the citizen to register his or her movements and that the citizen has the right to privacy.

It is up to the proposer and supporters of the Bill to come forward with such compelling and overwhelming reasons why the basic, long-held and cherished liberties of the individual and of English and Scottish law should be removed. The state—that is, the legal embodiment of society in the form of the Executive, the legislature and the judiciary—must be seen as a system of restraints on the activities of the individual, justifiable only insofar as it protects his or her freedoms and rights. The law should aim to provide a system of restraints which, although limiting freedom in some respects, maximises overall freedom. John Stuart Mill, who was not a Conservative but a classical liberal, in "On Liberty" in 1859, wrote:

"The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection."

Later, I shall deal with how the Bill measures up to the principles of liberty and how effective it will be in practice in achieving what its proposer has claimed. Would its overwhelming utility justify an increase in the power of the state? From what I have heard from him, I do not believe that my hon. Friend has made out that case.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the reasons the Conservative party fought so hard to abolish the wartime identity card. W. S. Morrison, who was later a Speaker in the House, in the debate on the Emergency Laws (Transitional Provisions) Bill 1947—that has a nice period flavour about it—said:

"On general principle, and without going into the overriding temporary necessities, the idea should be that a free-born member of the community is entitled to go without let or hindrance in his own realm. He should not be under the necessity of proving his identity or of producing a document to vouch that he is an ordinary British citizen."

He concluded:

"We should do as much as we can to simplify life, and restore it to its ancient freedom, and absence of formality. We should restore to the citizen the dignity of his rights and privileges, without the necessity for the production of a piece of paper to prove who he is."—[*Official Report*, 20 November 1947, Vol. 444, c. 1429-31.]

That was the view of the Conservative party after the war, when the national emergency and the reason for having identity cards had gone. In 1950, Chuter Ede, the then Labour Home Secretary declared:

"The National Register and the identity card are something alien to the English way of life and I hope also to the Scottish way of life".—[*Official Report*, Standing Commitee A, 27 June 1950; c. 55.]

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary brought the argument up to date in his speech to the Conservative political centre conference last week, when he said:

"I am sceptical of the State pushing too far in seeking to restrict individual liberty. There have been calls to ban completely the private ownership of firearms, or to legislate against amusement arcades in the hope that this will somehow induce financial responsibility amongst teenagers. The latest fashionable medicine for our social ills is the compulsory identity card. There are some arguments in favour of it, though its usefulness would depend on what sort of information was included. The more information you include, of course, the greater the dangers of error, abuse and excessive State power."

Having discussed the underlying principles, I will refer to the Bill and examine what is proposed. The 57 per cent. of the population who my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North said were in favour of the Bill will get the greatest shock. I suspect that this will lead the majority to revise their opinions about the usefulness of the Bill.

The Bill proposes that everybody aged 12 years or over ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom shall be in possession of a valid identity card.

The Bill applies to first-year pupils in secondary schools. They will be required to possess and carry an identity card and be subject to the criminal law if they do not do so. Also, 48 million people, if they are not in possession of a valid identity card, will find themselves

"guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 3"—

that is, £400—

"on the standard scale."

That is in clause 1(3). Clause 1(4) states:

"A constable, if he has reasonable grounds for doing so, may require any person who is in a public place to produce his identity card for examination so as to enable the constable to ascertain its validity."

No sign is given of what constitutes reasonable grounds. The proposer of the Bill has failed to give any guidance on that point. There is no schedule listing the grounds that might constitute reasonable grounds. Are we to await case law or internal police or Home Office memoranda? It is difficult to think of any ground that could not be made reasonable under the clauses of the Bill.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I explained that the intention behind the Bill as drafted, whether or not it is properly drafted, is that the law will remain the same as it is now. If he has reasonable cause to do, a constable may ask any person to identify himself. That is an easier means of identifying oneself than at present.

Mr. Bennett: I do not agree with my hon. Friend; I challenged him on that point earlier.

I now refer to present police powers. The Bill will increase such powers, which we got rid of in 1982 when we abolished the sus laws. One has only to look at the way in which some high-profile chief constables use the road traffic Acts to operate in effect, random breath tests. The constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk,

[Mr. Bennett]

North is a classic example. Between 19 December 1988 and 1 January this year. Norfolk police administered 2,872 breath tests on "reasonable grounds", and achieved a success rate of 1·1 per cent. Having tested 2,872 people, they caught 33 drivers.

Mr. Pawsey: What about the deterrent effect? People know that checks are taking place. That reduces the amount of drinking. That is an important point which my hon. Friend should take into account.

Mr. Bennett: If my hon. Friend compares the accident figures for Norfolk with those of Northumbria, where there is a 65 per cent. success rate in apprehending drunken drivers, he will see that there is no difference in the accident rate in counties in which the police breath-test thousands of innocent people and in those where they test people who they have reasonable grounds for believing are committing an offence of some sort. We must be careful how we extend police powers when we already see high-profile chief constables who want to make a name for themselves already using the law to its maximum, and sometimes appearing to go beyond their powers.

The police in Norfolk managed to get it wrong in 98·9 per cent. of cases over Christmas. What confidence can my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North have that they will not operate similar swoops on pedestrians doing their Christmas shopping in Norwich to check the validity of their identity cards?

Mr. Pawsey: That is over the top.

Mr. Bennett: We have seen chief constables going over the top in setting up road blocks around the country and breathalysing people. Clearly, with the 98·9 per cent. failure rate, they are not doing so on reasonable grounds. I do not have my hon. Friend's confidence that, if the Bill is enacted, chief constables will not use the powers in the Bill for all sorts of things, such as swoops on supposed burglars. We already see it in car stops, and we can see it being done to pedestrians.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Breath tests are presumably to stop drunken drivers. My hon. Friend drew a parallel with Christmas shoppers and said that the police will stop them. Presumably Christmas shoppers will not knock people over because they are drunk; if they do, behaviour in his part of the country must be very strange.

Mr. Bennett: My right hon. Friend misses the point. Norfolk police, who have the worst breath test success rate, are stopping thousands of innocent people. Northumbria police are managing to stop more drunken drivers, despite having breath-tested only just over 200 people. If Norfolk police did their job more effectively, they might catch more people. The breath test figures show how different police forces use their powers.

Mr. Ralph Howell: My hon. Friend's figures are nonsensical. He has not mentioned the success of Norfolk police in reducing accidents over Christmas.

Mr. Bennett: I have read the accident figures and there is no truth in what my hon. Friend says. The accident rate in Norfolk is no better than the rest of the country. I asked my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport a question about the figures specifically to ascertain what they showed. Clearly the methods of the Norfolk police are not a deterrent.

The powers of chief officers and police constables are being abused by some for high profile purposes. Whether they are effective is another matter, but I fear that under this Bill the same abuses will occur.

What will happen if Mrs. Bloggins does not have her card when a constable wishes to ascertain its validity? What questions will he ask to ascertain its validity? Will he ask, "Is this your photograph, Mrs. Bloggins? Were you really born in 1941? Are you sure that you still live at this address?" If Mrs. Bloggins does not have her card when a constable stops her, under clause 1(5) she will be not only guilty of an offence but a constable in uniform may arrest without warrant if he reasonably suspects that she has committed an offence under clause 1(3). I remind the House that clause 1(3) forces Mrs. Bloggins to carry her card.

Supporters of the Bill may argue that I am being unfair to Mrs. Bloggins and that she has a get-out in clause 1(5) should she be foolish enough to forget her card. Clause 1(5) says:

"Provided that if within seven days after the production of his identity card was so required a person produces the identity card at such police station as may have been specified by him at the time its production was required, he shall not be convicted of an offence under this subsection."

"Hold on," says Mrs. Bloggins, who is a qualified lawyer and unlike her friend, Mrs. Sniggins, has followed the Bill through its meandering subsections. "What about clause 1(3), which makes it an offence not to be in possession of a card? Is that not still an offence, even if I have been relieved of my criminality in not producing it for a constable under clause 1(4) if I go to the police station within seven days?"

We are putting thousands of people at risk. For the technicality of possessing an identity card, we shall be making them into criminals and liable to fines of £400 and the option, under certain subsections of the Bill, to up to six months' imprisonment.

Mr. Whitney: My hon. Friend is painting a harrowing picture of the harassment and persecution of Mrs. Bloggins under clause 1(4) and other subsections of the Bill. My hon. Friend fears that Mrs. Bloggins would be harassed, but has he any evidence that in France Mme. Leblanc has been similarly harassed? I suggest that there is no evidence of that.

Mr. Bennett: It is not compulsory to carry an identity card in France. A person merely has to give an officer his identity. Many abuses occur in France—the French police are not noted for their gentleness. If my hon. Friend thinks that the French police deal with the French public courteously and tactfully and demand their identity cards with complete correctness, he has another think coming.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: My hon. Friend is making grave accusations about the police. Is he saying that the police will stop Mrs. Bloggins irrespective of whether they genuinely believe that she may have committed a criminal act?

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend has obviously led a sheltered life. I have been stopped when driving my car on a number of occasions—I cannot claim to be such a fine, upstanding member of the community as my hon. Friend

the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) or my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). The police operate road blocks to stop motorists and say, "Is this your motor vehicle? May we have a look at your tax? Would you mind getting out of the car, sir, and may we look in the boot?" They do not have reasonable grounds when they stop the motorist, but they will be prepared to justify afterwards their "reasonable grounds" for stopping him.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): That is highly unlikely.

Mr. Bennett: I do not object to occasional road blocks to try to track down burglars. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) is implying that road blocks do not take place. My hon. Friend must live in a different world from the rest of us, who experience this from time to time.

It is right that the police should have certain powers, but Parliament and the public should ensure that they do not overuse them or use them in a way that Parliament did not intend. Anyone who believes that, from time to time, individual officers do not abuse their powers and that officers do not go over the top is kidding himself. We must be careful to ensure that we do not give opportunities to the bullying policeman to use powers on members of the public for no good reason.

What bureaucracy will be needed to implement the provisions in respect of cards on Mrs. Bloggins and the rest of our constituents? Clause 2 says that the Home Secretary will make arrangements for the preparation and issue of the necessary forms and instructions to comply with them. I hope that he does not employ the author of the explanatory notes for income tax forms. He is instructed to issue cards, to give out new ones on production of a fee for lost cards and will prescribe the particulars to be put on the cards. Mrs. Bloggins's age will appear on the card. Do my hon. Friends remember the problems with people's ages appearing on drivers' licences? The Bill will make it compulsory for people to show their age on an identity card.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): The poll tax legislation comes into operation in Scotland this year. Everyone who fills in the poll tax form will, unlike the position in England, be required to give their date of birth. That has caused concern and trouble to the Scottish authorities. No one can understand why it is necessary, and not only women but men have objected strongly to having to give their date of birth.

Mr. Bennett: I take the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. The community charge information will be private and will not be published under the identity card system, people's ages will be public knowledge. Great care has been taken to disguise people's ages on their driving licences.

Some of my hon. Friends are suggesting that the community charge information should be on the identity card. The Government have given specific promises that that will not happen. Information given about the community charge will be privileged and kept confidential. To place that information on an identity card would be a breach of the undertakings that have been given.

The Home Secretary will prescribe the material to be used in the fabrication of the cards and will give information for dealing with cards of deceased people.

An enormous state bureaucracy will have to be set up to administer the scheme, presumably involving local offices. Some 48 million people will be required to register initially. In an answer to a question that I tabled, my hon. Friend he Minister of State, Home Office said that it would cost £350 million to set up the system. Quite a few district hospitals could be bought with that money. It is further estimated that it will cost between £50 million and £100 million to run.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us how many policemen on the beat we would get for that sort of money? Many Labour Members have been pressing the Home Office that in areas such as Greater Manchester there should be more policemen. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that more patrolling policemen would be better than having identity cards?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Working on the basis that one police officer costs about £20,000, 50 police officers would cost about £1 million. The hon. Gentleman can work out how many police officers £350 million would buy.

Some hon. Members may claim that the Home Office has inflated the figures. Let us look at the costs and staff of the National Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre and the Passport Office. Neither registers as many names and addresses as would be required under national identity card registration. The annual running costs of the DVLC, with 6·6 million valid licences issued in the last year for which we have figures, was £21 million and there were 915 staff. The total number of licences issued is 27 million, which is over 20 million fewer than would be necessary under the Bill. The number of passports issued is 2,418,000 and there were 2,100,000 visitors passports. The cost for that was £42·9 million. The number of staff in post is 770 and the establishment is 923. One can see that the Home Office figures are not far out on the Bill. We are considering £350 million to establish the system and £50 million to £100 million to keep it running.

Mr. John Patten: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Home Office's calculation of the total cost of approximately £350 million for a compulsory registration scheme is based on comparative costs drawn from the Passport Office, where about £7·50 per passport unit is generally the cost?

Mr. Bennett: I had noticed a similarity in the figures when I was looking at the passport figures and I am glad that my hon. Friend can bear out that assumption.

Clause 2 requires the citizen to notify changes of address. The average person moves every seven years and 10 per cent. of the population have been in their present home for less than a year—that is 4·8 million people. A further 6·7 million people have been at their present address for between 12 and 36 months and another 5·7 million, or 12 per cent. of the population, have been at their present address for between three and five years. If one adds the number of new cards that would have to be issued on change of name, and if we assume a 2 per cent. loss rate, which is lower than that experienced by the clearing banks, one can see that there would be almost another 1 million cards that would have to be issued.

[Mr. Bennett]

One can see the enormity of the Bill. We are considering the issue of 6 million or 7 million cards a year. An enormous bureaucracy would be required and there would be great inconvenience to the average British citizen. Nor would the Bill achieve the aims and utility that it proclaims. Far from assisting with law and order, it would positively hinder it by creating new offences and police powers. It would clog up the courts at great cost and low benefit. It would divert scarce police resources for the enforcement of the regulations. With a loss rate of 2 per cent., there will be almost 1 million cards floating ownerless and many of them will find their way on to the black market, as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said. As surely as night follows day, such a market will rapidly be established by the criminal fraternity. Does anyone seriously believe that those who wish, for whatever purpose, to possess fraudulent cards will not be able to do so? The evidence of war-time and post-war Britain suggests that they will be able to possess them. In a Britain of national registration, conscription and rationing of food and clothes, 20,000 deserters remained undetected for years. They lived without difficulty, presumably with black market documents.

The evidence of other countries suggests that identity cards have no effect on law and order. The police have never expressed any difficulty in discovering the identity of individuals whom they have stopped. The evidence is that police officers have no difficulty in discovering the identity of people whom they stop by one means or another. The idea that we have to set up a system costing £350 million and £50 million to £100 million a year to run and a state bureaucracy employing 4,000 or 5,000 people with local offices everywhere, with great inconvenience, merely so that police officers may find it slightly easier to find out who the person is they have stopped is extraordinary.

The implications of the Bill are worrying. It will unnecessarily increase police powers. At present, a police officer can only stop and require a member of the public to give his name and address if the officer has reasonable grounds to suspect that that person is committing or has committed a criminal offence. A police officer can require the driver of a motor vehicle to stop under the Road Traffic Act 1972 or, in the case of an individual arriving at a port, under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. Police officers are not entitled to go up to a member of the public and to ask for his identity without having reasonable grounds. The Bill will give police officers the right to stop a member of the public to check whether his identity card is valid. That would be a new offence and a new right will be given to the police. Whatever my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North may say, we would be giving the police a new right.

In the Willcock case, Lord Chief Justice Goddard said:

"From what we have been told by Counsel for the respondent, it is obvious that the police now, as a matter of routine, demand the production of national registration identity cards whenever they stop or interrogate a motorist for whatever cause".

He went on to point out the damage that such laws do to police-public relations—a point that must be borne in mind when my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North talks about public opinion polls and the public reaction. Lord Goddard also said:

"To use Acts of Parliament passed for particular purposes during the war, in times when the war has passed, except that technically a state of war exists, tends to turn law-abiding citizens into lawbreakers which is a most undesirable state of affairs. Further, in this country, we have always prided ourselves on the good feeling that exists between the police and the public and such action tends to make people resentful of the acts of the police and inclines them to obstruct the police instead of to assist them."

We should not go down that road of creating more offences and more reasons why the police will challenge the public and the public will challenge the police.

According to *The Independent* of 23 January, that view is now shared by most chief police officers. The powers in the Bill to stop an individual in a public place take us back to the sus laws of 1824, which were repealed some years ago as a result of their misuse by a small minority of police officers. Do we want to turn the clock back?

Another major implication of the Bill to which I referred in passing earlier is the attack on the right of the individual to privacy. Privacy, as J. W. Eaton has observed, is one of the personal attributes that most people cherish. Why should British citizens be forced, as citizens, to register with the state and to carry a card containing personal details that they must show to a police officer on demand? It will not stop at police officers. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North admitted as much, as have other hon. Members. Police officers will be the first. Soon it will be traffic wardens and then 101 council officials and other people who have the right to statutory entry to our homes. The information will be passed on to them. I do not believe that people will want to see such officials being given the right to see a national identity card on demand.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) who is a sponsor of the Bill said in the debate on his ten minute Bill on 21 June 1988:

"Clearly the Revenue and the DHSS will be able to assist on its—

the identity card's—

"production to help eliminate fraud . . . it will be up to the holder to decide whether he shows the card to private individuals. If he does not, the person asking to see it will be able to draw his own conclusions in the absence of a reasonable explanation."—[*Official Report*, 21 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 976.]

That underlines the nonsense of those who argue for a voluntary system. How long before the attitude of mind, "What have you got to hide?" takes hold? The individual will find it impossible to be served in shops or to carry on normal business. Does the fact that a date of birth or residence of an individual is nobody's business count as a reasonable explanation?

The Data Protection Act 1984 was passed to protect the rights of an individual whose personal details are on computer. It was passed because of the increasing practice of recording personal data on computer. The Act says that such data cannot be used by unauthorised persons or be transferred between computers. In a letter today, the registrar has warned hon. Members of the serious consequences of the Bill. The Lindop committee on data protection described the use of a universal personal identity system and reported:

"It would . . . present a considerable threat to the privacy and perhaps the freedom of the private citizen."

It is recommended that UPI should not come in unless there has been special legislation and a committee to examine its purposes.

Finally—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] My hon. Friends may cheer, but I have spoken for less long than my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North and others. The Bill needs to have a reasoned case put against it on

grounds of principle and utility. If my hon. Friends want to examine the utility of the Bill they may do so; I propose to do the same. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] If my hon. Friends had been listening, they would have heard me.

The Bill, with its machine-readable, computer-coded cards and national register would place in the hands of a Government less benevolent than this Government—or even a Government who thought that they were motivated by benevolence—the power to control the basic rights of the individual. The fact that that is unlikely to happen in the United Kingdom is no reason to provide Governments with such an opportunity.

Edmund Burke declared:

"To innovate is not to reform."

Civil liberties are easy to remove but difficult to restore. The Bill is wrong in principle and would be dangerous in practice. It would create a large bureaucracy at an enormous cost to the taxpayer, increase the power of the state to no good purpose, invade the privacy of the individual and create a new criminal offence. It is a thoroughly illiberal and unnecessary Bill and I urge the House to vote against it.

11.51 am

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): I am grateful for this opportunity to join others in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on introducing this important Bill. In an ideal world very few of us—certainly not those of us who regards ourselves as free-born Britons—would tolerate for a moment the idea of identity cards. I therefore have the greatest sympathy with the starting point of the opponents of the Bill. Sadly, however, we do not live in an ideal world. We cannot merely argue that unfortunate foreigners are plagued with identity cards and officious bureaucrats. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) mentioned the French police, for example. Today's world is very different from the world that we lived in in 1952, when the Conservatives were proud to have a bonfire of controls. Among the things that we got rid of was the wartime national identity card. We need to take account of the changes that have taken place in society and in attitudes. There is no doubt that the views expressed in today's opinion poll in *The Times* are widely felt. Any of us who regularly speak to our constituents realise that.

First, there is deep concern about crime. None of the supporters of my hon. Friend's Bill can prove that it would result in a significant improvement, but it must be resonable to presume that it would be a major step in the right direction. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) suggested, the deterrent effect must be of great importance in the fight against crime. The Police Federation supports the measure, and I understand that it has now been joined by the Association of Chief Police Officers, which has moved from opposition —or at least, serious doubt—to a position of support for the principle of a national identity card. There is an overwhelming case for taking action that would help in the struggle against crime. My hon. Friends are right that the Government have taken other measures in the fight against crime, but we must recognise that not only in this society but in all western societies crime is increasing, and we must do something about it. We must not ignore the promise that the Bill offers in that regard.

I shall not dwell on terrorism, because I know that many other hon. Members wish to speak and the point has already been made by my hon. Friends. In addition, there is the fight against drugs. The case for the Bill in the fight against crime, terrorism and drugs seems overwhelming.

I fully appreciate, and am sensitive to, the civil liberties arguments against the Bill. But nowadays we all carry numerous cards and means of identification and they are of benefit to us. Such means of identification would also be of benefit to young people if they had them. Whereas in 1952 we were not accustomed to documentation, we are now completely accustomed to it. No serious, law-abiding person regards it as an infringement of his liberties or a curtailment of his civil rights; he regards it as a benefit and a help, and that is what a national identity card will certainly be.

I entirely understand the sensitivity about police action. As with most things in life it is a question of striking a balance. We do not live in an ideal world, and some compromises have to be made. We must therefore accept a commitment to carry an identity card with the necessary conditions and potential sanctions available should we refuse to do so.

In the application of my hon. Friend's Bill—or a close approximation to it—absolute safeguards would be essential. The police must certainly not be allowed the powers that have been referred to. We cannot have Mrs. Bloggins being bullied by an officer of the law to produce her identity card or else. It would be up to the courts to establish a body of case law, and only with the greatest care would an officer of the law, with "reasonable cause" in the terms of the Bill, require a citizen to show his identity card.

There are many other advantages to my hon. Friend's proposals. I emphasise the importance of identity cards as we move towards a single market in 1992. This country has enough problems and difficulties in moving towards a single effective European market, such as VAT and all the other issues of which we are well aware. We do not need to construct or leave in place yet one more obstacle, particularly since, if that obstacle were removed, all the other benefits to which I have referred would accrue. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who is at best agnostic on the questions of the national identity card, has said that while the rest of Europe can have open frontiers we must retain frontier control because of terrorism, crime and drugs. That is a nonsensical approach. The cause of law and order and the smooth working of the single market in 1992 with all the economic and political benefits that that will bring must be advanced by the implementation of the Bill.

It is worth emphasising, too, the importance of a national identity card scheme for immigration arrangements. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, pointed out, we have hitherto worked with a system of high external barriers and virtually no control inside the country. That has created a panoply of entry clearance officers and the immigration appeals system that is painfully familiar to the Home Office. Hon. Members on both sides of the House with large ethnic minority communities in their constituencies are also painfully aware of those arrangements.

I accept that recent changes in immigration practice have improved matters but I am still deeply unhappy about the present state of affairs. When the nephew or aunt of a member of one of our ethnic minority communities wants to come to this country for a genuine three-week holiday, phenomenal problems are often

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

caused simply because we know that, once under net, a person may be in the country for good. If we had an identity card, that problem would be removed. I can say with deep knowledge of my own ethnic minority community that those who are well established here—and, fortunately, more and more members of the ethnic minority communities are firmly and happily established nowadays—realise the benefits of an identity card system, whereas before they did not.

My experience—indeed my knowledge—is that one of the reasons why officials of the Home Office have had for decades a deep seated resistance to an identity card scheme has stemmed from fear of the reactions of ethnic minorities. That fear is no longer justified, and identity cards would be a positive benefit for ethnic minorities. The Government fear, however, that they would be accused of being authoritarian, which critics from the Opposition would be quick to latch on to. I believe that the Government should show courage and not be frightened of being called authoritarian. This scheme is a move in the right direction and will improve our fight against crime.

If I had had any doubts about my hon. Friend's proposals when I came here this morning the pathetic arguments against his proposal would have convinced me that he is right and his critics are wrong. We have heard objections on financial grounds, the difficulties for people wishing to change their name, and allegations that the documents could be forged. Such points cannot stand up to scrutiny. Those were demonstrations of the principle that hard cases make bad laws. They confirm that my hon. Friend's proposal is right. I would be prepared to consider a properly promoted voluntary identity card scheme if a compulsory scheme was too much to swallow. It would remove the Government from their problems with regard to the national football identity scheme.

I have pleasure in supporting my hon. Friend's Bill.

12.2 pm

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): I can remember the time when it was fashionable to say that we should not introduce so much legislation. We met 35 weeks a year, five days a week, and we were churning out enormous quantities of legislation, and it had to be halted. That was the view which was strongly held by Conservative Members. I must admit, however, that in recent parliaments that appears to have been forgotten, because we are churning out more and more legislation, even under a Government whose party has complained about the amount of restrictions continually being placed on individuals and on companies. We have a duty to look carefully at any proposals for new laws and new restrictions.

Although this Bill has only three pages and six clauses, it requires positive action by every citizen over the age of 12 years. We have heard that 48 million people will be required to do something positive if this small Bill becomes an Act. That is different from most other laws. Sadly, the poll tax legislation requires action, but not, perhaps, by so many people, because the responsible person in a household would complete the form. Before we embark on such a course, we must be satisfied that some benefits will flow from it.

I have listened carefully to discover the arguments in favour of a national identity card scheme. Most hon. Members who support the Bill rest their arguments on crime prevention. They claim that this scheme will help to prevent crime, about which we are all concerned. I cannot believe that. The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) gave some examples of what has occurred recently in his constituency. Of couse, we were appalled by them, and most of us, even representing constituencies a bit further away from the centre of London, can cite similar examples. We are concerned that elderly ladies are mugged in underpassess, for example, and we want to do something positive about that.

Looking at it with sympathetic eyes., I could not understand what difference identity cards would make in the fight against crime. My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked if we could expect a mugger to show his identity card. Of course, we could not. Before we can do that, we must catch the mugger. he will not stand around waiting to be asked for his identity card. Indeed, if we caught him, we would not need to ask for his card. He would be taken into custody right away.

Mr. Stern: Does the hon. Gentleman not regard it as slightly illogical that the proponents of this measure, who are claiming that it will reduce crime, begin by introducing an entirely new crime?

Mr. Lamond: That is a point, but it is not one that is important in my argument. If I believed for one moment that it would make some difference of reasonable significance to the level of crime, I would accept the hon. Gentleman's proposal. I do not believe, however, that it will help at all.

The right hon. Member for Brent, North said that those who do not believe that this measure would reduce crime had to put forward some alternative "magical" solution. There is no magical solution—certainly this is not one. I believe, however, that there is a straightforward solution. I do not want to go into it at length, but I support the view of those in my constituency and in Greater Manchester—including the police authority, which has written to me asking for my help in persuading the Home Secretary—that an increase in police officers, so that officers will be available to go out on the beat, would be a solution. There has been an increase in the numbers, and I am grateful for that.

Mr. John Patten: There has been an increase throughout the country.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: There are still not very many.

Mr. Lamond: I understand that the Home Secretary has tried to help, but that help was not sufficient. It never is. It is, however, a step in the right direction. That is the proper way to stop the crimes of which we have heard, and the sort of crimes that have caused so much anxiety in my constituency and surrounding areas that several newspapers used my correspondence with the Home Secretary as a basis for their articles. People strongly believe that more policemen on the beat—being seen in the community—would be a deterrent to crime. I do not accept that 48 million of us carrying identity cards would help to prevent crime.

It was said that we had identity cards during the war. It was said that they were to prevent fifth columnists. It

would have been interesting to see how effective this scheme was. Presumably a fifth columnist was someone who came into the country secretly in a submarine in the north of Scotland. If he was ever stopped, the fact that he did not have an identity card would immediately reveal him as a fifth columnist. To suggest that any enemies—in this case Germany—would land spies on our shores fully equipped for their activities, but would forget to give them identity cards is nonsense. It is also nonsense to say that if we had identity cards crime would be reduced. One might as well tie that to the fact that, now many years later, when rationing ended, there was an enormous crime wave. One could argue that if he had kept rationing on until today that crime wave might not have occurred. There is no sensible connection between identity cards and a reduction in crime. I do not believe that it would have any effect on the crime rate. If I thought it would I would be more inclined to listen to the argument.

It has also been suggested that the ethnic minorities and the immigrant population will be helped by the introduction of an identity card. In common with the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) I have a large immigrant community in my constituency—more than 9,000. That community encounter problems over bringing spouses to this country, but the main problem arises when relatives want to visit.

If somebody came and stayed on in the community, how would an identity card help? Let us suppose the police visited one of the areas of my constituency which is largely made up of immigrants and swept through the whole area asking to see identity cards. If the police stopped somebody in the street at random and asked for that person's identity card, and that person—providing that he managed to get the point across—said that he had left it at home, what then? He would have seven days to produce it. He would go off and that would be the last that the police would see of him. That is what happens. I confess that someone came to my constituency after I had persuaded the Home Office to let him in. Within the week the police were in touch with me because that man had been picked up working. I do not want to give away any secrets, but presumbably he got all the papers he needed to obtain a job. If people can do that, they would certainly get an identity card without much trouble.

I do not see any practical purpose in supporting the Bill as it will put tremendous pressure on the population. One can imagine trying to get 48 million people to understand exactly what is required. There would be problems when people changed their name, although I accept that that happens only occasionally. But consider all the hassle involved when people change their address, which happens far more frequently. A study of the poll tax legislation and what is required of people when they change their address illustrates the magnitude of the problem. All of that hassle would be gone through for no purpose or benefit, and for that reason I shall vote against the Bill.

12.12 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I believe that, following the speech of the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), it would be helpful if I outlined the Government's views on this matter.

So far this has been an excellent debate and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) not only on his success in the ballot and on the eloquence with which he commended his Bill to the House, but on the topicality of the subject, which is much due to my hon. Friend's efforts in recent weeks. There has been a great deal of interest recently in the House and elsewhere—one only need look at this morning's press—about the idea of a national identity card. My hon. Friend has given the House a welcome opportunity to debate this issue and we are grateful.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I have had this matter under review for a number of months. Many people have firm views on this subject, as we have heard during the course of the debate. We have received and are continuing to receive many representations on this issue. When considering those representations we should start afresh and we should not have any preconceived notions. We need to examine the merits, the advantages and disadvantages of the scheme, with, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said, the clarity of a balance sheet. My right hon. Friend gave an excellent and fascinating speech.

There are many elements, for and against, that must be weighed up carefully. In looking at any proposal for a compulsory system of identity cards, there are some general considerations—general considerations is a more pragmatic phrase to use than general principles—to which we must pay regard. On the one hand, in the balance of consideration there are the possible benefits to the state through enhanced security and immigration policy, and enhanced anti-crime activities by the police and society. There could also be benefits to the private citizen, who could acquire a convenient and certain means of easily proving his or her identity for a range of purposes—not just those restricted to police activity on the streets. We must balance those considerations against the disadvantages, such as the cost. We must judge whether it is good value for money to spend upwards of £350 million to set up such a scheme and upwards of £100 million to administer it. Given the problems that the police face we must also consider the additional burden on them caused by enforcing this scheme, as my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North is seeking to introduce a new criminal law.

There is also the possible negative reaction from some members of society to having such obligations imposed upon them. We must balance individual liberties with the needs of the state.

The proposals outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North must be judged by the considerations I have outlined. I shall attempt to weigh up those considerations when I answer his speech and the other speeches made in favour of the Bill. I note that all those speeches have been made by my right hon. and hon. Friends, but such a speech may come from the Opposition Benches later. Heaven only knows, perhaps the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) will stand up and tell us that it is Labour party policy to be in favour of compulsory identity cards. I hope that he catches your eye shortly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Although I shall consider the details of the merits and problems of a compulsory scheme, the first aspect to which I want to refer and to which a number of right hon. and hon. Friends have already referred, is the practice in other European countries. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North gave us an account of his telephone conversation with the French embassy and apparently

[Mr. John Patten]

embassy officials thought that the practice in their country was to have a compulsory scheme. I am told that my hon. Friend was given inaccurate advice, and I am not sure to which officials he spoke. There is certainly a school of thought on this issue that asserts that an identity card scheme must be a good thing for this country because so many of our European neighbours have such a scheme.

Identity cards are compulsory in the following countries; Belgium, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg and Spain. There are voluntary schemes in Austria and France —to which my hon. Friend has alluded. In France, the voluntary scheme is, de facto, a compulsory scheme in many circumstances. There is also a voluntary scheme in Italy where the identity cards are hand-written, and in Portugal. Denmark, the Republic of Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands have no identity card system. There is, however, a lively parliamentary debate currently taking place in the Netherlands about whether to have such a scheme.

Outside Europe, the same is certainly true of Australia, where the issue of whether to have identity cards to help with revenue fraud led to vigorous debates and the eventual withdrawal of a Bill by the Government when it fell in the Senate. There are no identity cards in New Zealand, Canada or the United States of America. Although there are compulsory schemes in Europe, they are not the norm.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Is my hon. Friend aware that Denmark has a national register of all residents and that there are identity cards in Sweden—I have seen them—on which it is possible to have a credit card number included voluntarily? When the Minister says that identity cards are not the norm, I must advise him that far more countries in the EEC have a card of some description than do not. Only Holland, Britain and the Republic of Ireland do not.

Mr. Patten: I was referring to the fact that compulsory schemes were not the norm in western Europe. I was recording those countries that do and those that do not have voluntary or compulsory schemes—I hope for the advantage of the House—so that we can have the facts before us.

I should like to make two general points to those who urge us to follow the idea of compulsory schemes, such as exist in some European countries, like Belgium and West Germany. First, I am aware of no evidence to suggest that identity cards have been of substantial benefit in tackling crime. That surprises me but I must report it to the House because, needless to say, it was something that we wanted to go into.

Secondly, there is the matter of geography. As we can all appreciate, immigration control at the point of entry presents particular problems to countries with land frontiers. In such countries there is a clear argument for the maintenance of some form of fairly vigorous internal control, in which I freely admit that an identity card system could play an important part. It may be different for us as we have only one land boundary with a foreign state—between the Province and Republic of Ireland.

During the debate much has been made of the benefits that might flow from the introduction of compulsory identity cards. We have heard from my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North and others that enabling the police to establish people's identity quickly and accurately with such a system would be a useful weapon in the battle against crime in everything from terrorism to mugging.

I shall deal with each of those arguments in detail later but shall now give a list of the major arguments that have been put forward so far——

Mr. Whitney: I understand that my hon. Friend is, as it were, leaving the international scene——

Mr. Patten: I was exiting.

Mr. Whitney: Well, before he does so, will my hon. Friend comment on the European angle of this issue, which a number of us have raised? It must be faced by the Government because they will run into real trouble in 1992 in a number of areas and this would be an unnecessary trouble. My hon. Friend seems to make much of the fact that not all the identity card schemes in European Community countries are compulsory, but the fact is—if he does not know this, his officials should tell him—that the voluntary schemes in, for example, France, are universal in effect. One could almost say that no Frenchman would be seen dead without his identity card. Therefore, my hon. Friend's point is without validity. The reality is that continental European Community countries have identity cards and that has enabled them to move towards open frontiers. If we cannot move towards open frontiers, there will be serious implications for us. Will my hon. Friend comment on that aspect of this issue?

Mr. Patten: I welcome the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney). The fact that the voluntary scheme in France is de facto compulsory is something that I specifically stated a few moments ago to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. There will indeed be continuing problems—some still to be resolved—about what we shall do at our own frontier ports after 1992. There is an argument about proper freedom of movement within the Community, but there is also the equally proper argument about the fact that a sea barrier, a land port or an airport is a good place at which to try to operate against illegal immigrants and terrorists. My right hon. Friend has considerable problems still to resolve in connection with the European Community on that point.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Will my hon. Friend give way before he leaves Europe?

Mr. Patten: Of course. I will stay with Europe for my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend know whether, in countries with compulsory cards, there has been a marked reduction in crime, drug abuse or illegal immigration and all the other things that we are given to understand are the reasons that the cards would be a good idea in this country? Does my hon. Friend really think that emulating France—renowned for its bureaucratic structures from Napoleon onwards—would be good for us?

Mr. Patten: I rather like France so I shall not comment —*[Interruption.]* No, that is not a statement of Home Office policy, it is a personal statement to the House of Commons. I shall not follow my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) down the road of Anglo-French relations and am unable to answer her question about whether the introduction of identity cards

—compulsory or voluntary—in a number of European countries has had an effect on either immigration or drug issues. I did mention crime earlier in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North. Much to my surprise, I found no evidence that identity cards had reduced crime levels. I would, prima facie, have expected to find some evidence of that, but we have not found it so far. I must report that fact to the House.

Turning from Europe to the United Kingdom it is also claimed that compulsory cards would curb under-age drinking because licensees could demand to see cards in cases of doubt. It is also claimed that they would help to prevent social security fraud and it has been suggested that an identity card would help us in travelling at least within the European Community as it could be used as a travel document.

However, we must consider how useful identity cards would be in achieving the sorts of things that would be expected of them. It would doubtless be quite possible to devise a card that could be used as a travel document. If such a card were to be available to all British residents, and not only to those eligible for a British passport—that is an important point—it would need to state the bearer's nationality or at least his immigration status. It would certainly have to be issued on more or less the same checks and evidence as are required for a passport. The idea of using an identity card as a travel document is interesting. Indeed, the Select Committee on Home Affairs has recommended that a page from the new Euro-passport could be put to that end.

Such a document could also be used as proof that its holder is old enough to drink in a pub, probably more accurately than the apparently forged birth certificates to which the hon. Minister for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) referred as being a problem that is rife in public houses in his constituency. I do not think—and I have taken advice from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security—that it would be much use in trying to prevent social security fraud, because false claims are generally based not on identity but on misrepresentation by individuals working and signing and claiming at the same time.

Mr. Whitney: Not always.

Mr. Patten: Not always, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe, with his experience of these matters, quite correctly observes. *[Laughter.]* For the avoidance of doubt, as Mr. Speaker would say, I was referring to my hon. Friend's distinguished past ministerial career rather than anything else. My hon. Friend is very quick this morning.

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): My hon. Friend has just mentioned that he has been advised by our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security that identity cards would not be helpful in this respect. But surely when people are asked to act for others in claiming benefit they are required to provide proof of identity. In this respect, a card would be extremely helpful.

Mr. Patten: That is a good point, if I may say so. Pensioners suffer in the same way. When they want to make use of other benefits, such as bus travel vouchers, they are asked to produce evidence that they are in receipt of the state pension. They do not always like to carry their pension books with them—understandably, I think.

Mr. Stern: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Patten: Yes, if it is about pension books.

Mr. Stern: It is indeed. I do not know whether my hon. Friend has had reason recently to go to a post office sorting office to collect a letter that has been impossible to deliver. If he were to do that, he would find a list of about 20 documents, any of which is acceptable as proof of identity. I accept that an identity card could be used, but there is no need for one.

Mr. Patten: Different organisations tend to have different criteria. That can have its own problems.

I think the most important consideration for a compulsory system funded by the state is whether such a system would help the state, help the police, help society, to deal with crime. Whilst my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North and others quite rightly pointed to the crime problem facing all west European countries, the good news is that in the last 12 months the crime rate overall in this country has begun to fall. That is because 95 per cent. of all crime is related to property, and property crime, thanks to the efforts of so many active citizens in this country in supporting the police, is going down fast. However, violent crime, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North has pointed out, has continued to increase. I think it is correct to say, for the record, that crime is going down, and not up, and long may that trend continue.

Mr. Ralph Howell: The fact is that crime has been increasing year by year. The latest figures are for 1987, and they are higher than those for 1986. Although my hon. Friend is correct in saying that there has been some reduction in such crimes as burglary and theft, the fact is that violent crime is still increasing. A lot of crime is not reported, simply because the detection rate in the case of burglary and so on is so low. Those people are demoralised and are disinclined even to report incidents.

The Home Office is making a very serious mistake if it believes that crime is declining. As I have said, violent crime is increasing, though other types of crime are declining. That is not a very desirable situation, and I must ask my hon. Friend what the Home Office intends to do to solve the problem. I would put the question even if crime were not rising at such an unacceptable rate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Interventions should be brief.

Mr. Patten: I must not get drawn into too wide a discussion lest I fall foul of your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would say only two things in response to my hon. Friend. Clear-up rates for violent crime are very high. Ninety-six out of every 100 people suspected of homicide are, in fact, found. In the case of crimes such as robbery and rape, the rate is between 70 per cent. and 75 per cent.

My hon. Friend puts forward an important point about possible under-reporting of the true amount of crime. I think we shall have to rest our argument until we have the results of the British crime survey, which attempts to go into these issues in great detail. We shall have those results within the next three or four months.

I shall now try, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to make a bit more progress in looking at the importance of compulsory schemes in dealing with crime, and whether we think it a good idea to introduce them.

[Mr. Patten]

I am not aware of any evidence that the abolition of identity cards in 1952—my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) took us through the history of that—made the work of the police more difficult. Historically, there is no clear evidence that the crime rate increased, either. One might expect some empirical evidence of that, but it is not shown by the statistics of the time. That may be because, as experience suggests, the main task of the police lies in apprehending criminals, not identifying them once they are apprehended. This is an important issue and one that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North was quite right to raise.

It was for this reason that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary wrote to the Association of Chief Police Officers towards the end of last year to seek an up-to-date opinion. Its view was that, although a compulsory scheme would have some advantages for the police, there would also be disadvantages. There would only be a real advantage if people were required not merely to present identity cards but to carry them at all times and produce them on request.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If chief constables were given a choice between a national identity scheme and all the cost that that would involve, and extra policemen, I can almost guarantee that they would settle for the money being spent on extra policemen.

Mr. Patten: We did not put that question to the association and I am not sure that all chief constables always have the same attitude to every issue.

It may be argued that if the introduction of identity cards is of any use at all, however marginal, we should introduce them because of the problems of crime. However, that would be to ignore some cogent contrary arguments.

We must not forget that we are talking not about the introduction of an identity card scheme but the reintroduction of a scheme that lapsed well within living memory. The national registration system adopted on the outbreak of war in 1939—as my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke said—included a requirement that an identity card should be carried and produced to a police officer on demand. The system survived the war, but, in time, the power of the police to demand that citizens should show their identity cards came to be resented very strongly. The resentment of one citizen led to the celebrated case of Willcock *v.* Muckle, in which the divisional court strongly criticised the police for demanding to see cards purely as a matter of routine. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke referred to what Lord Chief Justice Goddard said on that occasion. Not long afterwards, identity cards were abolished.

It is true that many people, including some who have written to the Home Office, take the view that as respectable citizens they would be quite content to carry identity cards. It is entirely reasonable to say that, but it is illogical to attempt to move from that to the idea that only those with something to hide will object.

If I were a criminal with half my wits about me, going out bent on crime in the evenings, I would make certain that I had my identity card with me. If I were stopped, I could then prove my identity and move on, apparently lawfully, down the street to carry out illegal pursuits.

As at least one of my hon. Friends has shown today, it is likely that some people who value their liberty as British citizens to move unimpeded throughout the United Kingdom would resent the imposition of compulsory cards. Others, including members of ethnic minorities and young people, might feel that if they were asked to produce an identity card on demand the state would look at them with unwarranted suspicion. I am sure that the police service would not gratuitously seek—as I think my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North thinks and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North feels—to require the production of identity cards. However, it would not be surprising if the fact that they were around fanned the flames of suspicion—often unnecessarily—that that would happen. That could have a rather corrosive effect on relations between police and some sections of the community, however wrongly based the fears were.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Would the Minister not agree that some years ago research that was highlighted in the debates leading to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 showed that the law of sus, the casual stopping of people which happened several hundred thousand if not a million times a year, caused great resentment against the police? Would that not occur again if we had national identity cards and police stopping people and asking questions?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman is correct. That research showed that there was resentment.

We have gone as far as we need to go with the cost argument. I have laid the costs of the compulsory scheme in front of the House. Many people would think that those costs produce uncertain benefits and their uncertainty means that the scheme would face vigorous and sincere opposition. Some Members have spoken about a poll produced by Public Attitude Surveys Research. I hope that the people interviewed in the poll mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North and who are recorded as being in favour of a compulsory scheme, will reflect on those uncertain benefits.

A survey published today by Public Attitudes Surveys Research shows that some groups would resent having to carry identity cards. The survey showed that groups among whom the opponents of national identity cards outnumber supporters are

"ethnic minorities, people in Scotland and inner London, readers of the Guardian and, to a less marked degree, readers of the Independent."

Many of my hon. Friends would regard the last two facts as a clinching reason for voting in favour of the Bill. It is significant that the survey says:

"Among those interviewed from an Asian or Afro-Caribbean background, 65 per cent rejected the idea of a card."

That shows the difficulties and it would be foolish not to recognise them.

Mr. Atkinson: The Minister has said that cost is one of the reasons for not introducing an identity card scheme. What thought has been given to inviting those who already issue plastic cards, principally the banks, to discuss whether the kind of information in the Bill could be included on those cards together with the bank's own information? That could be done at no cost to the state.

Mr. Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have given considerable thought to that matter and I shall come to it later when I look at the pros and cons of voluntary identity cards.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): My hon. Friend spoke about the police view and said that the Association of Chief Police Officers has said that cards would be advantageous only if they were carried all the time. What is the Government's view of the possibility of carrying cards all the time as I understand that that is not proposed in the Bill? Under the terms of the Bill a citizen would be required to produce his card within seven days, as he is required to do in, for example, the case of a driving licence.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend raises an important issue. The Asssociation of Chief Police Officers said that it would only be helpful in the battle against crime if people had to carry compulsory identity cards all the time and were obliged to produce them. The association did not think that a system that allows someone to say, "I will produce it later at the station, guv", would help the police in the battle against crime.

I shall now deal with representations that we received about a voluntary scheme. That may assist my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson). The basis of a voluntary scheme would be an official identity card that would be issued on request. Since there would be no obligation to carry one, there could be no plausible objections to it on civil liberty grounds. The civil liberty argument, which I respect, is against being compelled to carry a card. On the other hand, there can be no such argument against the freedom to carry such a card if one wants to.

I have pointed out that a compulsory system would cost the taxpayer a lot of money. The viability of a voluntary scheme would depend on whether it is attractive enough to be self-financing and for financial institutions to put their money there. We would not want to run such a scheme with a substantial Government subsidy.

While a voluntary scheme is unlikely to have much to offer in the way of improved efforts against crime, for immigration control or even as a travel document it may bring some benefits to the private citizen. I have already mentioned that a compulsory identity card could be used in a suitable format as a travel document. A card introduced under a voluntary system could serve the same purpose and in principle replace the British visitor's passport, as the Home Affairs Select Committee suggested.

Then there is the matter of under-age drinking. The Licensing Act 1988 tightened control by making it a strict liability offence to serve people under 18. I am pleased to report that, as a result, many more publicans are demanding proof of identity. Both the Home Secretary and I welcome local voluntary card schemes which have been developed under the aegis of the National Licensed Victuallers Association, the *Morning Advertiser* and the National Association of Licensed House Managers. These schemes seem to be working well.

It has also been suggested that an identity card scheme, whether compulsory or voluntary, could help in banking and retail transactions. That may have been behind the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East. That must be a matter for the commercial judgment of the banks and retailers involved. It is for them to decide what value any national voluntary scheme would have for the reduction of fraud. As yet they have made no representations to this effect, although I know that stamping out fraud is much in the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North and my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North.

Mr. Waller: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is interesting that credit card companies have rejected the idea of including a photograph on credit cards because of the difficulties involved? Does that not also show that the concept of having a photograph in a national identity card scheme will also involve difficulties, such as those mentioned earlier in the debate?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is on to a good point. There may come a time when with the present rate of growth of credit card fraud it is no longer a business expense which businesses can bear. They may want to think about photographs. Hitherto they have rejected the idea of photographs on credit cards.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that to have an identity card which contains the photograph, residence, signature and everything would facilitate fraud? Bearing in mind that people age, the card could be used even more effectively in a fraudulent transaction.

Mr. Patten: That is an open question. I see the hon. Gentleman's point, but a tightly run scheme, which would be extremely expensive, could help. It is a matter of judgment. That is a reason why I welcome today's debate.

A voluntary scheme would not be successful and self-financing unless a substantial number of members of the public would find the cards sufficiently useful to be worth paying for. The key question—this is central to the whole issue of voluntary cards—is whether there are many situations in which people have problems proving their identity and would be saved difficulties or delays if they bought officially issued identity cards. The answer to that question resides in what is on the card.

Another question is what information could in practical terms be recorded on the card, as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish pointed out. In that respect, modern technology issues a wide and ever increasing range of technological options. There are not just strips on the backs of cards; there are now smart cards—rather a good name, generally, for the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). The hon. Gentleman is not in his place, but I hope that someone will draw that remark to his attention. Smart cards contain silicon chips, which can record an enormous amount of information. We need to take account of the opportunities without allowing what can be done to take precedence over what should be done. Whatever else happens, we should not allow any of the debate about identity cards to be driven by the availability of technology, because important matters of principle must be considered.

Mr. Shersby: My hon. Friend has referred to the existence of smart cards. Does he agree that they are the ideal cards for those people who voluntarily wish to carry cards containing details of their medical history and so on which can be made available in an emergency? This kind of card will appeal to many people who are interested in the idea of an identity card for that purpose.

Mr. Patten: I suspect that, in years to come, whatever happens to the debate about identity cards, some

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commercial companies will decide to offer to the public a smart card which can record all sorts of information on a voluntary, opt-in basis. My hon. Friend is right again.

I have said that the Government consider that the costs and penalties attached to a compulsory scheme outweigh its benefits. It would, however professionally and impartially administered, carry risks for police relationships with the public that they serve, and we must consider that point. It would be very expensive and the state would have to pay for it. The Government are not persuaded that a compulsory scheme should be introduced.

A voluntary scheme is another matter. Certainly, the less complete its coverage, the less useful it would be to the state. On the other hand, it might have some benefits to the public and, therefore, might well become self-financing. But, as Mr. Speaker says in this place, for the avoidance of doubt I had better make it clear that only a self-financing scheme would be of any interest to the Government at the moment. As *The Times* said in today's leader,

"a voluntary scheme is at least worth more intensive Home Office study and public debate."

Today's Second Reading provides a good opportunity for that debate to begin.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I would like to consider further the pros and cons of a voluntary identity card scheme—all the points which have been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North and others during the extremely interesting debate held so far. We should like to report back to the House in due course.

12.52 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): This has been a useful opportunity to debate the issue of national identity cards. We should be grateful to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) for having given us that opportunity, if for nothing else.

The debate has not really started, although there has been growing interest in identity cards over the past couple of years, for two obvious reasons. First, with 1992 and the advent of the single European market, the concept of a Europe without frontiers has obviously been of interest. We have been told emphatically by the Home Secretary, however, that—whatever else happens—the United Kingdom will maintain its frontier controls, so the attraction of national identity cards in this country is obviously diminished.

The second argument seems to have taxed hon. Members' minds this morning. Crime has undoubtedly grown. In some ways, it is an indictment of the Government that so much criticism has come from their own Back Benchers about the fact that crime has been increasing. We have heard much today from the something-must-be-done brigade. Having listened to the contributions of many hon. Members, it seems to me that the idea that something must be done has led them to endorse this scheme.

I accept that the hon. Member for Norfolk, North is against crime. So is everybody else—I have yet to hear anyone say that they are in favour of it—but it is surely wrong to suggest that the national identity card scheme proposed in this Bill in particular is an aspirin that will solve the problem of rising crime. It is interesting that the Minister should say that in most countries in which national identity cards have been compulsorily introduced the crime rate has not diminished. That seems to kill the arguments of those who advocate the scheme today. I cannot understand that there could be any doubt about that. We should ask not what identity cards will do because the great problem is detection. Police officers will tell hon. Members that their big difficulty is not knowing whom they have caught, but catching somebody in the first place.

Mrs. Gorman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the police audit report that has recently been produced? It states that only 10 per cent. of our police are actually engaged in chasing and catching criminals, and that 30 to 40 per cent. are in motor cars driving around the streets. It is an extraordinary document and well worth reading.

Mr. Darling: I am not sure that the pattern is the same in every police force. Some chief constables, such as the one in my area, have taken substantial steps to put more officers on the beat and have fewer officers engaged in tasks that are not particularly productive.

Identity cards, whether compulsory or voluntary, will not assist the free movement of people in Europe or the detection of those suspected of having committed offences. We must look at the merits of the proposed scheme.

These days, there is a curious fascination with plastic cards. Much information can be put on a little card. As we have heard, to introduce a compulsory or voluntary identity scheme would be to open a door that would not be capable of being closed. The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), as his contribution wore on, added more and more to the list of what might be added to a little plastic card. Those who support the introduction of such a card would reduce every man, woman and child in this country to a number to be programmed at will. The idea that every individual would have his or her life story on a little metal strip on a little plastic card is objectionable. The universal personal indicator—that is what some people call such numbers—on a card could include an individual's medical history, work progress, financial status, what he did, where he did it, and where he was stopped. All that information could be revealed by passing a card through a computer terminal. That is a great step, and I should be reluctant to take it.

Mr. Pawsey: Despite what the hon. Gentleman said, the figures show that 57 per cent. of the population are in favour of the card. How does he reconcile that with the card that he is outlining?

Mr. Darling: I shall refer to that point in due course. As I said, the debate has only just started. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, when the Government introduced their proposals for the poll tax in England and Wales, the majority of people thought that they were a good thing. When they found out what they are about, the majority thought that they were a bad thing. As the debate on identity cards proceeds, more and more people will come to the view that their disadvantages will outweigh any advantages.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Why does the hon. Gentleman suggest that it must be a plastic card? Nothing in the Bill states that it is to be a plastic card. I have been at pains to explain that everything on the card should be readable by the person who holds it. If there is a space on the card for voluntary information, it would be filled in at the request of the holder.

Mr. Darling: The hon. Gentleman suggested that the card should be capable of being read. I am sorry that I misrepresented him. If the right hon. Member for Brent, North has his way, it will be a formidable card as more and more information is added. If the card is capable of being read and, therefore, the information is typed on to it or put on in some other way, the risks of fraud will be greater. The hon. Gentleman might like to visit the immigration and nationality department at Harmondsworth, which deals with cards that are suspected of having been in the hands of somebody who had committed fraud. I visited it earlier this week and saw six French identity cards, only one of which was genuine. The rest were clever forgeries, but it had taken a number of scientists a long time to establish that. The more one relies on traditional methods, the greater the risk of fraud.

Once one opens the door, it is easy to understand how abuses set in. At the press of a button, someone in Government can programme the card to be acceptable or unacceptable in any given circumstances. Doors can be opened and closed. We all know that if one presents an Access card to a garage it can be checked before credit is given. It does not take a great mind to realise that the same could happen with an identity card if it were decided that access should be denied to a certain category of people.

In Malaysia some years ago cards were colour-coded blue for nationals, brown for convicts and other colours for those who had offended against the political beliefs of the Government. It is not difficult to appreciate that the technology exists to programme cards in that way. I am not suggesting for one moment that that is what the hon. Member for Norfolk, North wants, but the imagination of one or two of his Back Bench colleagues might run riot at the possibilities open to them.

What is the problem with crime? Is it identification or detection? The police tell us that it is detection, so national identity cards will not assist.

The Bill proposes a compulsory scheme. I understand that the Government are not prepared to rule out a voluntary one, but both have their difficulties. There is a world of difference between choosing to carry bankers' cards or identity cards to get into libraries and the introduction of a compulsory identity card scheme. The difference is that we choose to carry those other cards. When one considers a voluntary scheme, one must bear in mind the example of bankers' cards. There is no legal requirement that one must present a bankers' card when cashing a cheque, but it might as well be compulsory because as far as I know, with the exception of the post office in the House, no-one will accept a cheque without a bankers' card.

If a voluntary scheme were acceptable, it would have to have all the panoply, complications and expense of a compulsory scheme or it would not work. No one would accept a national identity card unless there were confidence in the scheme.

Those in favour of the scheme say that people could be easily identified. That assumes that the police will stop people and ask them to produce identity cards. The police say that the scheme would work only if they were allowed to do just that.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that clause 1(3) is rather silly? Suppose my hon. Friend visited the seaside to go swimming on a warm summer's day. Would he be expected to carry his identity card as he goes fom the car to the seashore? Perhaps his wife would be expected to carry her card. That is the sort of silliness that appears in the Bill.

Mr. Darling: That is a problem. If I were minded to swim in the river Forth, I might want to carry a card as I might not be confident of emerging from it because of the chill of the water and the pollution. Someone might nip out to buy a Sunday newspaper and be confronted by a constable asking for an identity card. That person will have to visit the police station within seven days to produce it, which is objectionable and will not lead to good relations.

It is instructive to consider the case of Wilcock *v.* Muckle. A motorist was stopped because he was suspected of speeding and asked to produce his driving licence. He was asked also to produce his identity card. He refused because he considered that the police did not need it and knew who he was. The constable wanted to see it because he had been used to asking for it. That is precisely the situation that I foresee arising if the identity card system is to work. The police say that if it is to work they will have to do just that.

The cases most commonly cited by the hon. Member for Norfolk, North and by the right hon. Member for Brent, North are those in which a group of young people gathers in the street and causes bother. The difficulty there is getting hold of the individuals concerned, not of finding out who they are. Most of us who have experience of such matters know that although a person detained on the street may initially refuse to say who he is, during discussions in the police car on the way to the police station he will generally come to the conclusion that it is better to say who he is. The police still detain him to check up because although they have the person's name, they want to be sure who he is.

The right hon. Member for Brent, North gave several harrowing examples of people who were the victims of terrible attacks, but he should ask in how many cases attackers have been detected and brought to justice. Speaking as a Member of Parliament in whose constituency 25 per cent. of the population are pensioners, the problem is not a question of identity. The most common problem is that somebody comes to the door and shows a card of some sort to the pensioner. The pensioner admits the person and is then robbed. The police never find the people concerned unless they stumble across them in some other circumstances because they do not know where to start looking. As the Minister has said, the assailants will carry identity cards because they know that if they are stopped they will get into trouble if they do not have them, but they will never leave their identity cards at the scene of the crime to assist in detection.

The Association of Chief Police Officers, whose members should know about this issue, readily recognises that there are pros and cons and that the case is not proven. The association said to the Home Secretary that if he wanted such a scheme he would have to make the case for having it. The example has been given of the sus laws and the difficulties and ill-feeling that can be caused. Public support is important.

Several hon. Members referred to a poll today. The debate has only just started, so it is not surprising that many people, when asked whether they would like identity cards, can see the advantages because they think about their own bank cards. It is interesting to note that there

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were two groups of people in which the majority were against identity cards. One group was the ethnic minority population. That is not surprising as a great deal of evidence shows that they are the victims of being stopped, searched and questioned by police far more than other people. Their experience has led them to believe that with identity cards the problem would continue and might become worse.

The second group is one that I know something about —people living in Scotland. The reason why they are against identity cards is simple. Because of the controversy about the poll tax, most people in Scotland are very much aware that the Government have attached to us all an individual identifying number. They are aware of the arguments, whether practical or relative to civil liberties. Because Scotland has been used as a laboratory for the Government's poll tax plans, public awareness there is far greater than it is in other parts of the country. But just as awareness of poll tax problems is growing in England and Wales, so, when the debate gets under way—if it ever does —on identity cards, public perceptions will change. If Scottish opinion is anything to go by, I hope that opinions will change in other parts of the country and will result in a change of Government in this country.

The case is not proved in respect of 1992. When speaking to immigration and nationality officers earlier this week, they told me that they preferred frontier controls because the alternative would be to go into areas demanding to see identity cards and that would cause difficulties, which we would wish to discourage. Another question to be considered is the status of the information on the cards. The Home Secretary is even now having discussions with his opposite numbers throughout Europe with a view to including common information on immigration and nationality statistics. I can imagine a situation in the future when an immigration officer in Greece might consider that somebody is not to be admitted to Greece and that refusal might be good for the rest of Europe, even though if the person presented himself for whatever reason in the United Kingdom a different decision might have been taken.

There are all sorts of different standards of information, and different prejudices and criteria are applied. While I was at Harmondsworth, I was shown a computer containing more than 3,000 names of people who had had some sort of adverse comment made on them by immigration officials. They are not people who have wrongly applied to come into this country or who have wrongly been refused; they are people who have merely come to an immigration official's attention. Hon. Members can imagine the sort of difficulties that we would have if we were dealing with 45 million people—and potentially 200 million people throughout the EEC.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that the use of that information is a serious matter and that immigration officials have recourse to that computer? They can use it against individuals seeking to enter this country merely because an adverse comment has been made on an earlier visit although nothing illegal has been contemplated or done.

Mr. Darling: I can do better than that. When I visited terminal 3 at Heathrow the name of someone seeking to enter the country appeared on the computer screen. An officer kindly showed me how to key in the right information. The officials thought that there might be an inconsistency. I did not stay very long in that department. As I was leaving Heathrow so, too, was the gentleman, so it could not have been a permanent problem. He was admitted as a visitor, I understand. That illustrates the difficulties that are likely to arise when one is dealing with prejudice, or with the interpretation of a given set of facts by an individual who has the power to put information on to a computer. If that information can then be transmitted in connection with a compulsory identity card scheme further difficulties are likely.

Hon. Members have referred to terrorists and drug traffickers. Does the House seriously imagine that someone seeking to bring heroin or cocaine into the country or intending to blow up property or individuals would make the mistake of coming here without identification? Such people will have identity cards, and good ones at that. The cards might not belong to them but they will pass muster at most ports of entry and will be acceptable to a police officer seeking to ascertain whether an individual is who he says he is. In any case, under the Bill—even if the terrorist or drug trafficker does not have an identity card he can say, "If you bear with me, I will come back in seven days with one." Seven days later he will either have obtained an identity card or, more likely, have disappeared.

There is a risk of forgery and a flourishing black market. What price a little card that can tell the whole story of a person's life? I am sure that the Economic League and similar agencies would love to get hold of such information.

The scheme would create a vast bureaucracy—an industry of identity. The passport office is struggling to do its job, but there were delays last year and more delays are predicted this year. We know of the formidable problems at Lunar house, which deals with a comparatively small number of people. Apparently it will be 1990 before Lunar house clears the backlog of mail that it had accumulated 18 months ago.

Mr. Bermingham: Bearing in mind the fact that computer hacking has become a prevalent crime, my hon. Friend can imagine the type of information that fraudsters could extract from such records. That is a serious point.

Mr. Darling: My hon. Friend is right. It came as a shock to many of us to hear that even the Ministry of Defence computers had been penetrated on two occasions. Although the Minister of State told me that it was low-grade information and that security was not threatened, it was nevertheless information on a Ministry of Defence file. A computer containing information on 40 million people—goodness knows how much information on each—would be a paradise for hackers and for anyone who could get the information legally or illegally. What would happen if the system were privatised? Knowing the present Government, if it could be privatised it would be privatised. The temptation to sell or make available the information would be formidable. We must bear in mind that the police computer is also vulnerable and open to unauthorised use.

It is common knowledge that private investigators, many of whom are former policemen, can speak to their ex-colleagues on the old-boy network and discover

information that ought not to be revealed. That is happening day in and day out, throughout the country. The police national computer will be a mere abacus compared with the computer required to administer the national identity card scheme.

The Minister has mentioned the experience of other countries, but I believe that it is sufficient to say that the evidence is that most other countries do not have a compulsory identity card scheme. A minority have some sort of identification scheme, but in most cases it is voluntary.

Perhaps enough has been said about this. The Bill has sufficient flaws to condemn it as it stands without going into the wider issues that it raises. For instance, on the one hand it makes it an offence for somebody not to be in possession of a valid identity card, but on the other there is a saving provision that one has seven days to produce it. I understand why there is that provision, but it appears to defeat what the sponsors of the Bill say that it is intended to tackle. For that reason alone, I believe that the Bill should not receive a Second Reading.

This is not a time of war or rationing. The scheme appears to be another example of interference in our right to choose to be private and not to be interfered with by the state. The supporters of the Bill have failed to prove their case. The disadvantages far outweigh any advantages. Indeed, it is difficult to see what the advantages might be. The supporters of the Bill have not tackled the question of crime detection. On that matter, I can do no better than to endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who said that if £350 million were available to set up this scheme the money would be better spent employing police officers to go out on the streets and tackle some of the problems which have understandably been raised by hon. Members. The Bill is further evidence that some Conservative Members have a latent fear of the people of this country and that they would like further to extend controls on what those people do and where they go.

The Bill fails on its merits. I fear that it is a grand and useless gesture. For that reason, I urge hon. Members to vote against it, if it comes to a Division.

1.18 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn, Hatfield): I congratulate the Minister on his balanced summing-up of the matter so far. Important and necessary changes can often be made in short Bills. The most significant arguments can often be most effective when put as concisely as possible. Contrary to some of my hon. Friends, I shall keep my speech short and to the point.

I believe that the arguments in favour of this Bill are compelling and can be simply put. Today, in virtually every sphere of our activity, we are required to produce some evidence of identity. As car drivers, for example, we can be required to produce our driver's licences. To obtain a passport—itself an international identity card—we must produce our birth certificates. To gain benefits, to collect parcels from the post office, or to cash cheques via a third party, we are expected to provide some form of identity. There are excellent reasons why proof of age should be presented, for example, by young people drinking in public houses or by youngsters attempting to buy cigarettes. It should not be left to landlords or shopkeepers to guess customers' ages. That is imposing on them an unnecessary burden. Many young people who are old enough to drink in a public house probably already carry some proof of age, so they would welcome this opportunity.

The need to carry some form of indentification has already been demonstrated. Most people already carry some form identity. I wonder how many hon. Members are carrying some form of identification—perhaps a driver's licence, a printed name card, a cheque guarantee card, a credit card or a kidney donor card. We require servants of the House to carry a House of Commons identity pass.

A requirement that each citizen should carry a national identity card would not be a dramatic shift from the present position. The right to privacy, which critics of the Bill regard as a basic right, is given up the moment that citizens become active members of society. I believe that the introduction of a national identity card scheme would be welcomed by most citizens. A telephone poll by TV-am last week showed that 69 per cent. would be in favour of the scheme. Nearly every newspaper has had a poll on national identity cards in the last day or two and it was found that the average number in favour has been 57 per cent.

Such a card would be extremely convenient. I have noted the arguments against having a smart card, but several cards are unnecessary. The information required could be on one bar code on a single card. The cost of issuing and maintaining that card would be offset by the savings derived from not having to issue so many other official forms and documents. I understand that £350 million has been quoted as the likely cost of issuing such a card. I believe that £7 per person is a cheap price to pay for the sense of security given to those who wish to go out at night who will then feel that they are properly protected against those seeking to make their lives thoroughly miserable.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my hon. Friend truly believe that people walking the streets with identity cards will no longer engage in mugging? Does he truly believe that such cards will stop such criminal behaviour?

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend makes a good point, but I believe that it will be easier to catch such people. The police will be given a much more effective way in which to identify those they are seeking to apprehend.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Evans: No, I shall not.

I believe that we could have a commercially sponsored identity card and I do not see why it should cost the Government anything.

The Football Spectators Bill has nothing to do with a national identity card and there are fundamental reasons why the two are incompatible. On timing, there are no firm Government proposals for a national identity card and, first, important questions of principle need to be resolved. Football hooliganism, however, already exists and we must deal with it now. A national identity card is different from a football club membership card. A national identity card would be issued by a Government Department or an agency. Its purpose is to prove the carrier's identity, not to grant him admission to a football ground. A football membership card, unlike an identity card, can be withdrawn. A national identity card would not remove the need for most of the provisions contained in the Football

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Spectators Bill. We would still need equipment to check membership cards, procedures for withholding or withdrawing such cards and for licensing the grounds. The commercial opportunities of the national membership scheme, for example the marketing of football membership lists, would not be available with the national identity card. A national identity card would not separate the bully, the coward or the criminal from the football fan but without a membership card, one would not be a football supporter. The criminal understands that.

The carrying of a national identity card would contribute to a more law-abiding society. We would find out how many illegal immigrants there are in the country. Almost immediately one would stop the thousands—contrary to what the Minister said—of people who draw social security benefits illegally. Publicans would be able to verify the age of drinkers and shopkeepers verify the age of cigarette buyers. The police would be able to check the identity of those they reasonably believe may have committed or are about to commit an offence. The carrying of such cards would also save lives as people could be asked whether they wanted their donor number placed on it.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that people's political views should be added to their cards, together with information about their relationships, their friends and their marital status?

Mr. Evans: No, I do not.

Identity cards are extremely valuable. I believe that there are obvious dangers in making the carrying of that card voluntary, because those who refuse to carry it are most likely to be those with something to hide.

Mr. Stern: I assure my hon. Friend that I shall refuse to carry such a card.

Mr. Evans: Those who refuse to carry a card are those who are most likely to have something to hide or those who are under-age or intent on committing a criminal act.

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mr. Evans: No, I shall not give way.

As the Association of Chief Police Officers has recognised, a voluntary scheme would have too few advantages to make it worthwhile. This is an important, clear and necessary Bill and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on introducing it. I commend it to the House.

1.26 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): There are two ways of approaching this issue. One is the serious and philosophical side of whether identification cards are important. The other way——

Mr. Corbyn: The other way is to approach it like the hon. Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans) did.

Mr. Bermingham: Yes, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has just said, the other way is to approach it from the attitude of the previous speaker, the hon. Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans), who looked at the practicalities of this issue. I propose to look at both aspects.

I shall turn first to the philosophical side. We are supposed to live in a democracy and in freedom. We are supposed to have the right to choose. However, where people feel that the state knows best and that nanny knows all the answers—whether we approach this from the Left or the Right—the history of this century provides two ghastly examples of the results. There is the Stalinist approach, that the state must know everything about every human being, or the Fascist approach of Hitler, that the state must know every single thing about every human being. Extremist Left and Right always seem to meet at that point philosophically. The circle is squared at the point at which it is decided that there must be a national identification system so that every citizen is registered. Everything would be recorded: where one lives; where one went to school; who one's mother and father were; where one went to university; where one has worked and one's record of work. All would be recorded on the state's computers. Of course, in the past, there were no computers so the information was kept on files, but it would be on computer now.

That Orwellian sense—that 1984 concept—where the human being is not an individual but part of the machinery of state, to be ordered, checked and spied upon—is, in a philosophical sense, what identification cards are all about. I am sure that no hon. Member would agree with that sort of philosophical approach to members of society. Whether we are on the Left or the Right of the political spectrum, I am sure that none of us want that Orwellian concept of the ultimate state control. It is anathema to all of us. Therefore, if one approaches the Bill on that philosophical level, one says no to it because it would be one more step down that road. In this day and age we must be careful that we do not go down that road, because in a world of computers and electronic recording, it is all too easy for information to build up slowly and for the Orwellian concept of lack of freedom to develop. We must guard against that at every touch and turn.

I do not want to delay the House for long, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I know that many hon. Members wish to speak. I shall turn now to the purely practical side of this issue. The more I listened to the hon. Member for Welwyn, Hatfield, the sadder I became because every reason that he gave for a card was totally impractical. Am I to understand that a card would stop the mugger in his tracks? Would he approach his intended victim, card in hand, saying, "Gosh, it's me. Here's my identification card number."? Of course not. Would a card stop a thief breaking into a house and would it somehow make him leave his number behind to aid his identification? Of course not. The only thing that a thief would use his plastic card for would be to open one's Yale lock. The card would be efficient in that respect—that is, if he had the card with him. As has already been said, the position would be similar to that for driving licences—one would have seven days to produce it.

If someone is going out to be a naughty boy in the dark of the night the last thing on earth that he would do would be to put his card in his pocket. He would not put anything in his pocket that could identify him, because if he were to leave a jacket or any piece of clothing behind, that is the sort of thing that the police would be likely to find.

Let us be realistic. Will the card stop fraud? I intervened earlier—it may have appeared amusingly—to suggest that the photograph on the card would be the easiest way to increase fraud. No matter how much we do not like it,

nature has a cruel trick it plays on all of us: we get older and as we get older we may begin to look uglier, or more beautiful, depending on how age takes us. Certainly we change, and, as the French have found, for the purposes of forgery, changing photographs is really quite easy. Of course, a forged card could be created in no time at all. All the details suggested for the card, such as address, sex and date of birth, would make it very easy to go to a bank and pretend to be somebody else. An ordinary photograph could quite easily be made to look like an identity card photograph of somebody else. This would facilitate fraud, not hinder it.

On the question of photographs, consider the purely practical side. As we age, we will naturally want to have our photographs changed. For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have you ever looked at a passport—not your personal passport, but somebody else's? The number of people who deny that the photographs in their passports are good photographs of themselves—the passports having been issued perhaps 10 years ago—is enormous. We all change with the passage of time.

As someone who many years ago served on the Committee that dealt with the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, I know, from the very detailed investigations that were carried out, the response of citizens to stop-and-search proposals. It was found that across the Metropolitan area there were, I think, one million stop-and-search cases in one year. Intense resentment built up amongst the younger community against the police force—something that was totally counter-productive. One can just imagine how many people are going to be asked for identity cards and be told to turn up in seven days. Think of the enormous waste of police time. Are we going to get little slips like the ones that are issued when driving documents have to be produced? Just think of the cost in terms of manpower.

What would happen if one were to lose one's means of identification? Again, think of the cost. What would happen if one changed one's address, or if one changed one's looks? There are people in this world who change the colour of their hair artificially. All of that would mean that cards would come and cards would go.

The more one reads this Bill—the more one looks at the practical side—the more one realises how costly the scheme would be, and the less useful it appears. I cannot see a single valid reason for the introduction of these cards. If a publican wants to know somebody's age, let him ask that person. The same thing applies to a shopkeeper. If a police officer wants to know somebody's address, let him ask that person. That does not take very much time. We do not need £350 million of expenditure. Above all else, we do not need to start going further down that philosophical road to the point where the citizen ceases to matter and only the state counts.

1.33 pm

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): I start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on his chosen subject. Though I do not think he is here at the moment, may I say that this is an important private Member's Bill. He has provided us with an opportunity to debate an important and topical issue and, in so doing, has shown the country that he recognises the widespread feeling in support of his measure. He has also obviously given the Government great encouragement to look rather more closely at the subject than they may have done so far. I have to express slight disappointment that we have had to resort to a private Member's Bill because of the reluctance of the Government to introduce legislation of their own. I am quite sure that, in time, they will amend that situation.

This is a controversial subject, and one of increasing national interest, but regrettably today we have heard evidence of an awful lot of negative thinking on the subject. In advocating the need for a national identity card, I am not acting out of some deep-rooted desire to play at being big brother—or even big sister—as those opposed to this Bill may try to imply. It is quite simply a practical response to the constant need in modern society to identify ourselves for whatever purposes.

I listened with interest to my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), who presented a fictitious scenario involving a Mrs. Bloggins. I could not help thinking that I could see nothing in his argument. I cannot, for the life of me, see how a request that I carry a card stating my name, address, and what I look like, is in any way whatsoever a restriction of my individual liberty.

Judging from the numerous representations that I have received from my constituents who live with the daily stresses and strains of inner-city life they see no restriction either. They say, shrugging their shoulders, "An identity card for us—so what's the big deal?" Such is the attitude of normal, peace-loving and law-abiding citizens, the 57 per cent. of whom *The Times* leader writer speaks today. They recognise that identifying ourselves in 1989 has become a way of life which most of us accept without question.

We live in a sea of identity cards and can do increasingly little in society without using some form of identification. I used to think that it was only Americans who suffered from that problem, but we have followed suit. Our wallets and purses are positively bulging with little cards, but no one queries that. However, simply suggesting one more little universal card has all the freedom fighters up in arms—that is madness.

The point has been made several times this morning that from morning until night we can do virtually nothing without a card. I cannot drive my car to work unless I have a compulsory driving licence. I cannot fill it with petrol unless I have a cheque card to cover the cheque. I cannot —along with 10,000 other employees—enter the Palace of Westminster unless I have a photo-identity pass. I cannot go to the doctor without a medical card. I cannot even pay for a dress—hon. Gentlemen cannot pay for a suit—that costs more than £50 unless I have two forms of identification.

Mrs. Gorman *rose*——

Mrs. Hicks: I shall not give way to my hon. Friend, who had an opportunity earlier to make her point. We are short of time.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) —who is no longer here—and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said that they would object to carrying identity cards. However, it is interesting that they do not object to carrying the card they need to get into Parliament. We are in danger of creating double standards. By adding one simple universal card to our wallets, we could eliminate the need for many of the rest. Some may jump up and down and argue that the card will

[Mrs. Hicks]

be an invasion of our privacy and will restrict us. However, today, the restrictions are already in place—whether out of choice or necessity.

Across the water, where many of us take our holidays, I am sure that we would agree that we have never been conscious of any dictatorial regime. As we move towards 1992, which is less than three years away, and we pride ourselves on removing barriers and encouraging greater freedom of movement—that could lead to drug-running and terrorism—we find ourselves in the United Kingdom in a distinct minority.

We are one of only four of the 12 member countries of the EC who have no official identity scheme. That makes a mockery of what the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said when we discussed this matter in connection with a ten-minute Bill last year. He suggested that:

"The introduction of identity cards is a wholly undesirable practice, far more associated with dictatorships than with democracies."—[*Official Report*, 21 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 977.]

Does the hon. Gentleman know something about Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, Spain, West Germany, France, Italy and Portugal that we do not? I suggest not.

In recognising that five of the European schemes are compulsory and three voluntary, I am mindful of the Home Secretary's consideration of a voluntary scheme. But I regret that, for once—I hope that the Minister will convey this message to him—I cannot agree with my right hon. Friend's sentiments. If the national identity card scheme is to work successfully, it must be comprehensive. The very people who need to be identified are the ones who would choose not to participate in the scheme. Those of us who have been teachers know that that is a little bit like the voluntary open evening at school. Parents of good children tend to come but parents of naughty children, the ones who need to be seen, do not turn up. Does any hon. Member genuinely believe that the lady in Brent who this week was given £20,000 of taxpayers' money by Brent council to open a burger bar would have applied for a voluntary identity card knowing for 13 years that she had been an illegal immigrant? I am sure that she would not.

Mr. Bermingham: What has that got to do with the Bill?

Mrs. Hicks: People who have most to hide would not apply for a voluntary card. If we do not act now in favour of a universal approach we shall be in great danger of having piecemeal legislation to control football hooligans, under-age drinkers, under-age users of gaming machines and goodness knows who else. Costly separate schemes could in time be rendered completely useless by one comprehensive national scheme.

Already in the west midlands publicans have had to take the law into their own hands, and on 6 March 200 pubs in Brierley Hill, Stourbridge, Halesowen and, soon, Wombourn, near my constituency, will have a scheme to identify under-age drinkers. Both the police and the licensees say that the scheme will save aggravation. I can see it snowballing. In an emotive debate such as this there is a danger that those who oppose the Bill will engage in scaremongering. We have had some of that in the debate and it is done to try to sensationalise the powers of the police and to make them sound like our natural enemy. People use phrases like "police state" to try to put the fear of God into us all.

The case for ID cards should be kept in perspective. It is interesting to talk to people who have held identity cards and who speak from first-hand experience of their days in the war. Recently, one of my constituents spoke to 40 such people at the annual general meeting of the Stafford branch of the Dunkirk veterans' association. They all agreed that they would love to see a compulsory identity card scheme. Many of them said that they would feel safer carrying cards and thought that the only people to complain would be those who had something to hide. It is interesting to note that some of those veterans still carry their wartime identity cards. They do so, because, they say, if anything happened to them they could be easily identified. That was an interesting remark in view of the recent tragic spate of transport tragedies. Much time and heartbreak could be avoided if, as a result of carrying a universal card, every victim could rapidly be identified and the next of kin notified. I would go further and suggest that cards should contain not the metal strips that the scaremongers talk about, but details of blood group and indications of a willingness to donate organs.

The flag-waving civil liberties fraternity is not truly representative of the interests of the majority. The Opposition will probably vote against the Bill. I should like to see more interest by the Opposition, and I say to those who oppose the Bill that they should not let their suspicions misguide their appraisal of the benefits of such a scheme. Civil liberties groups tend to look with great suspicion on the subject of identity and see it as somewhat sinister, with cloak and dagger overtones, as if everyone is out to trap them. They talk of restricting the rights of the individual, but it is precisely because I want to protect the rights of the majority of my constituents who want to live in peace and harmony that I support the Bill.

The carrying of a small innocuous card will help us all to prevent crime and terrorism. At the same time it will convey practical everyday benefits and the majority of law-abiding citizens will have no objection to that. They would believe that we as Members of Parliament were acting responsibly in representing their best interests, and they would applaud our initiative.

1.44 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on introducing the Bill and stimulating debate on a subject which is of intense public interest. The proposal certainly has a sizeable majority of public support.

I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) has said. Those who have nothing to hide have nothing to fear from the proposal. I find nothing to quarrel with in the first two subsections of clause 1. That identity cards should be issued does not seem offensive. We already have a national medical card, a national insurance card and several other documents such as a birth certificate. One more in the form of an identity card does not seem offensive. However, there I part company with some of my hon. Friend's proposals.

In recent months we on the Home Affairs Select Committee have had the opportunity to talk to many police officers of varying ranks, not only chief constables, but senior police officers and constables on the beat. I can

speak only for myself, but it is my impression that, while the police generaly see advantages in a national identity card scheme—there are advantages—many draw the line at the sort of proposals—almost stop-and-seach proposals—that my hon. Friend suggests. There is a grave fear that the imposition of this request may lead back to the bad old days when the police undoubtedly lost the genuine support of the public, which they need to do a difficult and dangerous job. They were simply carrying out the duty that we in this House had imposed on them. That would be sad and we need to think carefully before we return to those days. There is a considerable case to be made for a facilitating document.

It has already been said several times that everybody in this House carries an identity card. When I was working for the BBC I carried my identity card. Members of the written press carry National Union of Journalists members' cards. In a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement made it clear that not only all members of the armed forces but all civilians working within armed forces' bases carry identity cards. Many people working in private industry carry indentity cards. Indeed, to get into a Labour party conference one must have an identity card.

We are now talking about introducing identity cards for entry into football grounds. Pubs are introducing identity cards to identify, not under-age but over-age drinkers. We frequently need an identity card for the Departments of Health and of Social Security, and some form of identity is needed to acquire a student travel card. Before long we shall need some form of identity card to travel even within the European Community.

In its fifth report the Home Affairs Select Committee addresses the subject of the British visitor's passport and I should like to place on record what we said.

"We continue to have grave doubts as to the security of the British Visitor's Passport. Despite the new precautions against forgery mentioned by Home Office officials, the BVP is widely regarded as a low-grade identity document. In the United Kingdom, it is not recognised as proof of identity by the Department of Social Security, for instance, and overseas it is regarded with disfavour by the immigration services of many countries, not least in the European Community. Although it may not be practical to withdraw or replace the BVP at present, due to its obvious convenience at a time when standard passports cannot be obtained without some delay, we recommend that the Home Office give urgent consideration to the withdrawal of the British Visitor's Passport as soon as the computerisation programme, which will allow for a five-day service for issuing standard passports, is fully operational."

The Select Committee continued:

"We further recommend that consideration be given to the issue of the back page of the new United Kingdom passport as a voluntary identification document to facilitate travel within the European Community. Such a document might also serve to replace the growing number of cards now being issued by football clubs, public houses and other private establishments for the purpose of identification."

The Chairman of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), asked:

"Would it not be better, both in the interests of the travelling public, in the wider interests of the country as a whole, to have a travel document that was universally well regarded and paid for in any event by the consumer who purchases that document and one in which we could all have confidence?"

The deputy secretary responsible for immigration and nationality, Mr. Hyde, said:

"Yes; those arguments are powerful."

The Home Affairs Select Committee was driving at this: the back page of the new European passport, which will be issued to every Common Market resident, carries all the information that is necessary for all the purposes that we have discussed—a photograph, signature and means of identification. It already exists and it would be possible, if it were used on a voluntary basis, to issue it immediately.

The European passport is machine-readable. It has two strips on the bottom. It may interest hon. Members to know something that I found out some five years ago when I first started to take an interest in this subject. The European passport's machine-readability and design are dictated not by the British Government, Common Market countries or the United Nations but by the International Air Transport Association. I cannot believe that it would not be possible to prevail on that organisation to add a third strip to contain additional information. I do not share the view of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) who, in his doomsday scenario, took fright at the possibilities of such a card being used on a smart card basis voluntarily to carry medical information and any other information including, if one wished, details of membership of a football club.

I see a compelling argument for the use and issue of one officially recognised card, whether purchased voluntarily, like a British visitors passport, or issued universally, like a medical card, and free. I believe, as does the Home Affairs Select Committee, that there is a strong case for one national, approved card rather than a plethora of easily forgeable, semi-official cards.

1.53 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on introducing the Bill and on including Northern Ireland from the outset. The absence of a national identity card provides some anonymity for individuals with criminal intent, giving them the freedom to traverse the country at will with little likelihood of ever being challenged and to engage in robbery and serious terrorism, as occurs in Northern Ireland. I believe that a compulsory scheme is the best way forward and that the requirement to carry a national identity card will, perhaps for the first time, create another risk for those evil-doers operating outside their home territory, where they are recognised and known. I believe that it can greatly help our police and security forces and I must agree that additional policing would be helpful.

The Bill poses no threat to law-abiding citizens in this country. Since I publicly voiced my support for the identity card scheme, I have not received one objection from more than 60,000 constituents, all of whom are eligible to contact me as their Member of Parliament. From that I assume that the support in the mainland press will also be forthcoming in Northern Ireland. Many of my colleagues from Northern Ireland constituencies have other commitments today and greatly regret being unable to be present to lend their support. The requirement for a national identity card could instil in our young people a greater respect for citizenship and a recognition of the responsibility that goes with it.

Hon. Members have commented on the attitude of ethnic minority groups. Those who have allegedly been harrassed by the police in the past would be protected by the production of a national identity card. National

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

identity cards would also put another obstacle in the way of illegal immigrants, and I welcome that. I recently spent considerable time endeavouring to get extended permission for an overseas visitor to remain in Northern Ireland. I endeavoured to arrange appropriate educational courses and so on for that visitor. Much to my annoyance, that person jumped ship or took the boat one morning from Larne to Stranraer and disappeared somewhere in London. The absence of national identity cards makes life easier for the countless thousands of illegal immigrants.

National identity cards might assist in controlling the great incidence of social security fraud in Northern Ireland. I do not accept the massive unemployment figures that are published even in Government documents. No Government officials or anyone remotely connected with Government will investigate at first hand what is happening in many parts of Northern Ireland.

I have reported allegations of people doing the double. They travel 50 miles to work in my constituency. They are unemployed when they register. If there just happened to be the need to produce a national identity card, it would be quite possible that a check would be made. Those who are doing the double and benefiting from state benefits which should rightly go to the disabled, to young widows and to pensioners, would think twice about the risks in what they are doing. At present, the absence of national identity cards enables them to move freely and to do what they like, with little risk of being picked up and challenged.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I have heard rumours in my constituency about council workmen removing from empty council houses polling cards belonging to people who have died or moved a long way away and impersonating them at the polls. I believe that this has been a long-standing problem in Ulster. Can the hon. Gentleman say how identity cards will help to solve the problem of the dead voting?

Mr. Beggs: The Government have attempted to overcome those problems. Abuse of polling cards is not so bad as it was in the past, but many citizens do not have either of the documents required for voting. Some pensioners have their pensions paid directly into their bank accounts and do not have a pension book to present when they vote. The Bill would be one way of ensuring democracy and preventing abuse. My hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) experienced the problem of impersonation and at considerable personal expense was involved in a court action. If national identity cards had been in operation, the problem would never have arisen. For that reason, I would welcome an identity card system in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appeal for very brief speeches. More than one hon. Member wishes to speak.

2.1 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) on his speech. He spoke with the sincerity to which the House is becoming accustomed. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on his good fortune and choice of Bill. There is growing concern about violence in our towns and cities. This Bill will provide positive assistance in reducing crime.

The idea of identity cards is not new. Significantly, my right hon. and hon. Friends have caused a measure to be introduced in the other place requiring one group—football supporters—to carry clear means of identification and to be members of a membership scheme before gaining entry into football grounds. The principle of requiring identity cards to be carried is already accepted by the Government. This Bill seems somewhat fairer than the one being proposed in the other place because it is not discriminatory. It does not seek to legislate against just one section of the community. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) reminded the House that self-employed building workers have to carry identity cards bearing the signatures of no fewer than two inspectors. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) said that the population had become more accustomed to carrying means of identification.

Many benefits spring from the Bill. It would save police time in identifying suspects and people in custody. It would be a positive crime prevention measure. It would help to remove the scourge of under-age drinkers from pubs and clubs and would assist the identification of those involved in road traffic accidents. Above all, it would be a disincentive to crime because the culprits would no longer have the possibility or illusion of being anonymous. Impersonation such as that which occurred at Heathrow by two journalists could no longer take place.

Another point that my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North made in his excellent speech is that identity cards would also result in the reduction of credit and cheque card crime. There is a distinct possibility that identification cards will, in any case, be required by 1992, for it is inevitable that as the Single European Act comes into force it will require the dismantling of all frontier barriers in the Community. When that happens, some form of identification will undoubtedly be required.

My hon. Friend the Minister made several international comparisons, which I should like to pursue. I was delighted to hear him make those points and they were extremely helpful to the House. If I may elaborate, all Danish citizens are provided with an identification card and much the same principle applies in Germany. As my hon. Friend rightly said, it is not necessary for German citizens to carry identification, but the police have the power to request proof of identity and address and maintain the power of arrest if proof is not readily available. As my hon. Friend said, in France it has long been customary for every citizen to carry identity papers and the police have the right to demand proof of identity from any person reasonably suspected of being about to commit or having committed a crime. If the person concerned cannot produce appropriate identification, arrest will follow and the citizen then has four hours to prove identity. That is clearly a strong inducement to carry the identification papers required, and that is why I support my hon. Friend the Minister when he talks about a voluntary scheme. It is, perhaps, not an ideal answer but a route that could be explored. I know that he is actively considering that idea and I congratulate him on the breadth of his vision in this case, as in so many others.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pawsey: No, because time is pressing.

Identity cards would also assist in the control of international crime because they would make it harder for people to enter illegally or to remain in a particular country. They would also reduce and control illegal cross-border activities, which is a point that the hon. Member for Antrim, East made, and they would help to curb the activities of terrorists and drug-traffickers.

I appreciate that time is rattling on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I want to make the point that the principal objection to ID cards is, understandably, likely to come from those involved in law-breaking. To repeat the point that other hon. Members have made, honest citizens have nothing to fear and will have a great deal to gain because identification cards will assist in reducing the current level of crime and will have the effect of making it safer for law-abiding citizens to go about their lawful business. I find it significant, though not surprising, that 57 per cent. of people in a survey published today said that they were in favour of the Bill and only 37 per cent. were against it. I also find it significant that the Labour party, as ever, is split down the middle with 47 per cent. in favour and 47 per cent. against.

The Bill has much to commend it and will be of positive assistance to the policed in combating crime. Law and order is, arguably, the single most important issue facing society at this time. There is a widespread view, which my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North expressed, that our streets are no longer so safe as they used to be. That point was underlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, who mentioned the growth of vigilantes. Vigilantes flourish when the existing forces of law enforcement are seen to be inadequate to protect the ordinary citizen. The recent formation of vigilante groups on the London Underground underlines that point. It is difficult to avoid the view that as the incidence of violent crime increases the ordinary citizen may feel entitled to take such steps as he thinks necessary to secure his own and his family's safety. I am worried about where that route will lead because eventually it leads to anarchy. People will undoubtedly take the law into their own hands if they believe that the state is no longer able to protect them fully. I do not argue that identity cards will banish crime overnight—they will not—but as my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North, said, they represent a further weapon in the armoury of law enforcement. In my view, they will be widely welcomed as a genuine attempt to uphold the law.

My hon. Friend's Bill has much to commend it but if for any reason it falls I hope that the Home Office will introduce a similar measure, albeit using a voluntary rather than a compulsory sanction. I would regard that as second best, but it would nevertheless represent a considerable step forward and would show the people of this country that the Government are determined to get to grips with crime. A clear signal would be sent out and I believe that that would be right. Having said that, I wish my hon. Friend all good luck, and I hope that he will be successful today.

2.10 pm*

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) on initiating a debate on this important subject by introducing the Bill.

I shall not dwell on the question of violent crime, which was handled so well by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). Instead, I shall concentrate on the important question of unique numbering for all our citizens. We start off in life by being registered by the registrar and with that registration goes the reference number on our birth certificate. When we are cared for or overseen by the social services department of a county council, or by the National Health Service, another number is applied to us. When our performance at school is monitored through the new school profiling system, yet another number is applied.

All the reference numbers are different. The reference number applied to us by the Inland Revenue for tax purposes refers to our principal place of employment if we fall within the PAYE arrangement, or to the source of our pension or widow's pension. The Department of Social Security keeps separate reference numbers in a computer along with a vast amount of detail which could, I suppose, be construed as an infringement of civil liberties. Borough and district councils give us yet another number for housing benefit purposes.

The existence of all these reference numbers leaves the door wide open for fraud and there is nothing more corrosive to our constituents' morale than to hear of the fraud and social security fiddling that goes on as a result. The potential to make money out of the non-standardisation of records exists not only in the state sector but in respect of our credit institutions. Our great mass of credit sources—banks, finance houses, stores and card issuers—have no standardisation of reference numbers. That, too, allows fraud, and means that there is no way that the institutions can cross-reference. One problem that would be solved by the introduction of an identity card is the problem not of impersonation but the various institutions' lack of knowledge of the facts in respect of their clients' other sources of funds.

The card should carry no more than an individual's name, address, reference number and photograph. There is no need for a smart card providing large amounts of the 1984-style information about which the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) was so worried, and the card would not be an infringement of human rights.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—who is chatting happily—could no doubt get out of his top pocket the House of Commons identity card which he carries at all times, as do I. That contains his photograph and his name, which is no great innovation. Every hon. Member is no doubt carrying a credit card, a charge card——

Mr. Skinner: Those are not compulsory.

Mr. Arnold: —and a driving licence, all of which identify. In fact, the hon. Gentleman's driving licence would even give away his date of birth.

A further advantage of the identity card, which would have a magnetic strip recording the facts to which I referred earlier, would be that we could get rid of the Football Spectators Bill. Every citizen would have a card with a unique reference number and the clubs, either separately or together, could keep a note of the reference numbers of those whom they wish to bar. The visiting spectator would put his card through the reader and, if it was the card of someone whom the club did not want, that person would not gain admission. We could easily dispose of all the present traumas surrounding that Bill.

[Mr. Arnold]

An identity card would also assist the victims of accidents. It would reveal an individual's blood group, whether or not he wished to give away his organs in the case of death, and whether he had medical conditions which required specific treatment. All that information could be rapidly identified by the emergency services after consulting by radio the already existing database of medical records.

The Home Office has apparently established that it would cost £350 million to set up this identity card scheme and a further £100 million to run it. I would argue that it would not cost anything like so much for the minimum of data that I propose. Such figures, I believe, are more typical of the response of civil servants who are always too ready to drive a Rolls-Royce at every opportunity.

Those who gain from the current situation are those involved in frauds and other crimes. Those who would gain from identity cards would be the law-abiding public, who have given their verdict through the poll already mentioned which showed 57 per cent. in favour. If we had such cards, the losers would be the fiddlers, the fraudsters and other criminals.

2.17 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Hon. Members have been naturally concerned throughout this debate about the level of crime in our community. What I believe is a great mistake, however, is to go on from there and to think that there is some kind of magic solution. The debate on this proposal represents an attempt to find a magic solution to a problem. I believe that there is no magic solution.

This scheme, which, of course, relates to a compulsory card, would be costly to implement and would require enormous bureaucracy to establish and, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, there is a potential for damage to police public relations. It is up to the Bill's supporters to show conclusively that identity cards would have such a beneficial effect that it would be worth incurring the cost and administrative burden needed to implement them. That has not been demonstrated in this debate.

No supporter of the Bill has put under proper scrutiny the advantages to be gained from the introduction of identity cards. A number of hon. Members have said that intending offenders would be deterred because of the fear of being identified. Of course that must be nonsense. What would deter them would be the fear of being caught and punished. There has been no evidence that the police regard identity as a major problem in combating crime.

Considerable reference has been made by hon. Members to public opinion, and the fact that it appears to show that the majority of people are in favour of such a measure. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) had said that there had been an absence of protest, I would contend that there has also been an absence of support. The fact is that, apart from the editorial columns of a number of newspapers, this has not yet become a public debate. There is little doubt that, as the debate developed, a great deal of opposition would emerge. If the Bill ever came into effect no doubt there would be enormous opposition when cases came before the courts involving children, perhaps vagrants, because they were carrying no card. Vagrants have no money so therefore the deterrent effect of a fine would mean nothing to them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North said that people already carry a number of identifying documents that may be referred to by number. He seems to suggest that another card would do no harm. It would only do any good, however, if it were linked to some kind of data base which would hold a great deal more information about the card holder, or if the card contained a great deal of computer-encoded information, perhaps in the form of a smart card, which has already been mentioned today. I believe that issues of civil liberty would arise if the same number appeared on several documents. If the document relating to the community charge carried the same number as the document relating to the Department of Social Security, the Inland Revenue and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre, such problems would occur.

It has also been suggested that the good citizen has nothing to fear. That was also said when such a measure came before the United States Congress. The idea that the good citizen has nothing to fear begs all sorts of questions. It was that suggestion that killed off the possibility of such legislation in the United States. In a libertarian society, I hope that we would all believe that that notion—the idea that the good citizen is somebody who would support the Bill, law and order and all the rest, and would have nothing to fear and would therefore apply for the card—is a dangerous proposition. I hope that we will firmly reject that.

Identity cards were introduced when we were at war and no doubt the autocratic punishments that then existed were suitable for that time. They are not suitable in peacetime, nor are they suitable to a country that values freedom.

I am not suggesting that such a measure should be opposed on the grounds of civil liberties at all costs. If the advantages for its introduction were so great, I would be prepared to weigh them up——

Mr. Ralph Howell *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 48, Noes 37.

Division No. 90] **[2.22 pm**

AYES

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Hannam, John
Atkinson, David	Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Beggs, Roy	Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Bellingham, Henry	Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Janman, Tim
Bowis, John	Jessel, Toby
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Kennedy, Charles
Browne, John *(Winchester)*	Maclennan, Robert
Buck, Sir Antony	Marlow, Tony
Butler, Chris	Mills, Iain
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Mitchell, Sir David
Dunn, Bob	Moate, Roger
Emery, Sir Peter	Rathbone, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*	Rossi, Sir Hugh
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey	Shelton, Sir William
Fox, Sir Marcus	*(Streatham)*
Gale, Roger	Sims, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip	Stevens, Lewis
Gow, Ian	Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*	Thorne, Neil
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*	Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*	Tracey, Richard

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Rhodes Boyson and
Mr. James Pawsey.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Darling, Alistair
Dixon, Don
Fraser, John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Heffer, Eric S.
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lamond, James
[illegible]ey, Richard
[illegible]ale, Alan
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Richardson, Jo
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Stern, Michael
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and
Mr. Gary Waller.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Since fewer than 100 Members voted in the majority the Question is not decided in the affirmative.

It being after half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Friday 21 April.

Private Members' Bills

HEARING AID COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

COALMINING SUBSIDENCE (DAMAGE, ARBITRATION, PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS) BILL

Order for Second reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

INDECENT DISPLAYS (NEWSPAPERS AND WORKPLACES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading, what day?

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): With the permission of the sponsor, Friday 7 April.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Who objected to that?

DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading, what day?

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): With the permission of the sponsor, Friday 17 February.

HEDGEROWS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): With the permission of the sponsor, Friday 17 February.

RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS (WEARING OF PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

CERVICAL CANCER (TESTING AND TREATMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 17 February.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not hear anyone shout "object" to the excellent Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray). I heard some muttering from the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). Can you confirm that he made a late objection, or was there no objection?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I heard the distinct sound of an objection from an unidentified part of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There certainly was muttering from the corner alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). It may have been the Whip, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), or Conservative Members behind him who have been engaged in political skullduggery to do with the Abortion (Amendment) Bill and who are sitting in the places usually reserved for Ministers. What if the Whip——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that: I heard the word "object".

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Second Reading [27 January].

Hon. Members: Object.

Debate further adjourned till Friday 17 February.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordered,

That Mr. Andrew Smith be discharged from the Social Services Committee and Mr. Ian McCartney be added to the Committee—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

EMPLOYMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Lewis Stevens be discharged from the Employment Committee and Mr. Tim Janman be added to the Committee—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND ARTS

Ordered,

That Mrs. Maureen Hicks be discharged from the Education, Science and Arts Committee and Mr. Jacques Arnold be added to the Committee—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If an hon. Member has an interest to declare, should he not declare it before shouting "object"?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House knows that hon. Members are obliged to record their interests in the Register of Interests. I have no power to require them to comply with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and following the remarks of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), I do have an interest. Sadly, I was unable to declare it or to outline my objections to his Bill in debate. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I that there is some conflict between the industry and the idea that he wants to promote—but that is not irrecoverable——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I cannot allow the hon. Gentleman to make the speech that he might have made had we been debating the Bill. For him to enter upon a contentious matter like that would place an obligation on the Chair to allow contrary points of view. I cannot allow that to happen.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. If an hon. Member has an interest is he allowed to object?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no Standing Order or convention of the House that requires an hon. Member to declare any such interest.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that the point of order has been made clear.

Mr. Corbyn: Two hon. Members have raised points of order, from which it seems that there is a great deal of unfinished business and unstated remarks on matters that have started. Are you prepared to allow the hon. Member concerned to express his interest in this matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought I had made it clear that was just what I was not prepared to do, nor could I allow it.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps you could assist newcomers like me by saying how we are to know, in the heat of debate, what an interest is if we are not allowed to be told?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows the rules about the register of interests, and that is the limit of the obligations.

Traffic (East London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.42 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I was pleased to hear the roars of approval as I rose to my feet. I shall begin by thanking the Minister's civil servants for providing me with the documents for which I asked at the beginning of the week. There is no need for the Minister to look frightened as that is probably the last time we shall agree during the debate.

The debate arises from the crisis in London's transport system. The system is in crisis because the roads are jammed, tubes and trains are overcrowded and unsafe and there is a shortage of buses which as often as not are stuck in the capital rather than moving. The Government's response has been irrational to the point of being perverse. For several years I worked in urban planning for the Government and was secretary to the joint urban planning group. I was astonished to see this ill-conceived plethora of unconnected piecemeal studies relating to different aspects in different areas of the transport system. Among those unconnected studies are the so-called London assessment studies. It is the east London assessment study that I wish to consider.

The 12 "stage 2A" options cover the area from Highgate to Tottenham, down to King's Cross and east to Hackney, and on to the Isle of Dogs. In the studies, that area is criss-crossed with road schemes—so much so that the map looks like a half-eaten plate of spaghetti. In Hackney, South, there is hardly a square yard of the constituency not covered by one or other of the road proposals. They extend from Graham road to Victoria park and from Shoreditch to Dalston. It is amazing to find that there are tens of thousands of homes within 200 metres of one or other of the road proposals in the 12 options set out by the consultants.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): What my hon. Friend is beginning to outline is absolutely right. The Department of Transport is obviously keen to encourage cars to come into inner London when it should be reducing the volume of traffic. Even more worrying, the Department has now enlarged the area of the east London assessment study to include the area immediately around King's Cross in relation to development proposals now coming forward for King's Cross. Does that not increase the danger that my hon. Friend outlines?

Mr. Sedgemore: My hon. Friend is right to raise that matter. By coincidence, I have here a newspaper cutting referring to "M-way mayhem for King's Cross" and quoting the wise comments of my hon. Friend on that issue.

We do not want debate to be narrow and parochial. I have mentioned Hackney, but in the neighbouring borough of Haringey, which is not in the east London assessment study, 13,500 homes are within 200 metres of one or more of the proposals. In the whole area of ELAS more than 100,000 homes are within 200 metres of one or other of the proposals. Those homes are occupied by real people who see their houses threatened or foresee the environment ruined by noise, congestion and pollution. I am not alone in the House in being deluged with letters, many from pensioners desperately worried about being caught in the blight trap. It is astonishing that the Minister should have allowed the studies to take place in such a way that more than 100,000 families are concerned about the blight on their homes. Even Hitler never blighted that number of homes during the war.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sedgemore: I am sorry, but I know that one of my hon. Friends wants to speak. I shall educate the hon. Gentleman and I am glad that he is here. I invited him so that I could educate him.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Give way.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be able to intervene in the Minister's speech.

The concept of this study has been wrong from the start. It looks at an artificial corridor but not at its place in the whole of London. Its terms of reference and the way in which it has been conducted are biased towards road building as a solution. The Government should put together a comprehensive long-term transport strategy for London.

That strategy should recognise that building new roads in London is environmentally disastrous, counterproductive and cannot conceivably meet the levels of suppressed demand for car use, as West Way has shown us all too clearly. It should also recognise that new road building is the most expensive option in both environmental and financial terms. If we look outside ELAS at the four major studies, we see the likelihood of ending up with no fewer than £3,500 million worth of tangled lunacy in terms of roads to be built in London. Hon. Members will appreciate that London is the first great city of modern times. It developed as villages coalesced, with the whole served first by canals, then railways, then buses, then trams. We must therefore accept that London cannot be transformed into a car-accessible city without knocking down most of what makes it attractive to live in.

There is a further conundrum. If London is to be a successful world city of the 21st century, as some of us in the Labour party wish, it must have an efficient transport system. The only way to make London a successful city of that kind is through a high level of investment in public transport, and traffic restraint. That investment must take place, not over one or five years, but over 10 years and more. We must spend not millions of pounds, tens of millions of pounds or hundreds of millions of pounds, but billions of pounds on public transport. That is what was done in Paris and that is what we should be doing.

Even New York has spent £1·4 billion a year to rehabilitate its underground sytem, not to mention sending us guardian angels to teach us about safety. We do not want the nonsense of 22 separate studies, and no doubt more to come, with all sorts of questionable criteria designed to produce arguments in favour of road building. With great respect to the Minister's boss, we do not want silly statements from the Secretary of State that improvement in public transport in London should be paid for by passengers in London and not taxpayers in Newcastle. That is a fatuous argument which shows no understanding of the taxation system, or of who pays or who benefits. It is clear that London is financing Newcastle's public transport system, not vice versa.

[Mr. Sedgemore]

London needs more than a plan for public transport. People and goods do not move about for the sake of it. London needs a transport plan which is integrated with a land use plan. My first major question to the Minister is this. Where is he getting the strategic advice for a sensible land use transportation survey? It looks to me as though Ove Arup had never seen a transportation survey and has no idea of the proper way to plan a road system.

It is also worth remembering that in order to streamline the city the Government abolished the Greater London Council—a major body which could have produced that transportation and land use plan. In spite of the difficulties, all the London boroughs and the City of London corporation have come up with unanimously agreed strategic planning advice for London. The agreement was made on 19 October 1988. I do not claim that that is a perfect solution, but it seems to go in the right direction. Certainly, it seems more intelligent and better than anything that the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment have offered.

It is clear that all Members in the area affected by the east London assessment study are united in opposition to road building solutions for London's transport problems——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): All?

Mr. Sedgemore: All but the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), so I am delighted to see the hon. Gentleman in his place.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now that he has named me?

Mr. Sedgemore: I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I am restricted by parliamentary convention as to the term that I can use to respond to the hon. Gentleman's statement. What he has said is as far from the truth as anything can be. That will be proved by the file on ELAS that my hon. Friend the Minister has. My reference to the ombudsman proves it. A petition that I have drafted for my constituents requiring a decision on the abandonment of Parkland walk, the matter which most affects my constituency, is with my constituents and I intend to present it to the House.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has got that off his chest as it allows me to respond in kind. I know exactly which arguments the hon. Gentleman has because I have some of his correspondence to his constituents. It becomes clear from those letters that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to oppose the building of roads in areas where there are Conservative voters and where Conservative homes will be knocked down and he is prepared——

Sir Hugh Rossi *rose*——

Mr. Sedgemore: I shall not give way again. The hon. Gentleman must take his medicine like the good parliamentarian that he is.

Sir Hugh Rossi: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member who does not know my constituency to make a statement about its political composition? Two thirds of Parkland walk runs through an area which has a Labour majority, whereas the Archway road is in a marginal area. If I wanted to gain anything politically, I would support the Archway road and not Parkland walk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Sedgemore: The hon. Gentleman has got that wrong. He is inventing a voting pattern for his constituency. It is extraordinary that the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment cannot come out against major road building solutions for London which will cause massive damage to the homes of his constituents. *[Interruption.]* I have the letters. The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green may laugh, but I have his letters to Miss Sharon Litton and to Oliver Burton, and they are different from what the hon. Gentleman now says. It is no good writing one thing on paper and then denying it in the House. It is an astonishing way for the hon. Gentleman to treat his constituents. I attended a public meeting in his constituency at which hundreds of people were present. I am told that the hon. Gentleman was invited but, no doubt, he was too busy to go along. The consensus among his constituents at that meeting was that the hon. Gentleman was not doing the job that they expected of him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is an Adjournment debate and it is the convention that the Minister and the hon. Member whose debate it is should agree to other hon. Members taking part. I was told that another hon. Member would formally take part. Is it possible to have some guidance or to develop a formal understanding on the division of time? At the moment we seem to be bogged down in a debate about a different constituency from the one represented by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The usual convention is for the time to be divided equally. It is also a convention that Adjournment debates are not used by one hon. Member to make an attack upon another hon. Member because, clearly, the hon. Member who is the subject of the attack will not have an adequate opportunity to respond and defend himself. I very much hope that the conventions of Adjournment debates will be respected.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would always go along with anything that you say. The Minister's intervention was crass because this debate is about the east London assessment study, which covers Hackney, Haringey, Islington and part of Camden.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My point—I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman understood it—was about the convention of making time available for another hon. Member to take part in the debate. I am not absolutely certain that insulting me before I have had a chance to open my mouth is quite the way to answer a point of order. The point is whether the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) will have a chance to speak.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Whether a third hon. Member is allowed to participate is a matter for the hon. Member

whose Adjournment debate it is and for the Minister. I hope that the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) will bear that in mind.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am bearing in mind that this is the first Adjournment debate—I used to work in the Civil Service—that I have ever attended in which a Minister has tried to filibuster by making points of order. The hon. Gentleman might reflect on the properties of the constitution when he goes back to his Department. In my day, Ministers' integrity would not have allowed that kind of thing, and as a civil servant I should certainly have advised my Minister against it.

The people of Haringey need not worry too much. They are getting splendid back-up from councillor Nicky Gavron on their planning committee, who has done excellent work in putting forward Haringey's blueprint for transport. I hope that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green will support councillor Gavron. Her concern to preserve all that is good in the local environment and to save the residents of Haringey from the death and destruction of urban motorways has been luminous, and her enthusiasm in explaining the problems to the people of Haringey unquenchable. The time and effort that she has put in has been a good lesson to us all. In the words of the poet Shelley, she is prepared

"To defy Power, which seems omnipotent"

and to fight to the last breath in her being for the residents and people of Haringey. I ask the Minister to watch her lips, for they say, "No more roads." What a pity it is that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green cannot say, "No more roads."

While I am congratulating people—we are now getting into the harmony of the debate—I congratulate George Stern for his heroic efforts in opposing the Archway motorway proposals for the past 22 years. George has asked me to ask the Minister for a categorical assurance that the Archway proposals are dead today, and I do so. I also congratulate the campaigning zeal of the *Haringey Gazette* and the work of the Hackney public transport action committee, the Graham road neighbourhood association and the Hackney transport campaign.

I specifically ask the Minister, if he is in better humour, to answer some questions. When the final ELAS reports come out later this year, will he give a categorical assurance that there will be full public consultation? Will he give an assurance that he and the Secretary of State will be prepared to meet the people of Islington, Haringey and Hackney to debate these issues? I have a letter from the Secretary of State which says that if he cannot get to them all, perhaps he should go to no meetings. That seems to suggest that Ministers will not come forward and engage in the kind of public debate that we want.

Will the Minister give an assurance that there will be a full public inquiry and that the inquiry will not be rigged in the sense that the inspector will be expected to come to a road-building solution before the inquiry starts? Will the Minister give an assurance that there will be a full debate in the House of Commons after the public inquiry? I should like to watch the Minister's lips and hear him say, "No through roads."

2.58 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose*——

Mr. Bottomley: Perhaps I should give way to the hon. Lady.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I apologise to the hon. Lady. Does she have the consent of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and the Minister to take part in the debate?

Mr. Sedgemore: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It will not be possible to answer all the hon. Gentleman's questions, but I will give way to the hon. Lady.

Ms. Abbott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and to the Minister. There is much concern about this matter in my constituency, not just on the part of Labour voters, Conservative voters, council house tenants or house owners, but across the board. The Minister would do well to take seriously the feelings of the people of London.

Reading the east London assessment study, one is bound to come to the conclusion that it is designed with the Chingford commuter in mind. It is designed not for the people who live in Richmond, Hornsey or Hackney but for those who want to commute to and from the suburbs as easily as possible. That is all very well, but there is a community in London. I shall deal with the people who live in the path of this road.

Mr. Corbyn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms. Abbott: I am afraid that I must get on.

The local community is concerned about the proposed road scheme. The M25 experience shows that increasing road capacity without a global plan for transport results in roads becoming more clogged. If the Government are considering only speeding commuters from the suburbs to the city centre, mere road capacity will not meet the need. If the Government are considering the lives and environment of those who live in London, the ELAS study is extremely problematical. The Minister will be aware of the threat to homes and shops. He will be aware that communities living in the path of the proposed scheme feel threatened by planning blight and want to be sure of their future. Above all, the Minister should be aware that the people who live in London—be it Haringey, Hackney, Islington, Richmond or Hornsey—want the House to produce a multi-dimensional plan that takes into account all transport needs. People, especially women and those on low incomes, want more investment in public transport. It is not sufficient to produce large roads on which surburban commuters can whizz into the city. We want a comprehensive plan and investment in public transport. If I may strike a partisan note, we would like a tube station in Hackney. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) in hoping that when the plans are brought forward there will be genuine public consultation.

3.1 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): As the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) used up two thirds of the

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

debate and suggested that it would be convenient for the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) to speak, I am left with little time to deal in depth with the east London assessment study.

I say to the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch that never in my 14 years in the House have I heard an hon. Member so misuse an Adjournment debate. He could have talked about the general issues affecting east London or just his constituency, but he sided with those who will sink to any form of abuse or worse when dealing with my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). Yesterday, we had a debate on the west London assessment study. If I had to choose which of the four hon. Members by whom I should wish to be represented, the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch would not be my choice. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) spoke eloquently and forcefully for his constituents last night. The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington showed that it is possible to advance the concerns of the borough properly. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch was talking——

Mr. Sedgemore: Jolly good.

Mr. Bottomley: It is the hon. Gentleman's privilege to make noises. If it were not his privilege, he would still do so. I give way to his voice—it is one of the loudest in the House.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch wrongly suggested that he has made more representations on the east London assessment study than my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green. If he is trying to give the impression that he is being more difficult than my hon. Friend, he is failing. The amount of effort made by the hon. Gentleman appears to be a couple of letters and some questions in the past week. His approach to the east London assessment study, his duties to his constituents and his remarks about my hon. Friend were out of place.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Bottomley: I will not give way.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch has asked a number of questions over the past week, but has not mentioned the answer to one of them. The answer appears partly in the Hackney transport policies and programme. What was the cost of personal injury accidents in the east London assessment study area last year. The answer is £50 million.

The assessment studies have been going for four years and the results of stage one were generally welcomed. There were a number of issues in south London, north London and east London that helped to shape a number of people's prejudices. One issue that came out of stage one was the effect of traffic on residents. I agree with the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington that we should not be building roads in London especially for car commuters from outside London.

When I go back to the day of the launch of *Auto Express*, when I opened my mouth and put my foot in it, I said that I had no intention of using taxpayer's money to build extra roads so that commuters could come pouring in from the home counties or from outer London to inner London by car. *[Interruption.]* People criticised me, although I did not mention the word salmonella, because it was the next best thing. Did the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch say anything in my defence? No. He is a person who merely carps and criticises. I want the House to know that the cost of the assessment studies in stage one and stage two of the east London study, designed to find long-term solutions to severe transport problems in the area, is estimated at under £2 million. So the cost over four years is £2 million for long-term solutions compared with the road casualty cost of £50 million a year and if the hon. Gentleman has any criticism about that comparison, he is more hard-hearted than I thought he was.

I came to the House in 1975 and people used to point the hon. Gentleman out to me and say, "Here is the intellectual of the Labour party." I looked him up and found that he had worked for Bob Mellish. I understood then why he was called that. Given the choice, I should prefer to take the approach of Bob Mellish to defending the interests of people in London to the hon. Gentleman's. If I wanted to have an awkward Member of Parliament making representations to the Minister, I would choose my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green. He has been more difficult than I have sometimes found pleasant.

We still need to work on through the studies to get to the end of stage two. The subject of the debate is the studies, and their objectives are, first, to promote access and mobility, which the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington would agree is worth considering. Secondly, it is to see how it is possible to bring more employment back into London and to support employment, economic growth and regeneration. Much of the east London assessment study shows the need and opportunities for regeneration. The same need is felt in the constituency of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). The third objective is to develop an efficient transport system. There have been calls for increased attention to public transport. We published transport statistics for London very recently and if any hon. Member would like a copy I shall arrange to send him or her one. The figures show that the increase in the use of public transport has been faster in London in the past six years than in any capital city in the past 40 or 50 years, except for Hong Kong when the mass transit railway was opened. Clearly, many of London's transport needs will have to be met by more rail development. But to those who say that public transport alone is the answer, I echo a remark that I made last night to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes about Richmond. With a possible rail route to come through my constituency, I do not see the public transport enthusiasts, of whom I am one, saying, "Don't worry about the impact locally." Building a railway line can be just as threatening as building a road.

Fourthly, we want to improve the environment. If we look at the main spine road through the assessment study area, it goes through the most run-down part of the area.

Mr. Sedgemore: The Minister has blighted the properties.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman's voice is louder than anyone else's. We want enhanced safety, to identify the location of high access routes and to identify measures

to improve safety. We had a bit of distortion, if not exaggeration, from *The Guardian* on 11 July, two weeks after I gave my answer in the House. We went into some detail on this last night. *The Guardian* produced an editorial in January 1989 saying that the Government should spend billions of pounds on more roads. There is no prospect of the Government spending extra billions of pounds on roads in London that do not have substantial benefits in excess of their costs—and that includes having an appreciation of the environmental impact as well as the economic cost benefit. We want London to go into the next century with the prospect of having necessary through traffic on through roads and traffic calming in other areas.

I have been out to dinner on several occasions with Socialist councillors in north London, where one almost needs a guide because councils have made it such a maze. One cannot get to the councillor's period house without having a guide.

Ms. Abbott: Name no names.

Mr. Bottomley: Gibson square is a good example but I shall not name the councillors. If one considers such areas, there is rat-running galore as stage one says. We hope to get through to the end of stage two as fast as possible because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green keeps telling me, the uncertainty, as well as the threat, is difficult. My hon. Friend's campaign has hit television on occasions, which is more than one can say for the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch. The particular problem which my hon. Friend has referred to the ombudsman is one on which I do not believe that we have legislative authority to do as my hon. Friend wants. I have sympathy for his point of view, but I shall not argue the case and I am grateful that he has not.

We hope to emerge from stage two of the assessment studies with the uncertainty greatly reduced. At the moment, there may be three options in a given area, any one of which may be feasible. If it is decided that only one option is feasible, we can reduce the blight—or the feeling of blight—by two thirds. The blight itself does not come from the Department.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch kindly did not mention it but it should be pointed out that the Labour local authorities in the Association of London Authorities, which say that the Department has asked them to hide the fact that options have been suggested are wrong.

With a degree more openness and truthfulness, and perhaps better-humoured Adjournment debates, we might be able to throw more light on this issue. I do not think that the House will be particularly grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he spoke in his Adjournment debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 30 January 1989

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will invite Soviet Jews and refuseniks to attend the information forum to be held in London in April following the conclusion of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe meeting in Vienna.

Mr. Waldegrave: In accordance with the Vienna concluding document, access to the open sessions of the London information forum will be assured, upon request, to any private individuals whether national or foreign, as well as to representatives of the media, non-governmental organisations and religious groups.

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received in the last year in regard to the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received representations on all aspects of this problem, from Members of both Houses of Parliament, the voluntary agencies, members of the public, from a number of individuals in Hong Kong and from representatives of the Vietnamese community in the United Kingdom.

Namibia

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We look forward to implementation of the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia, which is due to start on 1 April. This will enable Namibians to take part in free and fair elections to decide their own future.

West Germany

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there are any plans for an Anglo-West German summit meeting.

Mrs. Chalker: Plans are under consideration, and an announcement will be made soon.

Nigeria

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what special programme will be arranged for the state visit of the President of Nigeria; and how he will seek to promote a fruitful exchange of ideas and of trade.

Mrs. Chalker: The details of the programme for the state visit of the President of Nigeria are still under discussion. The visit should provide ample opportunity to strengthen the full range of our bilateral relations.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Departments (Insurance)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister which Departments do not insure *(a)* their vehicles, *(b)* their buildings and *(c)* their employees with an insurance company but instead carry their own risk.

The Prime Minister: Normally, Government Departments do not insure unless it would be more economical for them to do so than to carry the risk themselves. Departments are responsible for reviewing their own arrangements, and there is no central record of all the cases where commercial insurance has been taken out. A number of Departments, including the Ministry of Defence and the Crown Suppliers, insure against third party motor risks; and the Ministry of Defence insures against employer's liability risks. As a general rule, Departments do not insure their buildings.

War Pensions

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply of 26 January to the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) concerning war heroes, *Official Report*, column 1178, she will end the means testing of war pensions.

The Prime Minister: War disablement pensions and war widows' pensions are not means-tested, except in the case of an officer's widow who is widowed following remarriage. War pensions paid to dependants other than widows of which there are about 3,000 currently in payment may be means tested, and there are no plans to change this. The provision of such pensions predates the introduction of the present social security scheme, which has generally made the need for them obsolete.

"Death on the Rock"

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Prime Minister what briefing her press officer gave to journalists *(a)* prior and *(b)* subsequent to the screening of the television programme "Death on the Rock", and if she will name the journalists and newspapers concerned.

The Prime Minister: The practice is not to comment on lobby briefings.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Scottish Affairs Committee

59. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he plans to have any further discussions on the setting up of the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

60. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he intends to have any further discussions on the establishment of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Lord President of the Council what further steps he has taken to establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs.

63. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what further efforts he is making to bring about the formation of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs in the current Session.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Members to what I said on 19 January at business questions in reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), at column 484. I am not very hopeful about this matter—at least not in the immediate future—but I am having a meeting shortly with some of the hon. Member's hon. Friends in order to discuss the position and to see if there is any scope for progress.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civic Amenities Act 1967

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total number of successful prosecutions for offences committed under the Civic Amenities Act 1967 for each year of its operation in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible from the information held centrally to identify prosecutions under this Act.

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes are now known to his Department; and how many of these have been established in the last year.

Mr. John Patten: There are now some 64,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales, with approximately 20,000 having been established in the last year. The scale of this increase is very encouraging and reflects the public's growing commitment to the cause of crime prevention.

Crime (Greater London)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making against crime in Greater London.

Mr. John Patten: Data for notifiable offences recorded by the police for the 12 months to September 1988 show a fall of 1 per cent. in London (MPD/City). In the two largest categories, theft/handling and burglary, the fall was 4 per cent. and 3 per cent. respectively.

Greater Manchester Police Authority

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the aplication by Greater Manchester police authority for an increase in establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has announced today that he has approved an increase of 45 police posts in the establishment of the Greater Manchester police.

Police Federation

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met officials of the Police Federation; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend last met officials of the Police Federation at a social function on 10 January, when conversation ranged over a number of police matters.

Cambridgeshire Police Department

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the employment of additional civilian staff by the Cambridgeshire police department to deal with the administration resulting from the implementation of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. As I indicated in reply to a question by the hon. Member on 23 January at column *391*, this is a matter for individual chief officers of police in the exercise of their responsibility for the administration of the Firearms Acts.

Guardian Angels

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the activities in London of the group known as the Guardian Angels.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 27 January.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ascertain how many United States citizens, belonging to the group known as Guardian Angels, have been permitted to visit the United Kingdom in the last year to date.

Mr. Renton: As far as we are aware, three Americans representing the group 'the Guardian Angels' arrived at Heathrow on Sunday, 16 October 1988 and four at Gatwick on 24 January 1989. Others may, of course, have entered the United Kingdom as United States citizens coming here for visits.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will use his powers to deport those United States citizens belonging to the group known as Guardian Angels on the grounds that their presence in the United Kingdom is not conducive to the public good.

Mr. Renton: No. I am not aware of any justification for the use of the powers.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether any of those United States citizens belonging to the group known as Guardian Angels and recently admitted to the United Kingdom have been convicted of criminal offences *(a)* in the United Kingdom or *(b)* elsewhere; what evidence was presented to show that they were not likely to have recourse to public funds in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) by whom the United States citizens belonging to the group known as the Guardian Angels and recently admitted to the United Kingdom are to be employed; and whether they have been issued with valid work permits.

Mr. Renton: The persons in question were admitted as visitors with a prohibition of employment. Work permits were not required for the purpose of the visits as stated. I

am not aware of any reason for excluding these passengers under the immigration rules on the ground that they might become a charge on public funds, or on grounds of criminal record.

"Death on the Rock"

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of Lord Windlesham's inquiry report into Thames Television's programme "Death on the Rock."

Mr. Renton: The inquiry into the making of the programme was commissioned by Thames Television and not the Government. We are not in a position, therefore, to place a copy of the report in the Library of the House.

Metropolitan Police (Identikit Pictures)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the use of a photograph of Mr. Nigel Benn, the Commonwealth middleweight boxing champion, by the Metropolitan police in connection with trying to identify someone who had committed a criminal act;

(2) whether he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether there was any racist motive involved in the release of an identikit picture of Mr. Nigel Benn;

(3) whether he will set up an immediate inquiry into the release of an identikit photo of Mr. Nigel Benn; and whether he will make the findings of the inquiry public.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Metropolitan police have accepted that the publication of the photograph was a serious mistake, and have apologised to Mr. Benn. Steps are being taken to ensure that this regrettable incident does not recur. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner has already initiated an urgent inquiry into the circumstances of the case, and he has been asked to let my right hon. Friend know the outcome.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions photographs of white or black persons have been used previously by the Metropolitan police to make up identikit pictures; on what dates this occurred; and what was the racial breakdown of the persons involved.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that it is not normal police practice to use photographs of particular individuals to make up identikit pictures. Standard identikit packs, comprising photographs of specific facial features, are used.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of printing and distributing identikit pictures of Mr. Nigel Benn.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Metropolitan police that it was £28·53.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has assessed the consequences for race relations of the sending out of thousands of identikit pictures of Mr. Nigel Benn by the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am confident that this regrettable error will not be seen as undermining the Metropolitan police's firm commitment to good race relations.

Police Establishments

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is able to announce his decisions on increases in police establishments for 1989-90.

Mr. Hurd: I announced to the House on 14 November at columns *397-98* that I was able to approve 800 additional police posts for provincial forces in 1989-90 and that provision had been made for 300 additional police officers and 250 civilian staff for the Metropolitan police, subject to my being satisfied that earlier increases had been used effectively. That would make a total of 1,100 extra police officers for England and Wales. In addition, I can approve up to 130 posts where satisfied that the full cost would be reimbursed by a third party.

Applications from police authorities outside London have exceeded the number available for allocation and I have therefore had to set priorities. With advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, I have approved increases in police establishments with effect from 1 April 1989 as shown in the following table. The table also shows posts which I would be prepared to approve for stage II probationer training for constables, due for introduction in mid-1989, provided the police authorities apply formally for these posts and guarantee their readiness to meet their share of the costs.

Force	*Posts approved*	*Training posts yet to be formally approved*
Avon and Somerset	20	—
Bedfordshire	16	—
Cambridgeshire	15	3
Cheshire	8	—
Cleveland	9	6
Cumbria	9	3
Devon and Cornwall	15	4
Dorset	22	—
Durham	14	4
Essex	15	8
Greater Manchester	45	—
Gwent	5	7
Hampshire	20	—
Hertfordshire	20	—
Humberside	20	—
Kent	27	—
Lancashire	8	7
Leicestershire	18	9
Merseyside	22	—
Norfolk	24	—
Northamptonshire	12	3
Northumbria	30	—
North Wales	—	4
North Yorkshire	10	5
Nottinghamshire	16	8
South Wales	18	10
South Yorkshire	16	11
Staffordshire	16	6
Surrey	6	4
Sussex[1]	17	—
Thames Valley	44	—
Warwickshire	7	4
West Mercia	28	—
West Midlands	62	—
West Yorkshire	20	12
Wiltshire	7	4

[1] Includes approval for three posts at Gatwick airport, where the costs are reimbursed and which were previously held supernumerary to establishment.

Seventy per cent. of the posts approved will be deployed on operational duties identified by chief constables, mainly

at constable level. I have also retained 20 posts for allocation to regional crime squads specifically for their work in connecton with drugs. I await consideration of the results of a review of the manpower needs of the drugs wings of the regional crime squads before I decide on their specific allocation.

In a number of cases, my approval of extra police posts for forces is conditional either on the police authority's confirmation that their share of funding is available or that the posts specifically identified for training will be so deployed by the chief constable. In some cases I require confirmation on both points.

I hope to be able to confirm the Metropolitan police posts before Easter.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amounts are included within the estimated outturn public expenditure figure for the Overseas Development Administration in 1987-88 in Cm. 288-II for *(a)* aid by way of grants and *(b)* aid by way of loans.

Mr. Chris Patten: In terms of the standard economic categories used for the analysis of public expenditure, the estimated outturn of £1,277 million in 1987-88 comprised £1,070 million of grants; £165 million of net lending and investment abroad and to the Commonwealth Development Corporation (including drawings from United Kingdom contributions to international lending organisations); and £42 million of other expenditure (mainly Overseas Development Administration running costs and associated capital items).

Nearly all our bilateral aid is provided as grants; gross expenditure from existing bilateral aid loans in 1987-88 was only £14 million.

Nicaragua

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much official aid has been given to Nicaragua via non-governmental organisations in each of the last five years.

Mr. Chris Patten: Precise details are not available on a year-by-year basis before 1986-87. Amounts provided to non-governmental organisations through the joint funding scheme are as follows:

Financial Years	*£'000*
1980-81—1985-86	137
1986-87	24
1987-88	47

We have also provided some emergency aid to Nicaragua through non-governmental organisations. Total amounts provided for this purpose are:

Year	*£'000*
1985	100
1986	83
1987	Nil
1988	180

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing in ranked order the per capita contributions made by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries to Nicaragua for the latest year for which figures are available including the total aid given by each Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country for that year.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 19 May 1988 at column *516*. Figures for later years are not yet available.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much bilateral development aid and how much emergency aid has been given to Nicaragua in each of the past five years.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

£'000s

	Bilateral Aid	*of which Emergency Aid*
1983	64	34
1984	9	Nil
1985	116	100
1986	86	83
1987	Nil	Nil

Official figures are not yet available for 1988, but Her Majesty's Government committed £260,000 in emergency aid to Nicaragua following hurricane Joan.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much development aid and how much emergency aid has been given to Nicaragua by the European Community in each of the last five years; and what the United Kingdom contribution to the aid has been.

Mr. Chris Patten: Net official development assistance to Nicaragua, as reported by the European Community to the development assistance committee of the OECD in the last five years for which figures are available, is as follows:

	£ million
1983	4·52
1984	10·99
1985	9·76
1986	6·19
1987	8·72

Expenditure on emergency aid is included in the preceding figures and is not available separately. However, the European Community has indicated that commitments made were as follows:

	£ million
1983	Nil
1984	0·089
1985	Nil
1986	0·268
1987	Nil
1988	0·78

In each case, the United Kingdom contribution was around 20 per cent.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxation Reform

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* a full year if (i) the starting point for national insurance were raised from £43 a week to £55 a week, (ii) the starting point for the 7 per cent. rate of national insurance were raised from £75 a week to £85 a week, (iii) income tax thresholds were raised by 10 per cent., (iv) the standard rate of income tax were reduced to 24 per cent., (v) each individual's capital gains tax free allowance were doubled, (vi) the threshold for inheritance tax were raised to £300,000, (vii) stamp duty on securities were halved but extended to gilt-edged securities, and (viii) any adult were allowed to save £1,000 free of tax each year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates are as follows:

Direct revenue effect, at 1989-90 levels of income

£ million

	1989-90	*Full year*
(i) Lower earnings limit for National Insurance Class 1 contributions raised from £43 per week to £55 per week[1]	+80	+90
(ii) Starting point for 7 per cent. rate of National Insurance Class 1 contributions raised from £75 per week to £85 per week	−70	−80
(iii) Income tax thresholds[2,3] raised by 10 per cent.	−1,970	−2,540
(iv) Basic rate of income[3] tax reduced to 24 per cent.	−1,400	−1,530
(v) Capital Gains Tax exempt amount doubled for single people and married couples	0	−150
(vi) Inheritance tax threshold raised to £300,000	−350	−800
(vii) Stamp duty on securities halved but extended to gilt edged securities	[4] +200	[4] +200
(viii) Every adult allowed to save £1,000 free of tax each year	[5] —	[5] —

[1] Produces revenue yield because savings on contracted out rebates (which are paid on earnings between the lower earnings limit and the upper earnings limit) are greater than the cost of contributions forgone from those earning between £43 per week and £55 per week.
[2] Main personal allowances and the basic rate limit.
[3] Estimates are partly based on a projection of the 1986-87 Survey of Personal Incomes. They are provisional and include the consequential effect on capital gains tax.
[4] Highly uncertain.
[5] Cost would depend on take-up.

Tax Avoidance and Evasion

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money has been lost to the Exchequer each year since 1979 because of tax avoidance and evasion; and how many prosecutions have resulted *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the tax area covering Nottingham.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to say how much revenue is lost through tax avoidance and evasion.

The numbers of criminal prosecutions nationally for tax fraud in each year since 1979 are as follows.

Year	*Number of prosecutions*
1979-80	150
1980-81	188
1981-82	175
1982-83	142
1983-84	159
1984-85	238
1985-86	320
1986-87	325
1987-88	213

The Inland Revenue does not keep records of tax prosecutions by locality and separate figures are not available for the Nottingham tax area.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school children of employees; what child care provision, for school holiday or after-school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Brooke: My Department is taking part in a holiday play scheme for a number of Whitehall departments organised by the Westminster play association for children between 5 and 12. The scheme will run in the Treasury building in Parliament street.

Apart from small departmental contributions to start-up costs, the scheme currently in operation is self financing. Consideration is also being given to a similar scheme being operated at the Chessington computer centre.

Tobacco Tax

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was raised from taxes on tobacco and tobacco products in 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that £5,766 million revenue was raised from taxes (excise duty and VAT) on tobacco products. Of this, £1,000 million is estimated to have come from VAT (based on consumers' expenditure on tobacco) and the rest from excise duty.

Bingo Duty

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what figures the threshold for small-scale bingo duty would need to be increased to take full account of the rate of inflation since the tax was introduced.

Mr. Lilley: The small-scale bingo exemption limits would need to be increased to around £420 (daily) and £1,400 (weekly) to take full account of inflation since the exemptions were introduced.

Duties and Taxes (Yield)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate for the tax yield for 1988-89 of *(a)* vehicle excise duty, *(b)* fuel duty, *(c)* new car tax, *(d)* value-added tax on new vehicles and *(e)* value-added tax on petrol and derv sales.

Mr. Lilley: Following is the available information:

£ billion

	Tax yield 1988-89
(a) Vehicle excise duty	2·8
(b) Hydrocarbon oil duty	8·6
(c) Car tax	1·3

Estimates of the VAT yield from (d) value added tax on new vehicles, and (e) value added tax on petrol and derv sales are not available.

Written Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his practice when answering certain questions by reference to previous written answers to attach the answer so referred to.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Reference to written answers that have not been published in the *Official Report* will continue to be copied to hon. and right hon. Members.

Calendars (Germany)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when and why duty was imposed on calendars sent from Germany as gifts to persons living in Britain; and at what rate duty is charged.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 24 January 1989]:* All goods imported into this country, including gifts, may be subject to duty or value added tax. This is because similar goods bought in the United Kingdom bear these charges, and different treatment for imported goods would be unfair on businesses making or selling competing products. Under EC law, which we are obliged to implement, calendars that originate in the EC or have acquired free-circulation status are not liable to import duty but are liable to value added tax at the standard rate of 15 per cent. Gifts between private persons may qualify for relief from import charges by post, but business presents sent to private persons are chargeable unless the import value is £7 or less.

Income Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current estimate of tax revenue expected to be raised by the higher rate of income tax in 1988-89; and what were the comparable amounts raised by the higher rates in respect of the years 1987-88, 1982-83, 1978-79, 1974-75 and 1970-71.

Mr Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* Information is given in the table.

Tax liability at the higher rates of income tax

Year	Tax liability at higher rate £ billion	Tax liability at excess over basic rate £ billion
1970-71	—	[1]0·3
1974-75	1·5	0·6
1978-79	1·8	0·8
1982-83	3·4	1·4
1987-88[2]	8·2	3·9
1988-89[2]	[3]8·8	[3]3·2

[1] Between 1928-29 and 1972-73 Surtax, a deferred instalment of income tax charged at rates additional to the standard rate, was payable.

[2] Estimates are based partly on a projection of the 1986-87 Survey of Personal Incomes and are provisional.

[3] Includes estimated liability to Capital Gains Tax.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost of reducing the higher rate of income tax from 40 per cent to (a) 35 per cent., (b) 30 per cent. and (c) 25 per cent. in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* Available information is given in the table. Estimates include the consequential effect on capital gains tax. They are partly based on a projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and are provisional. The base for the comparison is the tax regime for 1988-89 indexed to 1989-90 by 6·8 per cent., the increase in the retail prices index for the year to December 1988. Receipts of tax in 1989-90 would be reduced by about half of the full year cost. Further information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Full year cost at 1989-90 levels of income and gains of reducing higher rate of tax.

Higher rate of tax reduced to	£ million
(a) 35 per cent.	1,200
(b) 30 per cent.	2,400
(c) 25 per cent.	3,600

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Funding

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has given to the proposals from university vice-chancellors to decentralise funding of universities and retain the links between university research and teaching.

Mr. Jackson: There is currently a wide-ranging debate on the funding of higher education, to which various vice-chancellors have contributed. The Government are watching with interest to see how this debate develops and matures.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the liability to pay 20 per cent. of the applicable community charge will be taken into account in assessing the level of student grant from 1989-90 onwards.

Mr. Jackson: The rates of student grant for 1989-90 were announced on 16 December at column 755. Students' discounted liability for the community charge was one of the factors considered in reaching decisions about those rates.

Examinations (Northamptonshire)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the proportion of pupils in each Northamptonshire school who, in 1988, achieved GCSE grades A, B or C, listing the schools in descending order of proportion from the highest to the lowest;

(2) if he will list if the *Official Report* the number of A level examinations sat in 1988 by pupils at Northamptonshire schools and the percentage passed, listing schools in descending order of percentage pass rate.

Mrs. Rumbold: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of pupils at Northamptonshire schools obtained in 1988 GCSE grades *(a)* A, *(b)* B and *(c)* C.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not yet available centrally.

School Rolls

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many maintained *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools, other than special schools, have 200 or more pupils on their rolls.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In January 1988, there were 9,279 maintained primary schools and 4,010 maintained secondary schools, excluding special schools, in England with 200 or more pupils on roll. The number of pupils in primary schools includes those attending part-time.

Schools (Funding)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much additional funding his Department is providing to local education authorities in 1989-90 and subsequent years for introducing local management of schools in respect of *(a)* training of heads, governors and officers, *(b)* developing computerised information systems and *(c)* additional support staff for schools.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Targeted support for expenditure by local education authorities on activities relating to the introduction of local management of schools is channelled through education support grants and LEA training grants. The 1989-90 education support grants programme includes support for £4·9 million of expenditure on the training of school governors, including training on local management. It also includes support for £25 million of expenditure specifically to help LEAs with the introduction of local management of schools through the purchase of computerised management information systems, the appointment of central teams and the training of non-teaching staff. The precise division of expenditure between these heads is for LEAs themselves to decide. It is my intention that support should be maintained at least at this level for a further two years. Training for heads and senior teachers to implement LEA schemes of local management of schools is a specified element of a £10 million national priority area under the LEA training grants scheme. It is for LEAs to determine what additional support to devote to the implementation of the education reforms from block grant or from their own resources.

Science (Policy Statement)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn on 12 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *390*, he is now ready to publish a policy statement on science in the light of discussions on the document "A Strategy for the Science Base" by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have nothing to add at present to my answer of 12 December 1988, at column *390*.

Teacher Recruitment

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to encourage people to come into teaching from careers in industry and business; what initial support he has received for his proposals from the industrial and business sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department's action campaign on teacher recruitment has boosting the number of mature entrants from industry and business as one of its main aims. The teaching as a career unit—TASC—targets older people from other careers with special publications, and in its national and local advertising. In conjunction with ICI, we are running a well-subscribed programme of taster courses for older people who are considering a career in teaching. We have funded special teacher training courses designed with those making a career change in mind. We also encourage and support partnerships between education and industry on teacher supply, notably with BP and British Telecom. In addition we have sponsored seven regional conferences to stimulate co-operation between education and industry over alleviating teacher shortage.

Single European Market

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what extent the further education sector is preparing for the impact of 1992 and the single European market; what resources are being allocated to it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Employers need an adaptable skilled work force to increase their competitiveness in international markets. The Government have introduced a number of reforms which aim to increase the responsiveness of the further education service to labour market needs. As the message about the single European market is increasingly heard by employers, they will be seeking appropriate provision from the further education sector.

A growing range of initiatives, at both national and local level, are being taken in further and higher education to prepare for 1992. For example, a network of language export centres has been set up to support specific business needs by providing language training, briefings on culture and trade, and export consultancy. And several agencies are promoting exchange visits between students here and in other member states. Such exchanges allow students to pursue their subject interests while practising their foreign language skills and learning about another cultural context. It is not possible for me to quantify the resources allocated to the many relevant activities.

History Syllabuses

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received about the content of history syllabuses in use in secondary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Various representations have been received over recent months mainly on issues such as bias and empathy. These will be further considered where

appropriate by the national curriculum history working group whose establishment my right hon. Friend announced on 13 January.

Incentive Allowances

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the specific requirements for teachers to receive incentive allowances; and how many teachers applying for such allowances have had their applications rejected.

Mrs. Rumbold: School teachers do not apply for incentive allowances. Under the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1988, a local education authority has the discretion to pay an incentive allowance if it is satisfied that a teacher fulfils at least one of the following criteria:

(a) he undertakes responsibilities beyond those common to the majority of teachers; or
(b) he has demonstrated outstanding ability as a classroom teacher; or
(c) he is employed to teach subjects in which there is a shortage of teachers; or
(d) he is employed in a part which is difficult to fill.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers receive one of the five incentive allowances in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: On the basis of a recent sample survey of LEAs undertaken by the local authority conditions of service advisory board, we estimate that about 140,000 school teachers in ordinary schools are currently in receipt of an incentive allowance.

GCSE

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will call for a report from the GCSE boards on their methods of marking GCSE papers in order to establish which boards use criterion referencing as the basis for marking papers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The GCSE incorporates criterion-referencing to a greater degree than the former O-level and CSE systems. The School Examinations and Assessment Council, which is responsible for advising my right hon. Friend on such matters, is charged with ensuring that GCSE syllabuses approved under section 5 of the Education Reform Act 1988 conform to the objectives of GCSE, and that GCSE assessment arrangements are designed to provide consistent measurement of the standards achieved. We look to the SEAC to take forward work to improve the basis for awarding GCSE grades. My right hon. Friend has also asked for the SEAC's advice in due course on the incorporation of the GCSE within national curriculum assessment arrangements, which require criterion-referenced assessment.

Teachers' Working Hours

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what systematic information his Department gathers about the average working hours of teachers in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the average working hours of secondary school teachers (including work outside the classroom) was collected for the first time in the 1988 secondary school staffing survey. Results from this are expected to be available in the spring. Comparable data for primary school teachers are not available.

Medical Schools

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which medical schools are currently providing lectures alerting medical students to the dangers of benzodiazepines.

Mr. Jackson: As for other subjects, details of the medical curriculum are for individual institutions to determine. However, the framework for those curricula are set by the General Medical Council's recommendations on basic medical education, which draw particular attention to the need for teaching about adverse drug reactions.

School Libraries

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on school library provision.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to the reply, 23 January 1989, columns 382-83]:* My hon. Friend's oral question when tabled referred to student library provision and was correctly answered on this basis. I regret that the Department failed to note when the question was unstarred that the word "school" had been substituted for "student". On this basis the answer is as follows:

The level of funding and organisation of school library provision are matters for local decision by LEAs and schools. In recognition of the importance of libraries in supporting the school curriculum, the Department's expenditure plans for 1988-89 allow for LEAs to spend an additional sum of £10 million on improvements in secondary school libraries.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Single Market

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in ranked order the latest available figures for the level of public awareness of the establishment of the single European market in 1992 among EEC member states.

Mr. Maude: Our single market campaign is targeted at business in the United Kingdom. The DTI does not therefore undertake regular monitoring of general public awareness of the single market. Limited research on the Department's behalf last August indicated that the general public's awareness of the single market at that time was over 60 per cent.

Marshall Aid Fund

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will raise with the EEC Commission the operation of the fund operated by the West German authorities known as the Marshall aid fund with a view to ascertaining whether the terms offered by the fund are consistent with the EEC rules on industrial aids; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The operation by the West German authorities of a Marshall aid fund, known as the European recovery programme, was noted as an existing aid by the European Commission at the time of the creation of the

European Community. I understand that the Commission has since policed the programme as an existing state aid which is subject to the state aid provisions of the EEC treaty.

Toyota

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the possibility of an investment in manufacture in the United Kingdom by the Toyota motor corporation.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 26 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), at column *667*.

Privatisation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is considering the introduction of a Privatisation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No decision has been taken to bring forward such a measure.

Assisted Management

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of his Department's assisted management were in place by 31 December 1988 on a regional basis.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 27 January 1989]:* By the end of December 1988, 11,487 applications for assistance under the consultancy initiatives had been referred to independent scheme contractors for the appointment of consultants, as follows:

	Numbers
North East	*602*
North West	*1,946*
Yorkshire and Humberside	*1,128*
West Midlands	*1,174*
East Midlands	*747*
South West	*922*
South East	
Cambridge area	*751*
London area	*1,279*
Reading area	*688*
Reigate area	*656*
Wales	*647*
Scotland	*947*

CIVIL SERVICE

Scientific Collaboration

Mr. Warren: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what arrangements exist, or are planned, to give training to United Kingdom civil servants in the methodology of European scientific collaboration.

Mr. Luce: Arrangements for any necessary training are the responsibility of the departments involved in European scientific collaboration. No training is provided centrally.

Secondments

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether there has been secondment by members of the Civil Service to the equivalent services in the member states of the European Community, and vice versa.

Mr. Luce: For a number of years, a small number of exchanges between the United Kingdom Civil Service and the Civil Services of France, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Ireland have taken place. Some of these have been under formal bilateral agreements between Her Majesty's Government and the governments of those other countries. A number of other exchanges have taken place outside the scope of the formal agreements.

Squash Racquets Club

Mr. Waller: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will ensure that adequate provision continues to be made for the Civil Service squash racquets club when Thames house north is transferred to the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Luce: Departmental occupancy of Thames house north is not yet fully settled, but the building is to be refurbished and the squash courts will cease to be available. No others are currently available on Departmental premises in central London, but possible alternative arrangements are being studied: I place importance on the availability of satisfactory sporting and recreational facilities for civil servants.

Pensioners' Alliance

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley, *Official Report*, 13 January, columns *773-774* when the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance can expect to receive the new payable order for £35,000; and if he will take steps to ensure that its repayment is treated as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Luce: My officials will authorise payment of £35,000 awarded to the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance from the RPI error funds immediately Parliament approves a Supplementary Estimate that has been submitted for the funds.

THE ARTS

Museums (Admission Charges)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all national museums, showing for each the adult admission charges in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 May 1988 at column *260*. Since that date, the science museum introduced in October 1988 an adult admission charge of £2 (with concessionary charge of £1) at the museum in South Kensington.

In 1978, admission charges were made by the following museums:

Imperial War Museum:
HMS Belfast
Duxford Airfield

Victoria and Albert Museum:
Apsley House
Ham House
Osterley Park Museum

Music

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on what support he is giving to *(a)* classical music and *(b)* popular music.

Mr. Luce: I do not seek to make a distinction between classical and popular music; some classical music is extremely popular. The Arts Council's direct expenditure on music in 1987-88 was £23,708,211. The Scottish Arts Council spent £5,581,580 and the Welsh Arts Council spent £2,296,500. The regional arts associations also funded music organisations. Additional funds were made available for touring and festivals.

British Theatre Association

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many new texts have been purchased by the British Theatre Association library in each of the past five years.

Mr. Luce: I am advised by the BTA that it purchased the following numbers of new texts in the past five years: 1,398 (1987-88), 755 (1986-87), 979 (1985-86), 1,088 (1984-85), and 1,131 (1983-84). Donations over the same period were in excess of 7,500 volumes.

ENVIRONMENT

Newmarket (Boundary Transfer)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 20 December 1988 to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, *Official Report*, column *186*, what is the estimate of the additional cost of converting the space released from the canteen that is to be remodelled at Brookslands avenue, Cambridge, for new offices to be occupied by staff transferred from Newmarket.

Mr. Chope: Plans are not yet fully developed, but the estimated cost is about £350,000. However, the anticipated income from the sale of the offices in Newmarket will be more than sufficient to fund this, as well as a refurbished canteen for 1,100 staff.

Housing Action Trusts

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the arrangements will be for the ballot in a housing action trust; whether each household will have one vote; and, in the case of joint tenancies, which of the joint tenants will be invited to cast vote.

Mr. David Trippier: We propose to ask the Electoral Reform Society to arrange for the conduct of ballots under the terms of section 61(3)(a) of the Housing Act 1988. Each secure tenant, including each joint tenant, living within an area proposed for designation will have a vote.

Customs and Excise (King's Reach)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the rental for the Customs and Excise building at King's Reach, Bermondsey, SE1.

Mr. Chope: The rental charges for privately owned buildings leased by the Property Services Agency are a strictly commercial and confidential matter.

Shopping Developments, Broadstairs

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his decision on planning appeal numbers, Department of the Environment reference numbers, SE2/5283/219/3, SE /5283/182/1 and SE2/5283/219/4, relating to shopping developments at Westwood road/Margate road, Broadstairs proposed by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society, Sainsburys and Argyle Stores (Properties) Ltd., following the public inquiry at Broadstairs in June 1988.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend hopes to issue his decisions shortly.

House Purchase (Interest Rates)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the impact of current interest rates on the rate of house purchase.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Parkway Stations

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the criteria which would need to be satisfied before he would entertain a public inquiry into a proposal to establish a parkway station with its attendant car park in an area in which no railway exists at present.

Mr. Chope: If such a proposal were to come before my right hon. Friend by way of appeal or call-in, the scale and impact of the development, and the likely degree of public interest, would be among the factors considered in deciding whether to hold a public local inquiry, rather than by proceeding on the basis of written representations.

Local Government Staff

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 25 January, he will set out for each available category of local government staff the numbers in *(a)* 1968 and *(b)* June 1988, showing the net and percentage change in each case.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is as follows:

Numbers of Staff Employed in Local Authorities in England

June figures

Local Authority Service	*1968*	*1988*	*Change* *Number*	*Percentage*
Education (Lecturers/Teachers)	488,749	650,651	+161,902	+33·1
Education (Other)	461,184	650,105	+188,921	+41·0
Construction	105,346	103,130	−2,216	−2·1
Transport Services	63,654	2,934	−60,720	−95·4
Social Services	215,275	335,632	+120,357	+55·9
Other General Services	528,284	579,404	+51,120	+9·7
Police (All ranks)	85,746	118,084	+32,338	+37·7
Total	1,948,238	2,439,940	+491,702	+25·2

Note: There is likely to have been some reclassification of staff between service categories over this period, so the figures for the two years may not be entirely comparable. Local authority functions have also changed over the period.

Water

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the locations of water quality sampling undertaken by South West Water for every day from 6 July 1988 until the latest available date.

Mr. Ridley: It is the responsibility of the South West water authority to take samples throughout its region in connection with its drinking water supply function: I am advised that it takes samples:

1. At raw water sources;
2. At treatment works at different stages of the treatment process;
3. Treated water at the exit from treatment works;
4. At service reservoirs;
5. Water in the distribution system at hydrants and customers' taps.

Between 6 July 1988 and 25 January 1989, a total of 25,544 samples were taken and analysed.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what discussions he has held with the Water Authorities Association about stake-building by water authorities in statutory water companies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of the Southern water authority's announced need for an increase in charges is accounted for by the necessity to fund the purchase of stock in statutory water companies;

(3) if he has reviewed the agreement between the Southern water authority and AIPF Ltd.; and if he has assessed whether they are in the public interest;

(4) how much has been committed by the Southern water authority to the purchase of stakes in statutory water companies;

(5) what steps he is taking to assess whether the Southern water authority's acquisition of stakes in the Eastbourne, West Kent and Mid-Essex water companies are in the public interest;

(6) what discussions he has had with the Southern water authority about its acquisition of stakes in the Eastbourne, West Kent and Mid Sussex water companies; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what steps he has taken to *(a)* regulate and *(b)* influence the use of public money by water authorities to acquire (i) majority and (ii) minority stakes in statutory water companies;

(8) if he has discussed with the Southern water authority the rate of return on its recent investment in the Folkestone water company; and if he will make a statement;

(9) if he has discussed with the Southern water authority the purpose for which it recently acquired a minority stake in the Folkestone water company; if he has taken steps to assess whether the acquistion was in the public interest; and if he will make a statement;

(10) what criteria water authorities are required to observe in the application of public moneys to the purchase of *(a)* majority and *(b)* minority stakes in statutory water companies;

(11) what discussions he has held with the Southern water authority about its accountability for stake building in statutory water companies; and if he will make a statement;

(12) what place the acquistion of minority stakes in statutory water companies have occupied in the discussions on performance aim, financial targets, and external financial limits for the Southern water authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State regularly meets water authority chairmen, including the chairman of Southern water authority, to discuss all aspects of water policy. The general question of share purchase in statutory water companies has arisen on a number of occasions. It has been made clear to chairmen that there are three constraints: their statutory powers; their external financing limits; and mergers policy, including the special provisions for water mergers announced by my right hon. Friend on 11 January. It has also been made clear that we shall not increase external financing limits to accommodate purchases of water company shares. Against this background, it is for each water authority to decide whether, and under what arrangements, to purchase water company shares; and to justify its actions.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Southern water authority about its external financing limits.

Mr. Howard: None.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what direction he has given to the Southern water authority to reduce pollution to Chichester harbour.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has issued no direction to the Southern water authority in respect of pollution in Chichester harbour. Effluent discharges by the authority are controlled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and the inspectorate has powers to vary and tighten discharge consent conditions where appropriate.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investments in statutory water

companies have been made by, or on behalf of, any pension fund to which water authorities contribute public money; if he is satisfied that any such investments produce a satisfactory rate of return for that pension fund; what instructions he has given to investment managers of such pension funds in connection with the purchase of water company stocks; and if he will place a copy of such instruction in the Library.

Mr. Howard: Investments by or on behalf of pension funds are the responsibility of the managers of those funds. Consequently, it is for them to determine, with reference to the appropriate regulations, whether a particular investment forms an appropriate part of their portfolio. The Secretary of State has no information, beyond what is publicly available, about such investments of this kind which may have been made.

Rates

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the level of increase in expenditure which could be set by the Leeds city council in 1989-90 if the increase in the rates was kept within 5 per cent. and the council made the same use of balances as in 1988-89.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is estimated that, with a 5 per cent. increase in rates next year, Leeds city council could increase expenditure in 1989-90 by about 5 per cent. (£17 million), if it made the same use of balances as in 1988-89.

Development Plans

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make an announcement about the Government's proposals for the development plan system.

Mr. Ridley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today published a White Paper setting out our proposals for the future of the development plan system in England and Wales (Cm. 569). These proposals, which reflect the outcome of the consultations undertaken in 1986-87, will improve the effectiveness of the development plan system by simplifying its structure and streamlining procedures for the adoption and review of plans. The strategic role of the counties will continue, but the present county structure plans will be replaced by statements of county planning policies, dealing with the key issues. The main feature of the new system will be a single tier development plan at district level. All district councils will be required to prepare development plans for the whole of their areas, consistent with national and regional guidance and with county policies. Similar arrangements will apply in the national parks. The necessary legislation will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits. The White Paper proposes a five-year timetable from commencement to full implementation of the new system.

A sound planning system is essential if we are to make realistic provision for homes and business while meeting the growing concern for protection of our environment in town and country. I believe that these proposals are a further significant step towards getting that difficult balance right. They will enable the planning system to serve the needs of the nation in the 1990s.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on his Department's public expenditure plans, following publication of the White Paper setting out the Government's expenditure plans for 1989-90 to 1991-92 (Cm. 609).

Mr. Ridley: The White Paper explains in more detail my Department's plans for expenditure for 1989-90 to 1991-92, announced in summary at the time of the Autumn Statement, and gives comprehensive information about what we have achieved through our programmes in past years, and about our targets for the future.

Housing

The Autumn Statement announced gross provision for housing capital expenditure in 1989-90 £441 million (12 per cent.) higher than previously planned. This increase has been made possible by the considerable success of the Government's right-to-buy policy. Receipts from the sale of local authority housing and land are on course to reach over £3,000 million, their highest level ever, with right-to-buy sales up by nearly 40 per cent. on last year, to an estimated 150,000.

This year's White Paper continues the trend established in previous years of offering more detailed information about the Government's housing programme. Particular emphasis has been placed on setting future targets for individual components of the programme, an emphasis which will be continued next year when the effects of new legislation have been absorbed. Information on the outputs already achieved has also been further developed, and should assist the reader in assessing public sector performance in the housing field.

Housing associations

Within the overall increase in housing expenditure, a major feature of the Government's plans is the increasing role of the Housing Corporation in supporting the provision of new rented accommodation by housing associations. Approvals for rented accommodation are set to rise from the current level of 16,000 to over 24,000 in 1991-92. The resources available through the Housing Corporation are being increased by £75 million in 1989-90, with further increases planned in subsequent years to reach over £1·3 billion in 1991-92 (80 per cent. up on the original provision for this year). This increased investment will be further augmented by injections of private capital. Details of the corporation's approved development programme were given by my noble Friend the Minister for Housing on 14 December. The increased resources being made available over the next three years together with the expanding use of private finance will allow many more homes to be provided for those in need.

Local authority programmes

The local authority programme is focused on renovation of their stock. In 1988-89 some 160,000 local authority dwellings will undergo improvement compared with 150,000 in 1987-88. The 1986 English house condition survey, published recently, confirms the successful use of housing investment programme resources to the extent that 92 per cent. of the local authority-owned housing stock is in good repair. Planned expenditure by local authorities on their own housing capital programmes in 1989-90 will be £353 million (13 per cent.) higher than provided for in previous plans. After taking account of the substantially increased spending power available to local authorities from higher levels of receipts, HIP allocations

for 1989-90 have been set at £920 million. Individual local authority allocations were announced by my noble Friend the Minister for Housing on 8 December 1988. Local authorities continue to spend an increasing proportion of their resources on the renovation of their housing stock, in line with Government policy.

Estate Action

Estate Action's budget has been increased by 36 per cent. to £190 million in 1989-90. This programme continues to promote renovation and improved management, encouraging innovative solutions to the problems of physically run-down and difficult-to-let estates. Over 100,000 dwellings are now benefiting from Estate Action treatment.

Housing action trusts

Last year, the Government announced a proposal to establish a number of housing action trusts as a pilot programme to tackle the worst areas of local authority housing. Following the identification of six potential HAT areas, consultants were appointed to report on their feasibility. The Government are now considering the consultants' reports. Net provision for HATs in 1989-90 is £68 million.

Other environmental services

Inner cities

My Department's inner cities programmes remain a very high priority. The key to successful inner cities regeneration is partnership between the public and private sector. Both the urban development corporations and the city grant programme are having considerable success in attracting private sector investment in their areas.

Urban development corporations

There are now 10 urban development corporations in England, Bristol being the latest to be set up this year. Public expenditure provision for UDCs is over £250 million in each of the next three years. Total resources available to UDCs will be even higher as increased receipts from the disposal of completed properties and sites are reinvested in the programmes. Priorities for 1989-90 have been set for the first and second generation UDCs. For example, in 1989 a start is planned on the Limehouse link road, the eastern extension of the London docklands light railway and on the development of Newcastle business park at Elswick. New measures will also be undertaken in other UDCs to further progress in housing, commercial and industrial development.

City grant

Since 1982, some £200 million of city grant and its predecessors have generated more than £800 million of private sector investment in the inner cities creating over 34,000 jobs and some 9,000 homes. To build on the momentum already achieved. City grant resources will increase by £23 million in 1989-90 and £28 million in 1990-91.

Urban programme, and derelict land grant

Despite the increased emphasis on UDCs and city grant, planned expenditure by DOE on the urban programme and derelict land grant amounts to well over £200 million a year. In 1988-89 local authorities' inner area programmes supported by government grant, are forecast to create or preserve about 37,000 jobs and support about 55,000 training places. Since 1982 over 7,000 hectares of derelict land has been reclaimed with the aid of derelict land grant. The programme will continue to concentrate on the regeneration of urban industrial land thus also relieving development pressure on open land. Some 2,700 hectares of urban land are planned to be recovered for productive use in the next three years.

New towns

The new towns programme in England is now moving into its final stages. The three remaining corporations are making good progress with the development of their towns and target dates for their wind up have been set. The disposal of commercial and industrial properties is continuing successfully and capital receipts now exceed gross capital expenditure by a substantial margin. Compared with last year's White Paper (Cm. 288) some increase has been provided in the resources available for capital investment in 1989-90 and over the plan period to facilitate wind-up and the increased disposals programme.

Countryside, recreation and environment

The Government is providing substantial resources for countryside agencies to further the process of creating a healthy rural economy, an attractive environment and to conserve wild life. The support for the Rural Development Commission will enable it to continue to help in the provision of a suitable range of viable job opportunities and services to meet the needs of rural communities. Additional resources have been provided for the Countryside Commission to continue its tree planting programme over the next three years. There are also extra resources to help start up in April 1989 the new Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Authority. The support for the Nature Conservancy Council will help protect valuable peatland habitats in Caithness and Sutherland, and enable NCC to conclude further 465 new management agreements with farmers and land owners to protect sites of special scientific interest. Continued support for the groundwork initiative will help extend the community based environment improvement schemes to other priority regions. Support for the Tidy Britain Group experimental clean-up projects has been more than doubled. The modest increase for the Sports Council will enable it to increase the range and quality of opportunities to participate in sports and physical recreations at all levels and to seek ways of attracting private sector investment into sports.

Environmental research

My Department's environmental research programme will be increased by £2·5 million in 1989-90 and 1990-91. The additional provision will support in particular research into the North sea marine environment, waste disposal, climatic change and water metering trials.

Heritage

Planned expenditure on the heritage will be increased by £8 million in 1989-90, and £11 million in 1990-91 mainly for continued restoration of Hampton Court following the fire; the first phase of Albert memorial restoration; additional provision for Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission grants programme, and to provide for the cost of maintenance of the growing number of churches vested under the redundant churches scheme.

Local environmental services (current and capital)

An additional £110 million has been included in local authority current expenditure provision for 1989-90 for the costs of preparing for the implementation of the community charge; this will be supported by a specific grant of £55 million with the remaining expenditure supported by block grant in the usual way. Provision for capital expenditure by local authorities for 1989-90 has been increased by £192 million to £819 million. This includes a further provision of £135 million in addition to

£110 million mentioned above to enable local authorities to prepare for the community charge. Capital receipts generated by local authorities on LES are buoyant, and forecast receipts for 1989-90 have been revised upward by £203 million to £745 million.

British Waterway Board

The BWB's external financing limit is increased to £48·3 million. The four-year action plan which the board has drawn up in line with its first and second responses to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on engineering operations will change BWB to a regionally managed, business-orientated organisation, seeking greater private sector investment.

Water authorities

As announced in the Autumn Statement, before the privatisation of their water supply and sewerage functions, the water authorities' responsibilities for the water environment will be taken over by the National Rivers Authority. £40 million has been allocated to the NRA in 1989-90 and £71 million in 1990-91. It is anticipated that increased receipts from direct charges will reduce the NRA's need for the Department's support to £65 million in 1991-92. The nine English regional water authorities will continue to require external finance in 1989-90 and provision of £10 million has been made, but their requirement will depend on the timing and cost to them of the establishment of the National Rivers Authority and of the privatisation itself. Investment by the regional water authorities has increased in constant price terms by over 50 per cent. since 1980-81 and is currently running at £1·1 billion. Further growth is assured to meet higher environmental and drinking water quality standards required by United Kingdom and EC legislation. The Water Bill will establish an independent director general of water services to protect the interests of consumers by ensuring proper standards of service and controlling prices. Provision has been made for the running costs of the water services offices of £2 million in 1989-90 and £4 million each for the following two years.

Property services agency

The PSA's civil accommodation programme is planned to increase by a net £8 million in 1989-90 and £9 million in 1990-91 compared with previous plans. Extra spending of £65 million and £109 million will be offset by increases in capital receipts from disposals, in rents and in payments by other Departments through the property repayment services system. The agency's provision reflects the need to meet unavoidable rent increases as well as to maintain its new building programme and the increased level of maintenance activity agreed last year. It has also been given additional funds to prepare for the change to fully commercial operation in 1993. On PSA's separate parliamentary works programme additional funds have been provided for restoring the Victoria Tower, and for various minor improvements to the Palace of Westminster.

Cash Limits

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Evironmnt whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits for 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I propose the following changes, subject to parliamentay approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates.

The cash limit for class X, vote 2 (central environmental services, etc) will be increased by £3·013 million to £253·196 million to cover increased grant in respect of the new towns development corporations' roads programme. This will be partly offset by savings within the vote.

The cash limit for class X, vote 4 (royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings, ancient monuments and the national heritage) will be increased by £14·055 million from £91·201 million to £105·256 million mainly to cover a payment to the National Trust to terminate my Department's obligations under leases in relation to Ham house and Osterley house. This expenditure will be partly offset by savings within the vote.

The cash limit for class X, vote 5 (Department of the Environment: administration) will be increased by £0·733 million from £129·337 million to £130·070 million to take account of a receipt which will not arise in 1988-89 as originally expected. The Department of the Environment's running costs limit will be reduced by £0·182 million from £159·862 million to £159·680 million. This reduction reflects transfers of £0·017 million to the Cabinet Office: Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) for the costs of recruitment under the direct entry grade 7 competition 1988, and of £0·165 million to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (class XX, vote 16) for increased expenditure by OPCS on services provided to my Department. The reduction in the DOE's limit will be offset by increases in the gross running costs limits for the other two Departments.

The cash limit for class X, vote 9 (Sale of shares in the water services public limited companies, etc) will be increased by £0·300 million from £5·140 million to £5·440 million to cover increased costs of advisors.

The non-voted cash limit for the new towns (DOE/NTI) has been reduced by £90·257 million from minus £389·743 million to minus £480 million to take account of disposals of property which are higher than previously forecast. This reduction offsets the increases above which will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Capital Spending

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of gross and net public sector capital spending by his Department by both central Government and local authorities for 1988-89 and for each of the next three years at current prices and at constant 1987-88 prices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 24 January 1989]:* The following figures relate to the Department of the Environment's public expenditure programmes, housing and other environmental services. The figures for 1990-91 and 1991-92 are rounded to the nearest £10 million. Expenditure by public corporations is not shown.

2. DOE—Housing

£ million

	1988-89 estimated outturn	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*	*1991-92 plans*
A. *Central Government and local authority capital expenditure in cash terms*				
Central Government				
Gross	874	969	1,200	1,500
Receipts	−100	−116	−120	−120
Net	774	853	1,080	1,380
Local Authority				
Gross	3,245	3,153	2,800	2,650
Receipts	−3,150	−3,490	−3,100	−3,000

	1988-89 estimated outturn	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans	1991-92 plans
Net	95	−337	−300	−350

B. *Central Government and local authority capital expenditure 1987-88 prices*

Central Government				
Gross	823	869	1,040	1,260
Receipts	−94	−104	−100	−100
Net	728	765	940	1,160
Local authority				
Gross	3,054	2,810	2,420	2,230
Receipts	−2,965	−3,128	−2,680	−2,520
Net	89	−302	−260	−290

3. DOE—Other environmental services

£ million

	1988-89 estimated outturn	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans	1991-92 plans
A. *Central Government and local authority capital expenditure in cash terms*				
Central Government				
Gross	326	441	440	440
Receipts	−1	−3	—	—
Net	324	438	440	440
Local Authority				
Gross	1,462	1,058	860	860
Receipts	−825	−745	−840	−840
Net	637	312	30	20
B. *Central Government and local authority capital expenditure 1987-88 prices*				
Central Government				
Gross	307	396	380	370
Receipts	−1	−3	—	—
Net	305	393	380	370
Local authority				
Gross	1,376	948	750	720
Receipts	−776	−668	−720	−700
Net	600	280	20	20

Housing Action Trusts

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to set up a housing action trust in the North Peckham and Gloucester Grove estates in Southwark.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to proceed with his announced plans for a housing action trust scheme for the Loughborough and Angell town estates.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 26 January 1989]*: When he has had an opportunity to consider the findings of the consultants studying the proposed housing action trust areas, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will decide the next steps.

Government Offices

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans are there *(a)* to move Government offices to the north and west of the United Kingdom and *(b)* to relocate some central London office staff to docklands or south of the river.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

Under the Government's relocation policy which I announced on 31 March 1988, at columns *610-611*, Departments are reviewing the location of their work with a view to finding locations offering easier labour markets and other advantages. Departmental Ministers announce the outcome of such reviews after decisions have been taken, and since last March firm plans to transfer 1,800 posts from London and the south-east to the north and west of the United Kingdom have been announced; target locations include Glasgow, Belfast, Wigan, Bath and Swindon. No similar announcements regarding moves within London to docklands and south of the river have been made.

In addition, a further 160 posts are due to be transferred to Glasgow under the earlier dispersal programme.

DEFENCE

United States Submarines (Discharges)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the release of coolant from United States Navy submarines into the waters of Holy Loch in Strathclyde;

(2) on what dates United States Navy submarines, moored at Holy Loch, released coolant from nuclear reactor systems into the waters of the Holy Loch; what was the total quantity of coolant released; what was the average amount of radioactivity per litre of coolant released; and whether any radioactive gases were released by United States Navy submarines on these occasions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 24 January at column *555*.

Royal Navy Submarines (Discharges)

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any Royal Navy submarine had ever discharged any coolant from nuclear power systems directly into the sea.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 24 January at column *554*.

New Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what substitutions for nuclear weapons withdrawn under the intermediate nuclear forces treaty are planned for both British and United States forces within the United Kingdom, on land and on ships based or calling at our ports; and when it is intended to introduce these new nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to substitute for the missiles withdrawn under the INF treaty, which only covered certain specific categories of missiles. The process of modernising and restructuring NATO's nuclear forces, to ensure that they remain effective, responsive and survivable, will not undercut in any way the real reduction in the Alliance's land-based nuclear weapons resulting from the treaty. NATO will continue to maintain only the minimum level of forces consistent with credible deterrence. NATO's nuclear stockpile in Europe is now at its lowest level for 20 years, having been reduced by some

35 per cent. since 1979; it will reduce even further when the INF treaty is fully implemented. Decisions on modernisation and restructuring will be taken as and when necessary.

New Ships

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many new ships the Royal Navy will order in the current year.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Newcastle-upon-Tyne East (Mr. Brown) and for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett) 29 November 1988 at column *217* regarding frigate orders. The Government also expect to place an order for SSBN-07 later this year.

In addition, although orders are not envisaged for this year, tenders have also been invited for an aviation support ship and we are in the process of evaluating the results of competitive feasibility studies for a possible replacement for the assault ships Fearless and Intrepid.

Ships (Scrapping)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will delay the scrapping of HMS Arethusa and HMS Euryalus while HMS Penelope and HMS Southampton are out of action.

Mr. Sainsbury: The repair of HMS Penelope is expected to be completed before the disposal of Arethusa and Euryalus. As to Southampton, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 10 January 1989 at column *675*.

Expenditure

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the precise amounts paid by his Department in the year 1985-86 to *(a)* The General Electric Co. plc., *(b)* Rolls-Royce Ltd., *(c)* British Telecommunications plc., *(d)* Lucas Industries plc., *(e)* BTR plc., *(f)* Austin Rover Group Ltd., *(g)* Dunlop Holdings plc., *(h)* United Scientific Holdings plc., *(i)* Courtaulds plc., and *(j)* Massey-Ferguson Holdings Ltd.

Mr. Sainsbury: The payments made to each of these companies in the year ended 31 March 1986 in respect of headquarters contracts were as follows:

	£ million
The General Electric Co. plc.	800·0
Rolls Royce Ltd.	435·0
British Telecommunications plc.	8·5
Lucas Industries plc.	62·0
BTR plc.	19·0
Austin Rover Group Ltd.	60·0
Dunlop Holdings plc.	14·0
United Scientific Holdings plc.	21·5
Courtaulds plc.	9·0
Massey Ferguson Holdings Ltd.	3·5

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the figures for the value of headquarter contracts awarded to United Kingdom based Ministry of Defence contractors which were used to compile the list shown on page 15 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Vol. 2) included any payments made by the Ministry of Defence for goods and services which were exported from the United Kingdom; and whether these figures represent the value of contracts signed or the value of goods and services delivered.

Mr. Sainsbury: The figures in table 2·10 of volume 2 of the 1988 "Statement on the Defence Estimates" are based on an analysis of payments made directly by MOD to contractors in 1986-87.

The analysis takes into account payments for many goods and services exported from the United Kingdom. For example, it includes payments for equipment taken abroad for operations or training by the United Kingdom armed services; however, these exports (and the corresponding imports if the items are returned to the United Kingdom) are specifically excluded from the official trade statistics.

The workshare agreements for collaborative equipment projects invariably involve a considerable amount of international exchange of components and assemblies. Where the arrangements provide for HMG to make purchases on behalf of a foreign Government—as is the case for certain items of equipment for the Harrier GR5/AV-8B project, for example—the payments made by MOD to contractors are included in the analysis. However, where funds for collaborative projects are routed through international agencies, the amounts are not included in the analysis of direct payments.

Payments made under sales arrangements, where no MOD money is involved, such as those with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, are separately accounted for, and are not included in the analysis.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the precise amounts paid by his Department in the year ended 31 March 1988 to *(a)* Jaguar Cars Ltd., *(b)* Sandvik Hard Materials Ltd., and *(c)* Kalmar Climax Ltd.

Mr. Sainsbury: The payments made to Jaguar Cars Ltd. and Kalmar Climax Ltd. in the year ended 31 March 1988 in respect of headquarters contracts were as follows:

	£ million
Jaguar Cars Ltd.	1·0
Kalmar Climax Ltd.	1·3

We have no record of any headquarters contracts having been placed with Sandvik Hard Materials Ltd.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list in the *Official Report* the total value of headquarters contracts handled by his Department in each of the five years up to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: The value of headquarter contracts placed in each of the four years up to 31 March 1987 is shown at table 2-9 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988", (Cmnd. 344-II). The value of headquarter contracts placed in the year ended 31 March 1988 was £6,541 million.

Accommodation Charges

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his reply of 23 January, *Official Report*, column *452 (a)* when he expects the armed forces pay review body to report on accommodtion charges for

1989-90 and *(b)* what information his Department has provided to the board as to elements of rates within existing charges for Scottish accommodation.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury during the public expenditure debate on 24 February 1988, at column 312. No evidence was submitted which related specifically to Scotland, although Scottish data were included in overall figures.

Opinion Polls

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department or any of the armed forces have conducted opinion surveys of service personnel on matters of general public interest.

Mr. Neubert: Attitude surveys relating to conditions of service are conducted as required, but I am unaware of any which might be regarded as of general public interest. If the hon. Member is concerned about a particular survey, perhaps he would let me know and I will be pleased to write to him.

Gibraltar

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to change the United Kingdom force levels in Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: All force levels are kept under regular review, and as part of the continuing drive for cost-effectiveness, we are considering restructuring and rationalising our forces in Gibraltar and their supporting infrastructure. In particular, subject to the outcome of detailed studies, we plan to withdraw in due course all or the major part of the infantry battalion stationed there.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the low flying regulations permit farm buildings to be used as simulated targets during low-flying training sorties.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 16 December 1988]:* The regulations for the conduct of low-flying training in the United Kingdom do not specify particular types of features at ground level which might be used as simulated targets.

WALES

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school-age children of employees; what child care provision, for school holiday or after-school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office does not at present provide any child care facilities directly, but the advice of welfare officers, flexi-time, part-time working, job-sharing and special leave are available to staff who have difficulties in arranging for the care of their children. A holiday play scheme is planned for summer 1989 and staff would be expected to contribute towards the costs.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, on a district basis, the sites in Wales used for the disposal of hazardous waste; and if he will indicate whether they are council operated or operated by a private contractor.

Mr. Grist: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a record of 286 waste disposal facilities in Wales. These are listed by local authority area in the following table. Very few of these sites receive special waste. Details of the waste which each facility is licensed to receive can be obtained from the appropriate waste disposal authority, which is required to maintain a public register.

Type of site	*Public*	*Private*	[1] *In-house*
Waste disposal authorities			
Aberconwy	1	0	2
Alyn and Deeside	2	10	3
Arfon	1	2	0
Blaenau Gwent	1	0	1
Brecknock	6	3	0
Cardiff	2	12	2
Carmarthen	1	0	0
Ceredigion	5	1	2
Colwyn	2	2	0
Cynon Valley	1	1	1
Delyn	2	6	2
Dinefwr	1	0	0
Dwyfor	3	2	16
Glyndwr	4	0	0
Islwyn	3	0	0
Llanelli	0	1	3
Lliw Valley	2	3	1
Meirionnydd	4	0	2
Merthyr Tydfil	1	0	0
Monmouth	3	1	0
Montgomeryshire	1	2	0
Neath	1	1	1
Newport	1	12	13
Ogwr	1	6	0
Port Talbot	1	1	1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	2	9	4
Radnor	2	1	0
Rhondda	3	2	0
Rhuddlan	1	0	0
Rhymney Valley	5	3	0
South Pembrokeshire	0	2	6
Swansea	4	10	10
Taff-Ely	3	6	0
Torfaen	2	1	5
Vale of Glamorgan	2	6	4
Wrexham Maelor	1	9	1
Ynys Môn	3	1	2
Totals	78	126	82

[1] Site used for producers own use only.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those waste disposal authorities that have completed their plans and deposited a copy with his Department.

Mr. Grist: The following district councils have completed their waste disposal plans and deposited copies with the Department:

Aberconwy
Alyn and Deeside
Arfon
Blaenau Gwent

Brecknock
Cardiff
Carmarthen
Ceredigion
Colwyn
Cynon Valley
Delyn
Dinefwr
Dwyfor
Glyndwr
Islwyn
Llanelli
Lliw Valley
Meirionnydd
Merthyr Tydfil
Monmouth
Montgomeryshire
Neath
Newport
Ogwr
Port Talbot
Preseli Pembrokeshire
Rhondda
Rhuddlan
Rhymney Valley
South Pembrokeshire
Swansea
Taff-Ely
Torfaen
Vale of Glamorgan
Wrexham Maelor
Ynys Môn—Isle of Anglesey

Nursery Education

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures to show the percentage of three and four-year-olds in *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* nursery classes and *(c)* infant classes in each local education authority in Wales in rank order of provision for three and four-year-olds as a whole.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not collected centrally in the form requested. However, data in respect of the percentage of three and four-year-olds in nursery schools and in primary schools is in the following table:

	Nursery schools	*Primary schools*
West Glamorgan	2·4	85·2
Mid Glamorgan	8·6	67·5
Clwyd	2·7	73·0
Gwent	10·4	56·1
Dyfed	3·1	60·9
South Glamorgan	7·2	48·8
Powys	—	50·8
Gwynedd	—	49·2

Pupil Numbers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of pupils in primary schools in Wales in classes of over 30.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: During a particular teaching period of an enumeration date in January 1988 11·6 per cent. of secondary school children were taught in single-teacher classes of more than 30 children and 12 per cent. were in classes of more than 30 taught by more than one teacher. Comparable figures are not available for primary schools. However, in September 1987, 16·9 per cent. of ordinary classes in maintained primary schools had more than 30 children.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the percentage of pupils in primary and secondary schools in Wales in classes of 35 and over in each local education authority in rank order.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: For secondary schools, the percentage of pupils who were being taught in a class group of more than 35 pupils during a particular teaching period on the enumeration date in January 1988 was as follows:

	Classes taught by one teacher	*Classes taught by more than one teacher*
Mid Glamorgan	1·2	16·7
Gwynedd	0·8	14·8
Dyfed	0·5	13·0
South Glamorgan	0·6	11·9
Gwent	0·3	11·6
West Glamorgan	0·3	9·6
Powys	0·5	8·0
Clwyd	0·7	3·6

Comparable information is not available for primary schools. However, the percentage of ordinary classes in maintained primary schools which had more than 35 children in September 1987 is as follows:

	Percentage
Clwyd	4·8
Dyfed	1·2
Gwent	1·1
Mid Glamorgan	1·1
South Glamorgan	0·9
Powys	0·7
Gwynedd	0·6
West Glamorgan	0·6

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the areas of south Wales which he has submitted for consideration to the European Commission under its review of the European Economic Community's structural funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Decisions on the eligibility for support under the EC structural funds are being taken by the European Commission on the basis of criteria set out in the governing regulations. Her Majesty's Government have recommended to the Commission cases for all four south Wales counties and for the Llanelli travel-to-work area in Dyfed. The whole of the industrial south Wales area is also covered by an integrated development operations programme bid which seeks assistance for the period 1988-92 and transitional arrangements, also included in the funds' regulations, provide for this to be considered by the Commission as planned.

Welsh Water Authority (Land)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a further statement about the current total land holding of the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Grist: Land owned by the Welsh water authority is a matter for that authority.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State of Wales how much land currently held by the Welsh water authority is surplus to its requirements.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh water authority informs me that it currently has 4,421 acres of land in its ownership which it considers is surplus to requirements.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much land currently held by the Welsh water authority he expects to become surplus to its requirements during the next five years.

Mr. Grist: Such estimates are a matter for the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will take steps to ensure that any future sale of lands currently held by the Welsh water authority is at prices which reflect their full potential value.

Mr. Grist: These are matters for the management of the Welsh water authority.

Advertising

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount of money spent by the Welsh Office on advertising for each year since 1978; and how much of that was spent on newspaper advertisements in *(a)* the *Western Mail*, *(b)* the *Daily Post*, and *(c)* other newspapers.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 24 January 1989]:* The total spending on newspaper, television and radio advertising and other promotional activities (literature exhibitions and so on) is as follows:

	£
1979-80	61,000
1980-81	62,000
1981-82	100,000
1982-83	99,000
1983-84	108,000
1984-85	121,000
1985-86	227,427
1986-87	406,965
1987-88	576,500

The spending from 1979-80 to 1984-85 on newspaper advertising is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The sum spent on newspaper advertising from 1985-86 and subsequent financial years is as follows:

	£ thousand
1985-86	98
1986-87	110
1987-88	140

The principal areas of advertising for each of these financial years is:

	£ thousand
1985-86	
Transport and Highways	72
Establishments Group (Recruitment/Public Notices)	10
Miscellaneous publicity (all other divisions)	16
	98
1986-87	
Transport and Highways	97
Establishments Group (Recruitment/Public Notices)	5
Miscellaneous publicity (all other divisions)	8
	110
1987-88	
Transport and Highways	101
Establishments Group (Recruitment/Public Notices)	10
Miscellaneous publicity (all other divisions)	29
	140

More detailed information on spending in individual newspaper titles is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HEALTH

Food Poisoning

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made as to whether the 184 per cent. rise in notified cases of food poisoning between 1980 and 1987 results from *(a)* contaminated food; *(b)* poor kitchen hygiene, or *(c)* any other significant reason; and what is the estimated proportionate responsibility of these factors.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the majority of cases of reported bacterial food poisoning the suspected vehicle or source of infection is not identified. Comprehensive data are available only from 1970 to 1982 on a number of outbreaks where a food vehicle was identified by the investigators. Some of main contributory factors were preparation of food too far in advance, storage of food at ambient temperature, inadequate cooking of food, inadequate reheating of food, inadequate thawing and under cooking of food. All these factors would have encouraged the growth of food poisoning organisms present in the food. My advisers believe that these contributory factors remain important.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what foodstuffs, other than eggs, were attributed to the cases of food poisoning notified in 1987.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In the majority of cases of reported food poisoning the suspected vehicle or source of infection is not identified. In 1987, in those reported outbreaks where the food vehicle was identified, the following foods were involved:

poultry or poultry mixed with other foods; beef; pork/ham; lamb; mixed meats and meat pies; fish/shellfish; rice; milk and desserts.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the cases of food poisoning attributable to chicken and eggs in 1988 required some form of medical attention or treatment from the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This information is not available.

Grading

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursing and midwifery staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the clinical grading structure by each regional health authority and by each health district.

Mr. Mellor: The information the hon. Member requested has now been placed in the Library.

Psychiatric Patients (Accommodation)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has undertaken into the relative standards of in-patient psychiatric hospital accommodation and that available to discharged former patients.

Mr. Freeman: Several research projects about alternative provision to mental hospitals have been funded by the Department, and I will send the hon. Member a list and place a copy in the Library when this is ready.

In addition, Ministers have recently set in hand work to get a clearer picture of the development of services across the country for people with a mental illness. The objective is to provide Ministers with a properly informed basis for considering whether there are any steps it would be right and practical to take to improve the care of mentally ill people.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior hospital doctors work *(a)* more than 80 hours a week, *(b)* more than 104 hours a week, and *(c)* more than 112 hours a week (i) in the Nottingham district health authority and (ii) in the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. D. H. White, the chairman of Nottingham health authority and Sir Michael Carlisle, the chairman of Trent regional health authority.

Mental Illness

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether his Department has conducted or is conducting research into the reasons for the disproportionate numbers of blacks in mental hospitals;

(2) whether his Department has conducted or is conducting research into the disproportionately high incidence of diagnosed schizophrenia among blacks.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health directly commissions a range of research into mental illness pertaining to the general population. The Department is not funding research specifically into reasons for the occurrence of mental illness in ethnic minorities; but since 1985 it has been supporting NAFSIYAT, a voluntary organisation active in the field of ethnic psychiatry, to evaluate the effectiveness in providing a treatment service in the community aimed at ethnic minority populations. The Department has made available about £1 million in 1988-89 for research into the care and treatment of mentally ill people, including schizophrenia.

In 1987-88 (the latest year for which figures are available) the Medical Research Council, the main Government agency for the funding of medical and related biological research in the United Kingdom, allocated £10·4 million to research into mental health.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department intends to review mental health care among ethnic minorities in light of the particular problems faced by such groups.

Mr. Freeman: It is for health and social services authorities to identify and take account of the needs of all sections of the community when reviewing, planning and funding local mental health services. The importance of mental health care was emphasised at a seminar on ethnic minority health, held in November 1987 for health authority chairmen and managers, chaired by the then Minister for Health. The Minister drew attention to the difficulties which needed to be overcome when mentally ill patients and those treating them had different cultural backgrounds. In addition, where appropriate, Ministers are raising questions on improving health services for ethnic minorities through the review system.

AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will review his decision not to place Waltham Forest in category A or B with respect to funding for AIDS treatment as set out in circular LAC (89) 1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. Our main aim in distributing the support grant for social services for people with AIDS is to help those local authorities that face the most immediate pressures in 1989-90. Category A authorities are those that are estimated to have by far the greatest concentration of people with AIDS and people at risk of infection. Category B includes those authorities which have smaller numbers and those which have fewer cases but which have located in their areas major regional treatment centres associated with which is an additional workload for local authority social services. The London borough of Waltham Forest does not meet these criteria, but, along with all other social services authorities in England, is eligible to bid for funds to assist the planning of services for the future. The Department will continue monitoring the distribution of cases nationally and keep the situation of all authorities under review.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial contribution is being made to his AIDS campaign by organisations other than his Department.

Mr. Mellor: Health Departments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have provided £495,000 for specific work to be conducted by their respective health education agencies and as a contribution to the National AIDS Helpline which provides a service to the whole United Kingdom.

Other Government Departments have financed specific initiatives related to their fields of responsibility. These include the provision by the Department of Education and Science of educational material for teachers and for use with secondary school pupils; development by the Home Office of educational material for use in prisons; and provision by the Department of Employment and the Health and Safety Executive of an information booklet for the workplace.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many AIDS patients are currently being treated in each London hospital where AIDS is treated; and if he will give his best estimate in each case of the number of foreign nationals involved.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated average annual treatment cost and total eventual treatment cost of *(a)* each AIDS patient from the time of being identified as HIV positive and *(b)* each drug addict seeking treatment.

Mr. Mellor: On current evidence, our best estimate is that the average cost of treating a person with AIDS from diagnosis to death is between £20,000 and £30,000.

Because of the wide variety in the amounts and types of treatment given to drug misusers, it is not possible to estimate average treatment costs.

Genito-urinary Clinic (Waltham Forest)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will direct North East Thames regional health authority to approve a genito-urinary clinic to be located in Waltham Forest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Planning of health services within a particular area is a matter for the health authority concerned, which is best able to judge priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what child care provision his Department providesfor pre-school age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after school care is provided for employees' children aged five years and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how are these to be funded.

Mr. Freeman: At present no provision for the child care of the pre-school age children of staff is made in this Department, although preliminary discussions on such facilities have taken place. A holiday play scheme has been organised for the forthcoming Easter holidays for the children of staff working in HQ buildings in central London. Additionally staff working in the Whitehall area can make use of the centrally organised holiday play schemes.

Child care provision is one of the areas being examined in a review of opportunities available to women employees in the Department. We hope to base any further holiday play schemes on the experience we are gaining.

The schemes are intended to be self-supporting, but the Department has provided funding to prime them.

Cancer (West Ham)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will order an inquiry into the causes of the cancer cluster now identified in West Ham in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Freeman: Research into the epidemiology of cancer is undertaken by a number of cancer registries and research organisations funded both by Government and independently. Department of Health officials will ascertain whether any study into the incidence of cancer in West Ham has been or is being undertaken, and will discuss the matter with the district health authority.

Departmental Expenditure

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what amounts are included within the estimated outturn public expenditure for his Department in 1987-88 in Cm. 288-II for *(a)* expenditure by way of grants or other forms of non-recoverable expenditure and *(b)* expenditure by way of loans.

Mr. Mellor: Estimated outturn expenditure for 1987-88 as detailed in Cm. 288-II included the following amounts for:

	£ million
(a) Current and capital grants	152
(b) Net lending to public corporations	12

Note:

The amount shown at *(b)* represents the external borrowing limit for the General Practice Finance Corporation guaranteed by Treasury stock.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have received kidney transplants in each year since 1982.

Mr. Freeman: According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of cadaveric kidney transplants performed in the United Kingdom for patients entitled to NHS treatment was:

Year	*Number*
1982	1,033
1983	1,144
1984	1,443
1985	1,336
1986	1,493
1987	1,485
1988	[1]1,544

[1] Provisional figure.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, by region, the number of patients undergoing dialysis treatment.

Mr. Freeman: According to information supplied by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the number of patients receiving dialysis by regional health authority, on 31 December 1987 was as follows:

Region	*Hospital haemodialysis*	*Home haemodialysis*	*Intermittent peritoneal dialysis*	*Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis*
Northern	243	57	18	206
Yorkshire	177	100	2	195
Trent	177	233	2	309
East Anglian	121	70	0	47
North West Thames	128	82	7	141
North East Thames	204	178	3	298
South East Thames	172	137	6	271
South West Thames	11	47	0	96
Wessex	70	42	0	113
Oxford	105	119	0	120

Region	Hospital haemodialysis	Home haemodialysis	Intermittent peritoneal dialysis	Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis
South Western	92	159	5	180
West Midlands	193	126	0	424
Mersey	128	45	8	52
North Western	150	156	6	271

Note:
There is no waiting list for renal dialysis, because it is an essential treatment for a life-threatening condition.

Hoffenberg Report

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which of the various bodies concerned to progress the ideas combined in the Hoffenberg report have been consulted in the last year; and what was the outcome of those negotiations;

(2) which initiatives to promote organ donation were extended following discussions with the National Health Service;

(3) if he will list those district health authorities which now have an operational policy for organ donation; if he will list the number of potential donors identified in each district health authority in England; and if he will estimate the percentage increase which this represents on the previous year's figure;

(4) if he has any plans to introduce a system of required request so as to increase the number of organ donors.

Mr. Freeman: Following publication of the report of the working party chaired by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, we prepared a draft circular containing guidance to health authorities on organ donation. After consulting extensively with health authorities, medical bodies and other interested parties we issued health circular HC(88)63 copies of which have been placed in the Library in December 1988. For further details I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 13 December 1988 at column *555*. The working party advised us against the use of required request legislation. The health circular asks district health authorities to draw up operational procedures for organ donation by 30 June 1989. Authorities have also commenced a survey which will enable us to assess the number of potential donors; it is too early to form estimates at this stage.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information his Department has about organ transplants undertaken in *(a)* private hospitals and *(b)* National Health Service pay beds; and what action he will take against hospitals and consultants who transplant organs which have been sold;

(2) if he will consider introducing legislation to outlaw the sale of organs for transplants;

(3) if he will initiate a compulsory register of all imports and exports of transplantable organs and tissue into and out of the United Kingdom and of all transplant operations.

Mr. Freeman: We do not at present collect information centrally on transplants carried out in private hospitals, or on the use of pay beds by transplant patients. On the subject of the register of organs, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 26 January at columns *711-12*. When investigations by Bloomsbury and Barnet health authorities are completed shortly, we shall consider urgently what action to take, including the relevance of legislation.

Elderly People

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many elderly people within each health authority in England and Wales were awaiting placement in geriatric hospitals or in residential homes in the local authority voluntary and private sectors at 1 January; and what is the breakdown of numbers in each sector in each health area.

Mr. Freeman: Information about patients awaiting admission to hospital is collected according to the specialty of intended treatment, not by hospital type. Regional and district summaries of hospital in-patient lists at 31 March 1988, the latest available centrally, have been placed in the Library. Information about the numbers of elderly people seeking placement in residential homes in the local authority voluntary and private sectors is not collected centrally.

Tranquillisers

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many psychiatric hospitals within the National Health Service have special units to enable people to withdraw from benzodiazepines.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are at present withdrawing from benzodiazepines in psychiatric hospitals within the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have this information centrally.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many working days were lost in 1987 as a result of people withdrawing from benzodiazepines.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of all prescriptions given in 1987 by National Health Service's doctors was for benzodiaze pines.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have information in the form requested. In Great Britain in 1987 community pharmacists dispensed almost 399·7 million prescriptions. Of these, about 25·5 million, or almost 6·5 per cent., were for benzodiazepines.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the total number of children under the age of 16 years currently being prescribed benzodiazepines.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally.

Imported Food Regulations

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which public bodies are responsible for collecting information on the number and nature of prosecutions made for breaches of the Imported Food Regulations 1984.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: This information is held by the local authority which has undertaken the prosecution. Such prosecutions are rarely necessary, since imported food which is found not to comply with the requirements of the Imported Food Regulations is normally dealt with by the port health authority in co-operation with the importer.

Listeria

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what temperature of refrigeration is recommended by his Department to prevent the growth of listeria.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Appropriate storage temperatures for chilled food depend on factors such as the length of and the type of food. We are satisfied that the times and storage temperatures recommended in our guidelines on pre-cooked chilled food in catering produce a microbiologically sound product. In addition, as I said in my reply to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 27 January, we are preparing separately guidelines for retailed chilled foods which will be issued as soon as possible.

Cook-chill Meals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield, *Official Report*, 23 January, column *411*, how many of the consultant microbiologists or control of infection officers in the Yorkshire area were consulted before the Yorkshire regional health authority made the decision to implement cook-chill catering across the whole region in September 1988.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the Yorkshire regional health authority.

The hon. Member may wish to contact its chairman for the information he is seeking.

Hereditary Conditions

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent the new National Health Service register will help in tracing the medical records of those who suffer from hereditary conditions such as glaucoma and diabetes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The NHS central register exists to facilitate the transfer of medical records when patients move from one family practitioner committee area to another. It is not used to record whether people suffer from hereditary conditions; this and other clinical information is contained in the individual medical records which are confidential. No change in the scope of the register is planned, but computerisation in 1990 is intended to speed up considerably the tracing and transfer of the medical records of all patients.

Cash Limits

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made in the cash limits of his Department for 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for Class XIV Vote 3 (Miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) will be increased by £4,995,000 to £424,256,000. The increases are made for an additional £3,697,000 to implement, from 1 April 1988, the recommendations of the review bodies in respect of doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and professions allied to medicine as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 21 April 1988, £100,000 for nurses' and midwives' pay as announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 1 November 1988 at column *601*, £5 million for a grant to the Motability 10th anniversary trust fund and £250,000 for the "Eggs: The Facts" advertising campaign. These increases are offset by a surrender of £3,236,000 in respect of a grant to the independent living fund and of £250,000 in respect of grants to organisations serving the interests of persons affected by an error in the calculation of the retail prices index. These sums represent that portion of those grants which will not be paid at the level planned in the current financial year. The increases are further offset by a reduction of £566,000 to the sum announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 21 July 1988 at column *726* to reflect a reduced carry forward of capital underspends allowed under the end-year flexibility scheme.

The net effect of these changes has been charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Dietary Sugars

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pending the report of the COMA panel on dietary sugars, he will request the Health Education Authority in planning its pilot campaign to promote dental health in the north-west to have regard for the conclusions and recommendations contained in two reports referred to by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) in reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 19 October 1988, *Official Report*, column *917*.

Mr. Freeman: In planning its pilot campaign to promote dental health in the north-west, the Health Education Authority is taking into account all relevant scientific information, including the two reports quoted. The COMA panel on sugars in the diet will take account of these two reports, among others, in reaching its recommendations.

Medical Students

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many students entered medical training each year from 1976 to 1988; and how many qualified each year from 1982 to 1988.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The following information was supplied by the University Grants Committee from a special medical return. The intake of pre-clinical medical students to United Kingdom medical schools was as follows:

Academic year	Numbers
1976-77	3,809
1977-78	3,944
1978-79	3,979
1979-80	3,987
1980-81	4,010
1981-82	4,072
1982-83	4,154
1983-84	4,108
1984-85	4,125
1985-86	4,093
1986-87	4,119
1987-88	4,125
[1]1988-89	4,177

[1] Provisional

The number of students who obtained a first registrable medical qualification was as follows:

Academic year	Numbers
1981-82	3,545
1982-83	3,742
1983-84	3,640
1984-85	3,636
1985-86	3,628
1986-87	3,762
1987-88	3,744

TRANSPORT

Severn River Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the progress towards a new Severn river crossing;

(2) when he proposes to begin the construction of a new Severn river crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of groups of firms interested in bidding for the second Severn bridge have responded to the Department's invitation to submit proposals. These are now being assessed.

We hope to announce by the end of February the groups selected to submit full tenders. We remain on course to provide the bridge by the mid-1990s, if traffic levels justify this.

Promoters will be asked to indicate possible completion dates and the toll levels associated with them.

Lorries (Loose Bulk Loads)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents over the most recent period for which figures are available have *(a)* involved or *(b)* been caused by lorries carrying loose bulk loads; and how many (i) deaths and (ii) serious injuries have been caused as a result of spillage of loose bulk loads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is not available. The Department does not record causes of accidents. Cause is often disputed or unclear.

The Department does have available the following figures taken from police reports of personal injury accidents:

In 1987, there were 246 accidents in which a dislodged vehicle load in the carriageway was recorded. In these accidents there were 334 casualties, of whom seven were killed and 78 seriously injured.

Heavy goods vehicles were involved in only 86 of these accidents, which resulted in 135 casualties, including four fatalities and 42 serious injuries.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any representations from people directly or indirectly damaged as a result of spillage from lorries carrying loose bulk loads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are aware of 14 such representations during the last five years covering a widely differing range of incidents.

It is important for lorry loads to be properly and safely secured. Drivers should follow carefully the guidance set out in the code of practice "Safety of Loads on Vehicles" prepared jointly by the Department, the road transport associations, vehicle and equipment manufacturers and the police.

It is also important to avoid diesel spillage which causes severe danger to motor-cyclists.

Aircraft Safety

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had or proposes to have with the Civil Aviation Authority concerning the safety in use of twin-engined jet aircraft on transatlantic crossings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation.

I am advised that the safety record of extended range operations by twin-engined aircraft is such that there has been no need for discussions with the CAA.

NATO

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom representatives designated to form part of the staff of the NATO agencies in transition to war and in war for *(a)* the Defence Shipping Authority (East), *(b)* the Interallied Insurance Organisation, *(c)* the Agency for the Co-ordination of Inland Surface Transport in Central Europe and *(d)* the NATO Civil Aviation Agency.

Mr. Portillo: Details of the United Kingdom representatives designated to form part of the Defence Shipping Authority (East), the Interallied Insurance Organisation, the Agency for the Co-ordination of Inland Surface Transport in Central Europe and the NATO Civil Aviation Agency are classified.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom delegates to the sub-committee on rail transport of NATO's planning board for European inland surface transport.

Mr. Portillo: The United Kingdom's delegates to the sub-committee on rail transport of NATO's planning board for European inland surface transport are:

One officer at grade-level from the Department of Transport;
A representative from British Rail;
A Ministry of Defence major; and a lieutenant-colonel or major from the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the title of the sub-committee of NATO's planning board for European inland surface transport (PBEIST) which deals with ports, beaches and inland waterways; and what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom delegates to this sub-committee.

Mr. Portillo: The title of the sub-committee of NATO's planning board for European inland surface transport (PBEIST) which deals with ports, beaches and inland waterways is the permanent sub-committee for ports, beaches and inland waterways transport (PBIWT). The United Kingdom is currently represented on this sub-committee by one officer at grade 7 level and one officer at SEO level from the Department and one officer at HEO level from the Ministry of Defence. The proceedings and further details of attendees are classified.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what economic assessment his Department has made of the impact upon the east midlands of electrifying the midlands main line and of not doing so.

Mr. Portillo: The commercial opportunities for developing the line are a matter for British Rail.

Addingham Bypass

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects construction work to commence on the A65 Addingham bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We plan to start construction on Addingham bypass this summer.

Departmental Expenditure

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what amounts are included within the estimated outturn public expenditure for his Department in 1987-88 in Cm. 288-II for *(a)* expenditure by way of grants or other forms of non-recoverable expenditure and *(b)* expenditure by way of loans.

Mr. Portillo: The outturn public expenditure for my Department in 1987-88 as estimated in Cm. 288 included £240 million net repayments of loans. The remainder of the estimated expenditure of £4,721 million was not recoverable except for about £15 million port severance grants which may become recoverable in certain circumstances. The figures for 1987-88 now show a total expenditure of £4,592 million, including £362 million net repayments of loans.

Coastguard

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* those incidents in 1988 requiring assistance from each coastguard rescue station in Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: Figures for 1988 are not yet available. The number of incidents where assistance was co-ordinated by coastguard rescue centres in Scotland during 1987 are as follows:

	Number
Aberdeen	53
Clyde	167
Forth	66
Moray	71
Oban	140
Pentland	56
Shetland	65
Stornaway	42

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received against the proposed closure of the Moray coastguard rescue centre.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has received a number of representations including 13 letters from hon. or right hon. Members.

Heavy Lorries

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of Transport if he will list the number and type of local authority control schemes to restrict heavy lorry movements which have been implemented since the coming into force of the Heavy Commercial Vehicles Act 1973.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not keep a record of such schemes.

Bus Doors

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the safety of bus doors since the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston on 19 May 1988, *Official Report*, column *524*.

Mr. Portillo: Good progress has been made in our discussions with the bus operators and manufacturers. I hope to make an announcement shortly.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* income received, or estimated to be received, by London Regional Transport from *(a)* fares, *(b)* the Exchequer, *(c)* rate levy on London boroughs and *(d)* other income, for each of the years 1984-85 to 1989-90 at constant prices, together with the percentage of income arising from each source for each year, respectively.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is as follows:

Income received by London Regional Transport (1987-88 prices)

	[1]*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	[2]*1988-89*	[3]*1989-90*
Total income (£ million)	1,203·7	1,070·3	1,046·5	997·4	957·5	1,086·9
Source						
Traffic Income						
(£ million)	802·0	683·3	693·5	710·6	726·4	778·7
Per cent. of total	66·6	64·3	66·3	71·2	75·9	71·6
Other Income						
(£ million)	39·4	33·8	45·9	47·8	51·9	51·0
Per cent. of total	3·3	3·2	4·4	4·8	5·4	4·7
Grant (including GLC grant in 1984-85)						
(£ million)	362·3	348·2	307·1	239·0	179·2	257·2
Per cent. of total	30·1	32·5	29·3	24·0	18·7	23·7
Grant recovered from levy on London ratepayers (65·63 per cent. of total grant)	n/a	228·5	201·6	156·9	117·6	168·8

[1] 15 month accounting period 1 January 1984 to 31 March 1985. Audited figures for the fiscal year 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985 are not available.

[2] Estimated outturn (as published in Annual Business Plan for 1989-90), deflated using an inflation rate for the financial year 1988-89 based on the 1988 RPI and an average of independent forecasts for 1st quarter 1989.

[3] Forecast (as published in Annual Business Plan for 1989-90), deflated using an inflation rate for 1989-90 based on an average of independent forecasts.

Source: Annual Report and Accounts except as stated in notes [2] and [3] above.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to develop a primary road network in Suffolk and Norfolk suitable for the advent of the Channel tunnel and the European single market.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A primary route network, consisting of trunk roads and principal local authority roads, is already firmly established for the Department's eastern region, which includes Suffolk and Norfolk. We monitor its operation through a joint committee with the seven county surveyors for the region. The effects of predicted traffic growth and road developments on the network are taken into account at each annual review. This would include any increase in traffic to and from Europe through the east coast ports. The Channel tunnel is not expected significantly to influence traffic flows in Suffolk and Norfolk.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the financing of a new railway line between the Channel tunnel terminal area and London can be carried out with public funds.

Mr. Portillo: Under section 19(2)(a) of the Transport Act 1962, British Rail has the power to borrow public funds for capital investment.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there is any requirement for a specified minimum rate of return to be achieved if the financing of the construction of a new railway line between the Channel tunnel terminal area and London is to be carried out with public funds.

Mr. Portillo: If the new line were to be financed by British Rail, the board would need to demonstrate that the project would produce a commercial return. The discount rate used to test this (currently 7 per cent.) will be agreed between BR and the Department. It will need to reflect the Treasury's required rate of return, which is intended to ensure that commercial public sector investment programmes (such as BR's) provide a rate of return which is broadly equivalent to that which could be achieved in the private sector. The required rate of return was set in 1978 and is reviewed from time to time.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the circumstances in which he will not give his approval to a proposal from British Rail to construct a new railway line between London and the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: We will not give our approval if the board's proposals (which will need to include environmental protection measures) fail to establish a commercial case for the construction of a new line.

Road Traffic (Tax Yield)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much tax yield the Treasury would gain from each 1 per cent. increase in the volume of road traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tax receipts do not relate directly to traffic volume. The gain would vary according to how much of the growth came from increased vehicle mileage and how much from increased numbers of vehicles on the road, and on their fuel consumption. Increased motoring taxes would be partly offset by the costs of the extra wear and tear caused by the extra traffic.

Underground Stations (Fire Brigade Reports)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in the light of the recommendations in the Fennell report, he will place in the Library the annual reports put forward in 1988 by the London fire brigade on each deep underground station.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that London Underground will, in the light of the Fennell recommendations, place in the Library of the House copies of the annual reports by the London fire brigade together with its responses. This procedure will be implemented starting from the inspection reports received in 1989.

M20

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to let the contract for the construction of London-Ashford section of the M20 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect to let the contract for the Lenham to Ashford section of the motorway this spring.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has decided upon a date on which to announce his decision on the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend will reach his decision when he has considered all the evidence before him.

Guardian Angels

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the British transport police on the activities on the London Underground system of the organisation known as the Guardian Angels.

Mr. Portillo: I see no need for such a report. The Government have made it clear that we are opposed to private citizens adopting a policing role except as special constables. There can be no objection to any persons travelling on the Underground if they do so in an unprovocative manner as fare-paying and law-abiding citizens. If, however, they act unlawfully or engage in conduct likely to provoke a breach of the peace, their presence will not be welcome and in that event they could not expect to be exempt from the ordinary processes of the law. The British transport police committee is considering the changes that would be necessary to the British transport police scheme to allow the force to recruit special constables and the Government look forward to their proposals.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the amount collected in tolls on the Severn bridge since it opened to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A total of £48,547,086 to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the present debt on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest available figure is £85,469,667 at 31 March 1988.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the proposed doubling of toll charges on the Severn bridge takes place in September 1989, when he expects the debt on the bridge to be finally discharged.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 2006.

Road Traffic (London)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the number of vehicles of different categories crossing the three London traffic cordons in a combined 24-hour flow for the years 1983 and 1987 together with the total vehicle flow at each cordon in passenger car units for the period together with the percentage change for each category and total as set out in Table 4 of his recent publication "Statement on Transport in London".

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information on flows in passenger car units is as follows:

Summary of Radial Traffic Movements in London
Combined direction 24 hour flows—thousands of passenger car units

	1983	*1987*	*per cent. change*
London Boundary cordon	2,133	2,257	+6
Inner London cordon	2,144	2,203	+3
Central London cordon	1,660	1,664	+0·3

The remaining information is set out in table 3 of the "Statement On Transport in London", reproduced as follows:

Summary of radial traffic movements in London
Combined 24 hour flow—thousands of vehicles

Mode	*1983*	[1]*1987*	*per cent. change*	*per cent. share*
A. *Vehicles crossing the London boundary cordon*				
Buses and coaches	19	16	−16	1
Private cars	1,565	1,705	+9	79
Taxis	6	9	+50	—
Goods vehicles:				
light	159	206	+30	10
medium	111	111	0	5
heavy	77	52	−32	2
Motor cycles	46	39	−15	2
Pedal cycles	15	16	+7	1
TOTAL	1,998	2,154	+8	100
B. *Vehicles crossing the Inner London cordon*				
Buses and coaches	35	35	0	2
Private cars	1,535	1,606	+5	75
Taxis	40	40	0	2
Goods vehicles:				
light	196	216	+10	10
medium	116	110	−5	5
heavy	40	34	−15	2
Motor cycles	77	58	−25	3
Pedal cycles	31	24	−23	1
TOTAL	[2]2,070	2,123	+3	100
C. *Vehicles crossing the Central London cordon*				
Buses and coaches	39	34	−13	2
Private cars	1,071	1,086	+1	67
Taxis	125	131	+5	8
Goods vehicles:				
light	134	173	+29	11
medium	91	90	−1	5
heavy	32	17	−47	1
Motor cycles	81	65	−20	4
Pedal cycles	47	30	−36	2
TOTAL	1,620	1,626	+0·4	100

[1] Estimates extrapolated from 1986 survey. See Statistics Bulletin (88) 39—London Traffic Monitoring Report for 1987.
[2] Estimates extrapolated from surveys conducted in 1981 and 1984. See Statistics Bulletin (88) 39—London Traffic Monitoring Report for 1987.

The question asks for results expressed in the form of passenger car units. This measurement is used by traffic engineers to express the demands of different vehicle types as a single value, usually in connection with traffic control at signalled junctions.

The following values are commonly used by the transport and road research laboratory to convert other vehicle types to their equivalent in passenger car units.

	Passenger car units
Bus or coach	2·0
Private car	1·0
Taxis	1·0
Light goods vehicle	1·0
Medium goods vehicle	1·5
Heavy goods vehicle	2·3
Motor cycle	0·4
Pedal cycle	0·2

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that those advising him on British Rail's preferred route for a new railway line between London and the Channel tunnel do not live on or near any of the routes in question.

Mr. Portillo: Members of the Department are required to disclose any personal interest they may have in matters for which they are responsible in an official capacity.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Eastern Europe (Food Sales)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the foods and quantities sold to countries in Eastern Europe in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ryder: The following information on United Kingdom exports to Eastern Europe is derived from the "Overseas Trade Statistics". It covers exports to Albania, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Data for the whole of 1988 are not yet available.

Tonnes

STC Division code		*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
00	Live animals chiefly for foods	44	38	55
01	Meat and meat preparations	441	957	216
02	Dairy products and birds' eggs	117	131	113
03	Fish, crustaceans and molluscs and preparations thereof	70,638	70,807	63,972
04	Cereals and cereal preparations	644,165	307,847	706,142
05	Vegetables and fruit	586	846	374
06	Sugar, sugar preparations and honey	128	103	41
07	Coffee, tea, cocoa, spices and manufactures thereof	1,927	1,300	2,135
08	Feedingstuff for animals	1,122	2,260	2,331
09	Miscellaneous edible products	2,410	315	342
Section 0	Food and feed	721,578	384,604	775,721
Total value of these food and feed exports (£ million)		81·516	43·502	54·149

NATO Central Supply Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom representatives designated to form part of the staff of the NATO central supply agency in transition to war.

Mr. Ryder: Information on the posts, ranks and responsibilities of the staff of NATO central supplies agency is subject to NATO security classification, and I am therefore unable to provide this information.

Food Hygiene

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, 1 December, *Official Report*, column *319*, when the major national campaign on food hygiene will be launched; which people and which organisations have advised on its content; at whom it is aimed; what form it will take; and what the cost will be.

Mr. Ryder: The campaign was prepared by my Department in collaboration with DOH, the Health Education Authority, the public health laboratory service and the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and will be launched this spring. The campaign will be based on an educational leaflet "The Recipe for Food Safety" which will advise the general public on how to prevent food poisoning in the home. The leaflet will be distributed through supermarkets, doctors' surgeries and other outlets. The campaign will cost initially £50,000.

Slugs

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has made any estimate of the size of the slug population; and what evidence he has of its rate of growth in recent years.

Mr. Ryder: Whilst I have no estimate of the size of the slug population, long-term monitoring shows no indication of a population explosion. Recent weather conditions have, however, encouraged greater slug activity which has caused local problems for cereal and oilseed rape growers in particular.

Bottled Water (Nitrate Content)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food what are the nitrate levels in the five most popular bottled waters sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: My Department does not keep records of the composition of all individual brands of bottled waters. Information on levels of nitrates in natural mineral waters should be available from the authority which has

"recognised" the water under the appropriate European Community rules. It may also be available from the exploiter of the water source.

EC Produce (Chemical Treatment)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department takes to ensure that produce from other EEC states which has been treated with chemicals banned in the United Kingdom does not enter the United Kingdom market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The United Kingdom now has over 1,000 statutory pesticide maximum residue levels (MRLs) under the Pesticides (Maximum Residue Levels in Food) Regulations 1988. Some of these MRLs are set at levels designed to preclude use of certain pesticides and they apply to imported as well as home-produced food and crops. Other member states, like the United Kingdom, are free to approve pesticides not already banned in all member states under directive 79/117/EEC. Many pesticides approved for use here and elsewhere do not give rise to residues in food. However, if imported food were thought likely to contain undesirable residues of pesticides not approved in the United Kingdom, appropriate MRLs could be introduced and enforced under the regulations.

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions during 1988 salmonella enteriditis was confirmed in egg-laying flocks and on which occasion he used his powers to prevent poultry or eggs from such units from being sold for human consumption.

Mr. Ryder: The provisional figures for 1988 show that salmonella enteritidis was isolated in 20 table-egg laying flocks. Where salmonella enteritidis has been isolated a veterinary investigation has been carried out and advice given. I announced last Friday in a parliamentary reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) that notices will be issued under the Zoonoses Order 1975 to egg producers with flocks known or suspected of infection with salmonella enteritidis or other similar types of salmonella. These notices will prevent the sale of eggs in a raw state direct for human consumption.

Farmers (Direct Aid)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what information he has about the intention of EEC member states to introduce new direct aid schemes for farmers;

(2) which European Economic Community member states currently operate direct income aids for farmers.

Mr. Ryder: None. The Council reached agreement on the Commission's income aid proposal on 24 January. Member states wishing to implement this optional regulation have four years in which to submit their proposals to the Commission.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to introduce a direct income scheme for farmers.

Mr. Ryder: I have no plans to do so.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the total volume of each commodity held in the United Kingdom in storage under the common agricultural policy intervention regime.

Mr. Ryder: A note setting out the volume of United Kingdom intervention stocks of agricultural commodities is deposited in the Library of the House and updated monthly.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the level of expenditure incurred in the United Kingdom during 1988, for each commodity, in *(a)* common agricultural policy intervention buying and *(b)* storage.

Mr. Ryder: The information requested is as follows:

£ thousand

	1987-88 Outturn	*1988-89 Forecast*
Beef		
Intervention purchases	100,759	50,340
Intervention sales	−52,850	−43,470
Net cost of intervention buying	47,909	6,870
Storage costs	18,356	10,190
Cereals		
Intervention purchases	5,470	72,460
Intervention sales	−93,993	−55,060
Net cost of intervention buying	−88,523	17,400
Storage costs	59,560	35,276
Butter		
Intervention purchases	133,837	2,490
Intervention sales	−23,342	−32,450
Net cost of intervention buying	110,495	−29,960
Storage costs	18,309	4,750
Skimmed Milk Powder		
Intervention purchases	363	2,490
Intervention sales	−18,092	−32,450
Net cost of intervention buying	−17,729	−29,960
Storage costs	243	4,750
Oil-seeds		
Intervention purchases	0	7,240
Intervention sales	0	−7,560
Net cost of intervention buying	0	−320
Storage costs	0	240

Beef Producers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much financial support was available to British producers of beef for each of the last three years for which figures are available; and what is his estimate for the next full financial year in the light of the new regime announced on 24 January.

Mr. Ryder: Total expenditure in support of beef production in the United Kingdom in the last three financial years was as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	404·2
1986-87	312·0
1987-88	292·2

These figures comprise intervention purchases and sales, intervention storage costs, export refunds, beef variable premium, suckler cow premium, calf premium and the beef element of hill livestock compensatory allowances.

In 1988-89 expenditure on the beef variable premium has been reduced as a result of firmer beef prices flowing from reductions in beef from the dairy herd. In 1989-90 expenditure will depend in particular on uptake of the special premium, the rate to be decided for the suckler cow premium and the extent to which the new system for intervention is activated.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the financial effect on the United Kingdom of the decision announced by the European Economic Community Council of farm Ministers at their meeting on 24 January.

Mr. Ryder: We are still assessing the financial consequences of the decisions reached at the Agriculture Council on 24 January. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Export Subsidies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department takes to verify the notice of quantity of agricultural products exported from the United Kingdom with the aid of EEC export subsidies.

Mr. Ryder: Physical control of United Kingdom exports and imports, including those of agricultural products, is the responsibility of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Agriculture Industry

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when, further to his reply of 5 December, column *30*, to the hon. Member for Daventry, he plans to publish data on the state of the agriculture industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: "Agriculture in the United Kingdom: 1988" has been published today by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. I have made copies available in the Library of the House. As indicated in my earlier reply, this document is the successor to the annual review White Papers which have been published in previous years. The new publication contains enhanced information on commodities and on the general financial situation of the industry and provides a compendium of statistics, generally continuing the series which has been running for many years, and providing valuable data for all those with an interest in the industry.

The document notes that 1988 was a year in which major policy developments took place in the United Kingdom and in the European Community generally. In the EC, the most significant development was the agreement reached at the European Council in February 1988, introducing budgetary discipline in the common agricultural policy and improving its management. Last year also saw the introduction of a number of United Kingdom schemes offering farmers the opportunity to engage in commercially viable alternatives to surplus production. Set-aside, the farm woodland and farm diversification grant schemes were all introduced. The number of environmentally sensitive areas was increased and the reorientation of the capital grant scheme was announced.

The different sectors of United Kingdom agriculture fared very differently during 1988. The situation of the industry reported in the document is therefore a complex one, but the following are among its main features.

Cereal and oilseed rape yields were low due to poor weather and because of this and lower prices the value of output was significantly reduced. The value of output of potatoes fell sharply as a result of lower prices. Horticulture had a relatively good year, with most parts of the sector recording a higher value of output.

Within the livestock sector, higher beef prices and increased production of lamb maintained the output value of these meats, but lower prices for pigmeat meant that this sector was depressed for much of the year. Milk production was further reduced by the quota arrangements, but the value of output was maintained by price increases. Production of poultrymeat continued to expand, but lower prices reduced the value of egg production. The forecasts exclude the effects of the recent disturbance in the egg market.

There was little change in the overall quantity, average price or value of the industry's output, but with higher input costs its net product fell by nearly 7 per cent. which, after providing for labour and interest costs and net rent, was reflected in a 25 per cent. fall in farming income. However, no single measure can fully reflect the situation in such a diverse industry, and a variety of different compilations of the aggregate statistics, both United Kingdom and EC, can give different results. It is for that reason, among others, that I have recently suggested that we need a more sophisticated analysis of what is happening to farm incomes than a single aggregate measure can give. The document provides other indicators of farming prosperity which show smaller falls. It also shows that there were considerable income variations among farm types. While the arable and intensive livestock sectors did less well, net income from dairying and hill and upland livestock farms showed marked increases in all parts of the United Kingdom, and net income from lowland livestock increased in England and Scotland. Overall, England fared less well than Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

For the first time Inland Revenue sample data are included in the document. They indicate that income from farming has accounted for 50 to 60 per cent. of total taxable income in recent years. Other earned income has contributed a further 15 to 20 per cent. It is the Government's policy to encourage farmers to find ways of generating an increasing proportion of their income from activities which respond to market demand, including alternative employment of assets and business skills on the farm.

These are sample data relating to earlier years. Further research and surveys are needed to get a more precise and accurate picture of the income position of farming households, and we are undertaking these.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest estimates for the cost of collecting the poll tax in Strathclyde region.

Mr. Lang: Strathclyde regional council will have included an estimate of the cost of community charge collection in the budget which it has now set, but the council has not yet provided the Scottish Office with details of that budget.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what guidance he issues on the circumstances in which information used for the maintenance of the community charge registers may be disclosed to *(a)* other departments of Government, *(b)* the police and *(c)* public utilities;

(2) what guidance he issues on the use of personal data collected by the community charge officer for community charge purposes as a general information resource for the charging authority to use for other purposes, and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: We have made no provision for personal data to be disclosed for the purposes or to the organisations mentioned by the hon. Member. Section 20(2)(b) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, provides that the extent to which a local authority shall be entitled to inspect the register shall be an entitlement to inspect such part of the register as relates to premises within their area for the purpose of determining, levying or collecting any community charge. I do not consider that specific guidance is required in relation to either of these issues.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responsible persons, as so described for the purpose of the community charge, had failed to complete properly the community charge inquiry forms in relation to their date of birth; on how many the £50 civil penalty had been imposed for this reason; and if he will give the information also for each regional council on 31 October 1988 and on the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Lang: The processing of community charges inquiry forms and the imposition of civil penalties are matters for individual community charges registration officers and the information requested is not held centrally.

NHS Grading

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Gailbraith) on 20 January 1989 at column *338*.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of the employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employee's children aged five years and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department does not provide child care facilities and has at present no plans to provide any. It has, however, publicised such facilities provided by others as have come to notice. The provision and funding of facilities for child care are being considered servicewide and my Department will review the situation in the light of developments.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for people waiting for hospital treatment in *(a)* Aberdeen, *(b)* Dundee, *(c)* Edinburgh, and *(d)* Greater Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on waiting lists is collected centrally only for health board areas. The latest available information on hospital in-patient and day case waiting lists is published in statistical bulletin 1/88, "Waiting List Figures for 31 March 1988", copies of which are held in the Library.

Area Conservation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Caerphilly of 24 January, he will list those schemes under which he makes payments to facilitate the conservation of certain areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Under the provisions of the environmentally sensitive area scheme and the agricultural development programme for the Scottish islands my right hon. and learned Friend may make payments to farmers and crofters who are prepared to undertake certain conservation measures.

Ross Hall Hospital (Orthopaedic Operations)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many orthopaedic operations at National Health Service expense have been carried out at Ross Hall hospital to the latest available date; when this practice started; what is the total cost to date for the National Health Service; and what would be the bed requirement if these operations were carried out within National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of patients admitted to Ross Hall hospital for orthopaedic procedures as part of the waiting list initiatives is 52. The first of these patients was admitted in early 1988.

The total cost to the National Health Service has been £154,144. The operations were carried out in order to shorten waiting times for the operations concerned. I visited Ross Hall hospital and learned at first hand how much this initiative by the board was appreciated by the patients concerned.

School Leavers (University Courses)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of school leavers

entering full-time degree courses at university in each of the years from 1982-83 to 1987-88, inclusive, and from each local education authority, including 16 subdivisions of Strathclyde; and if he will express these figures as a proportion of the number of students in s4, s5, and s6 in each authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not readily available centrally. The table shows the participation of young Scots in full-time university courses.

	Under 21 Scots entrants to full-time undergraduate courses at universities in the United Kingdom (1)	*Column (1) expressed as a percentage of 17 year olds the previous year (2)*
Session		
1982-83	8,000	8·5
1983-84	7,700	8·4
1984-85	7,800	8·7
1985-86	7,400	8·4
1986-87	7,400	8·5
1987-88	7,700	9·2

Labour Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of people unemployed in each of the travel-to-work areas in September 1988 and September 1984.

Mr. Lang: The total number of unemployed claimants in each of the travel-to-work areas in Scotland in September 1988 and September 1984 was as shown in the table.

Unemployed claimants

Travel-to-work area	*September 1988*	*September 1984*
Aberdeen	10,073	9,518
Alloa	2,767	3,468
Annan	849	1,241
Arbroath	1,455	1,625
Ayr	4,899	6,787
Badenoch	394	517
Banff	838	733
Bathgate	6,639	10,210
Berwickshire	507	629
Blairgowrie and Pitlochry	994	1,272
Brechin and Montrose	1,312	1,449
Buckie	459	527
Campbeltown	586	723
Crieff	345	386
Cumnock and Sanquhar	3,735	4,022
Dumbarton	4,799	6,150
Dumfries	2,037	2,547
Dundee	13,017	16,919
Dunfermline	6,510	7,476
Dunoon and Bute	1,184	1,309
Edinburgh	28,850	34,356
Elgin	1,551	1,655
Falkirk	7,443	10,959
Forfar	929	1,018
Forres	599	574
Fraserburgh	597	770
Galashiels	851	1,088
Girvan	640	804
Glasgow	94,724	114,805
Greenock	8,607	9,140
Haddington	1,149	1,065
Hawick	508	798
Huntly	288	313
Invergordon and Dingwall	2,154	3,057
Inverness	3,972	3,908
Irvine	8,600	12,013
Islay-Mid Argyll	515	532
Keith	475	576
Kelso and Jedburgh	327	422
Kilmarnock	5,461	6,002
Kirkcaldy	9,488	10,276
Lanarkshire	24,806	33,936
Lochaber	966	1,263
Lockerbie	374	501
Newton Stewart	532	658
North East Fife	1,544	1,761
Oban	660	746
Orkney Islands	729	707
Peebles	414	517
Perth	2,677	3,022
Peterhead	1,271	1,628
Shetland Islands	626	638
Skye and Wester Ross	776	846
Stewartry	792	957
Stirling	3,557	4,900
Stranraer	1,135	1,271
Sutherland	602	822
Thurso	682	718
Western Isles	2,105	1,884
Wick	681	779

Note: Due to changes in the compilation of the statistics during the period these figures are not directly comparable.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of employees in employment by travel-to-work areas in September 1988.

Mr. Lang: The latest available figures, from the 1984 census of employment, are given on pages 28 and 29 of "Scottish Economic Bulletin" number 36 (December 1987), which is available in the Library of the House.

Job Creation

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the number and categories of jobs which have been created by the Inverclyde initiative since the date of its inception in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Inverclyde initiative does not in itself directly create new jobs. Its aim is to stimulate local economic activity and create opportunities for employment.

The initiative records show that between March 1985, when the initiative was launched, and December 1988, 2,613 new jobs have been created by companies in the area. Of these, 1,034 were in manufacturing and 1,579 in the service sector.

Teachers (Working Hours)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what systematic information his Department gathers about the average working hours of teachers in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The timetabled working hours in school in a normal working week subdivided by time in contact with pupils and time out of contact with pupils is collected biennially from each teacher in education authority primary and secondary schools. Due to industrial action in schools, the most recent comprehensive data available relate to September 1984.

Whole Body Monitoring

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now consider extending the programme for whole body monitoring on a systematic basis to the whole of Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have funded a programme of research into whole body monitoring covering Scotland as a whole which has been undertaken by the Scottish universities research and reactor centre at East Kilbride. The final report of that work has been prepared and will be published shortly.

Education Reform

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total spending in his Department on press, public relations and advertising on education in 1986-87 and 1987-88 and the projected expenditure for 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 17 January 1989]:* Expenditure was £5,000 in 1986-87 and £20,000 in 1987-88, and is estimated to be about £26,500 in 1988-89.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the percentage of the annual social fund budget allocated for each month of 1988-89 for grants and loans *(a)* in the Edinburgh, Leith local office and *(b)* in each of the other local offices in Lothian region; and what social fund claims and payments have been made to date, broken down into (i) the number of social fund claims issued and returned for each of grants, budget loans, and for crisis loans, (ii) the number of awards, partial awards and refusals for both grants and loans, (iii) the average payment and (iv) the number of awards successful on review; and if he will give the loans for claimant group 'E', 'A' and pensioners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of the numbers of applications for social fund loans and grants processed and awarded, listed by local office, including information on annual budget allocations and expenditure, are in the Library. Local offices do not, however, have monthly budgets. To assist local office management, there is a national profile of anticipated monthly expenditure which may be adjusted to reflect local demands. Details of the national profile were given in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 11 July 1988 at column *61*.

No statistics are maintained on the number of application forms issued to potential social fund applicants and their representatives.

Details of the number of awards successful on review and the numbers of loans awarded to each social fund client group in the offices requested for the year to the end of December 1988 are shown in the tables.

A. The number of social fund awards successful on review

Local office	*Number*	*Amount awarded (£)*
Bathgate	143	25,882·19
Edinburgh City	9	1,558·55
Edinburgh East	127	21,041·69
Edinburgh North	21	3,138·40
Edinburgh South	75	12,381·78
Edinburgh West	53	6,609·64
Total	428	70,612·25

Loans awarded to social fund client groups

Client group	*Loans awarded*	*Amount granted (£)*
01	74	12,876·29
02	76	14,245·38
03	318	53,948·25
04	64	12,152·46
05	593	85,311·48
06	436	69,063·44
07	4,108	726,898·36
08	59	10,945·05
09	224	26,402·86
10	1,509	288,461·74
11	4,159	384,959·82
12	82	13,399·53
13	1,294	100,298·40
15	638	32,433·82

C. List of social fund client group codes.

Code	*Client Group*
01	Aged over 80 with higher pension premium
02	Aged 60 to 79 disabled with higher pensioner premium
03	Aged 60 to 79 with ordinary pensioner premium or over 60 without pensioner premium
	Applicant and partner aged under 60
04	Lone parent with disability premium
05	Family with disability premium
06	Other with disability premium
07	Lone parent without disability premium
08	Unemployed with family premium—signing quarterly
09	Unemployed without family premium—signing quarterly
10	Unemployed or with training allowance—with family premium
11	Unemployed or with training allowance—without family premium
12	Others with family premium
13	Others without family premium
15	Applicants not receiving Income Support

Benefits

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the amount of benefits to which people are entitled but which is not claimed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No precise estimates of total unclaimed benefits can be provided and those figures which the Department does publish give no more than the broadest orders of magnitude. I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 21 to 25 and table 15.17 on pages 272 to 273 of Cm. 288 (the 1988 public expenditure White Paper) for details of the latest available take-up estimates for the main income-related benefits. Take-up estimates for 1985 should be available shortly.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the levels of statutory sick pay and of sick benefit and invalidity benefit; whether they are earnings related; and if there is a minimum and a maximum sum.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Statutory sick pay is payable at one of two rates, depending on an employee's average weekly earnings. The present rates are £49·20 where average weekly earnings are £79·50 or more and £34·25 where they are between £41 and £79·49. SSP is subject to deductions for tax and national insurance contributions, where appropriate.

Sickness benefit is a flat-rate payment of £31·30 per week for persons under minimum pension age and £39·45 per week for persons over that age. These sums are increased by £19·40 and £23·65 respectively where there is entitlement for an adult dependant.

The basic invalidity pension is a flat-rate payment of £41·15 per week with increases of £24·75 for an adult dependant and £8·40 for each dependent child. Two other increases may be payable with invalidity pension. An additional earnings-related pension is payable based on the claimant's earnings since 1978. The maximum increase payable in 1987 was £29·11, but the average amount in payment was £4·30. An invalidity allowance is payable at one of three rates where the claimant's incapacity began more than five years before pension age. The rates are £8·65 per week (under 40); £5·50 (40-49) and £2·75 (50-59 (men); 50-54 (women)). But where there is entitlement to both increases, invalidity allowance is offset against the additional pension, so in effect the higher of the two sums is payable. Neither sickness benefit nor invalidity benefit is taxable.

Where the claimant has been in hospital for six weeks, sickness or invalidity benefit is reduced by £8·25 a week if the claimant has a dependant and £16·50 if not. After a year in hospital there is a further reduction of £8·25 where the patient has a dependant. If he has no dependant the benefit payable is reduced to £8·25 a week.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many payments have been made under the cold weather payments scheme for each of the weeks in 1989 in *(a)* Nottingham and *(b)* the country as a whole.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Maternity Benefits

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the most recent available figures showing *(a)* the number of maternity payments from the social fund made to women on income support and the take-up rate for this benefit, *(b)* the number of awards of free milk and vitamins made to pregnant women on income support and the take-up rate for this benefit and *(c)* the number of pregnant women on income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

(a) 95,700 social fund maternity payments were made to women on income support between 11 April 1988 and 31 November 1988;

(b) information is not yet available on the number of awards of free milk and vitamins to women on income support. The May 1987 annual statistical inquiry showed 47,000 such awards to women receiving supplementary benefit;

(c) pregnant women are not separately identified for income support purposes.

It is not therefore possible to provide information about take up for either maternity payments or free milk and vitamins.

Benefits

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people over pensionable age in Great Britain have had their total social security benefits reduced to less than £1 per week as a result of changes to the housing benefit regulations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret this information is not available.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of *(a)* claimants and *(b)* dependants on supplementary benefits income support for each year since 1979 for Great Britain, England, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Number of claimants in receipt of Supplementary Benefit or Income Support

	Great Britain	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
1979	2,855,000	2,396,000	172,000	286,000
1980	3,118,000	2,627,000	186,000	304,000
1981	3,723,000	3,131,000	221,000	371,000
1982	4,267,000	3,590,000	253,000	423,000
1983	4,349,000	3,649,000	260,000	440,000
1984	4,609,000	3,866,000	275,000	468,000
1986	4,938,000	4,141,000	291,000	506,000
1987	4,896,000	4,073,000	287,000	535,000
1988	4,354,000	3,596,000	259,000	499,000

Number of partners and dependent children of claimants in receipt of Supplementary Benefit or Income Support

	Great Britain	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
1979	1,516,000	1,256,000	95,000	164,000
1980	1,745,000	1,465,000	104,000	177,000
1981	2,399,000	2,013,000	149,000	237,000
1982	2,803,000	2,348,000	173,000	281,000
1983	2,888,000	2,438,000	178,000	273,000
1984	3,119,000	2,618,000	198,000	304,000
1986	3,353,000	2,821,000	207,000	326,000
1987	3,309,000	2,789,000	194,000	327,000
1988	3,018,000	2,510,000	182,000	327,000

Source for both tables:
1979-1987 Annual Statistical Enquiry.
1988 May Quarterly Statistical Inquiry.
Notes:
1. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand and may not therefore sum.
2. There was no Annual Statistical Inquiry in 1985: the one due in December that year was deferred until February 1986.

Incomes

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the average growth in incomes in each of the last 10 years of *(a)* households in the sixth decile group and *(b)* pensioners' households in the sixth decile group of pensioner households;

(2) what was the average growth in incomes in each of the last 10 years of *(a)* households in the seventh decile group and *(b)* pensioners' households in the seventh decile group of pensioner households.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 23 January at column *414*.

Family Credit

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for family credit take-up in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales, *(d)* the United Kingdom and *(e)* Greater Glasgow.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For the figures for Great Britain as a whole, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 13 January 1989 at columns *781-82*. No breakdown of this figure between countries or areas is available. The family credit scheme in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will immediately undertake an in-depth study of the high extra costs of disability, as advocated by the Disablement Income Group in its recent report entitled, "Being Disabled Costs More Than They Said", in order to supplement the information on extra costs derived recently from the survey of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Mr. Scott: In view of the differences in size, scope and method between the OPCS and Disablement Income Group surveys, we are not persuaded that further research is needed to explain the apparent discrepancy in findings. However I can assure the right hon. Member that we shall take careful account of the DIG report in our consideration of the OPCS findings.

Benzodiazepines

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are at present receiving sick or invalidity benefit as a result of withdrawing from benzodiazepines.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not held.

Income Support

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect a reply to his letter, dated 30 December 1988, regarding income support for unemployed young people.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I wrote to the hon. Member on 27 January.

Social Fund

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applications have been made to date for social fund *(a)* community care grants, *(b)* budgeting loans and *(c)* crisis loans; and how many have been refused in each category.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information for the period to 30 November, the latest date for which firm figures are available, is in the national summary tables in the Library.

AIDS

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated average annual benefit cost and total eventual benefit cost of *(a)* each AIDS patient from the time of being identified as HIV positive and *(b)* each drug addict seeking treatment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department does not collect statistical information about benefit claims by AIDS patients and drug addicts. It is therefore not possible to make such estimates.

EMPLOYMENT

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current weight in the retail prices index for *(a)* mortgage interest payments, *(b)* rents, *(c)* rates and *(d)* other housing costs; and what information he has to the equivalent weights in the consumer price indices for other European Community countries.

Mr. Lee: The weights (per thousand) for the components of housing used in the retail prices index are: mortgage interest payments 42, rent 33, rates 43 and other housing costs 42 (water and sewerage charges, repairs and maintenance charges, do-it-yourself materials, dwelling insurance and ground rent).

Housing costs are not similarly defined in other countries, and detailed comparisons are not possible. The weights assigned to the shelter element of housing costs in the consumer price indices of EC countries involve different coverage and concepts, and comparisons should be treated with caution. The figures are as follows:

Weights for Shelter costs in consumer price indices
Countries including owner occupiers cost and rents
Weights per 1,000

	Weights
United Kingdom	75
Germany	148
Holland	164
Ireland	37
Denmark	166
Spain	127

Countries including rents only

	Weights
France	69
Italy	40
Belgium	64
Greece	54

Channel Tunnel (Death)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will call for a report from the Health and Safety Executive on the circumstances in which a teenager was killed in an industrial accident in the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are carrying out an investigation into the circumstances of the accident in the Channel tunnel on 23 January 1989.

Mines (Safety)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those people and organisations he consulted before making the regulations regarding the safety of exit from mines.

Mr. Nicholls: Consultations on proposed regulations to govern health and safety at work are undertaken by the Health and Safety Commission before proposals are made to my right hon. Friend for approval.

The organisations listed were formally consulted by the Health and Safety Commission before the proposed regulations on safety of exit from mines were submitted to my right hon. Friend:

Confederation of British Industry
British Coal
Cornish Chamber of Mines
Federation of Small Mines of Great Britain
Gypsum Mining Association
Mining Association of the United Kingdom
British Ball Clay Producers Association
Other Miscellaneous Mines interests via relevant Mines and Quarries Inspectors in charge of districts
Trades Union Congress
National Union of Mineworkers
British Association of Colliery Management
National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shot-firers
Transport and General Workers Union
General Municipal and Boilermakers' Union

Department of Employment
Department of Energy
Department of the Environment
Department of Trade and Industry
Scottish Office
Welsh Office
Northern Ireland Office
Northern Ireland Department of Economic Development
Health and Safety Agency for Northern Ireland
Institution of Mining Engineers
Institution of Mining Electrical and Mining Mechanical Engineers
Institution of Mining and Metallurgy

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has of the number of accidents involving men employed by contractors in mines in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: The table below lists actual recorded accidents to men employed by contractors:

	Fatal	*Major Injury*	*Plus three day*[1]
1986	1	44	162
1987	1	58	183
1988	2	85	319

Source: British Coal.

[1] The introduction of the RIDDOR regulations on 1 April 1986 broadened the categories of reportable accidents. Figures for other mines are not readily available.

Radiation Overdoses

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what records are kept of incidents of radiation over/dosage within the National Health Service; and how many such incidents have been recorded in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive keeps a record of all over/exposures of employees and other persons, and also of medical exposures of patients that are much greater than intended because of malfunction of or defect in the radiation equipment used, that are required to be notified under the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985.

Since 1 December 1986, the earliest date for which such records are centrally available, the number of overdose incidents within the National Health Service which have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive in each year are as follows:

	Number
1986	5
1987	8
1988	4

Workers' Charter

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will be seeking in the context of the single European market to introduce a workers' charter with particular reference to mergers and closures of companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on Tuesday 17 January 1989 *Official Report*, column *186*.

Tourism

Mr. Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage the tourist industry in Suffolk and Norfolk to take advantage of the Channel tunnel and the European single market.

Mr. Lee: The British Tourist Authority (BTA), which is sponsored by my Department, is doing a great deal both to identify and publicise the measures the tourist industry, including that in Norfolk and Suffolk, need to take. The BTA is co-sponsoring a major conference on 1 and 2 February on the impact on tourism of the completion of the single European market at which my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I will speak.

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the progress of the tourism review that he announced on 18 July 1988.

Mr. Fowler: As the public expenditure White Paper makes clear, the Government's expenditure plans provide for my Department's total spending on tourism to be maintained at the current level, pending decisions following the review of tourism policy I announced in July.

A scheme of financial assistance has been operated for nearly 20 years now by the English tourist board under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. Commitments have already been made to provide over £10 million in assistance through the scheme in 1989-90, and some £3 million in 1990-91 and 1991-92. The scheme offers grants, and other assistance, and was introduced and maintained against a background of difficulty in attracting investment for tourism projects. Tourism is now one of Britain's largest and fastest growing industries. The confidence of the industry has been reflected in continuing high levels of investment. In England, almost £2 billion

was invested in major tourism and leisure projects completed or under way during the first six months of 1988. In these circumstances, I have decided to suspend the scheme to fresh applications until decisions can be taken on the fully range of matters covered by the review.

I have asked the chairman of the English tourist board to close the scheme to further applications and to make no more offers of assistance subsequent to those approved at the meeting of the board already arranged for 14 February until I have had the opportunity to consider the future of Government support for the tourism industry.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men and women over 50 years of age have been without work for one year or more within the following occupational groupings; and what percentages these represent of the total number of unemployed people over 50 years *(a)* managerial and professional, *(b)* clerical and related, *(c)* other non-manual, *(d)* craft and similar, *(e)* general labourers and *(f)* other manual.

Mr. Lee: Estimates are available from the labour force survey for unemployed people who left their last jobs less than three years ago, as follows:

Unemployed people[1] aged 50 or over who left their last job less than three years ago[2]

Occupational grouping	*All in group Thousands*	*Those who left their last job a year or more ago Thousands*	*Per cent.*
Men and women			
Managerial and professional	67	31	46
Clerical and related	30	14	45
Other non-manual	14	[3]—	[3]—
Craft and similar	61	27	45
General labourers	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Other manual	104	52	50
All occupational groupings	280	131	47
Men			
Managerial and professional	51	24	47
Clerical and related	10	[3]—	[3]—
Other non-manual	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Craft and similar	57	26	45
General labours	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Other manual	73	38	52
All occupational groupings	201	95	47
Women			
Managerial and professional	16	[3]—	[3]—
Clerical and related	20	[3]—	[3]—
Other non-manual	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Craft and similar	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
General labourers	[3]—	[3]—	[3]—
Other manual	31	15	47
All occupational groupings	79	36	45

[1] Based on ILO/OECD measure of unemployment.
[2] Information about last occupational grouping was not sought from unemployed people who had not been employed within the last three years.
[3] Less than 10,000 in cell: estimate not shown.

School Leavers

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of achievement of the Christmas guarantee for school leavers; and what is the average period of payment of bridging allowance for those awaiting YTS.

Mr. Cope: The previous "Christmas guarantee" of an offer of a YTS place for the previous summer's school leavers has been extended to a general guarantee of an offer of a YTS place to all 16 and 17-year-olds not in full-time education or employment whenever they apply. This guarantee is being fulfilled; there are more than sufficient YTS places available in all areas of the country for any young person who applies.

Information on the average period of payment of bridging allowance is not available.

Discrimination

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will take steps to ratify ILO convention No. 111 on discrimination in employment and occupation (1958).

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Government have no plans to introduce legislation to effect the changes that ratification of this convention would entail.

Cost of Living

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in *(a)* the general index of retail prices and *(b)* the indices for one and two-person pensioner households during the last five calendar years; and what proportion of the difference is accounted for by differing treatment of housing costs.

Mr Lee: The percentage increases are given in the following table. Housing costs are not covered by the pensioner indices and data is not available to estimate what their effect would be if they were. However, a like-with-like comparison can be made between the pensioner indices and the general index excluding housing, and the percentage increases for this are also given in the table.

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
General index	5·0	6·1	3·4	4·2	4·9
General index excluding housing	4·3	4·9	3·0	3·3	4·0
One-person pensioner index	5·0	4·9	3·2	2·3	3·7
Two-person pensioner index	5·1	4·9	3·2	2·6	3·8

Advertising

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the subjects of his Department's advertising campaigns in each of the last three years; how much was spent on each; what subjects are projected for advertising in the year 1988-89; and how much expenditure is planned for each.

Mr. Cope: The amount spent by the Department of Employment on advertising campaigns in each of the last three financial years, together with the subjects, is contained in the tables:

	£ million
1985-86	
Action for Jobs	0·04
Career Development Loans	0·03
Part Time Job Release and Job Splitting Scheme	0·03
Total	0·10
1986-87	
Action for Jobs	12·2
Career Develoment Loans	0·2
New Workers Scheme	0·3
Total	12·7
1987-88	
Action for Jobs	5·4
Job Share	0·1
Job Release/New Workers Scheme	0·1
Career Development Loans	0·1
Small Firms Service	0·3
Other	0·1
Total	6·1

The amount committed to advertising campaigns in the financial year 1988-89, together with the subjects, is contained in the following table:

	£ million
1988-89	
Action for Jobs	0·6
Career Development Loans	0·3
Fit for Work/Disabled Persons	0·1
Jobclub	1·1
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	0·6
Better off in Work	3·0
Small Firms Service	0·5
Total	6·2

This total includes expenditure by the employment service in its first full financial year within the Department. Other publicity activities to promote Departmental objectives are under consideration, within published expenditure limits. All the figures in the tables include production costs and VAT.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will name the sites referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Elmet on 25 January, and specify the modifications to existing methods of work which have been agreed in each case.

Mr. Nicholls: The sites and action taken are as follows:

(a) Godkin Opencast Coal Quarry, Derbyshire—owned by Northern Strip Mining plc—Mineral: Coal.

Immediate prohibition notice issued preventing planned development in the area of a dam wall within the site. Subsequent investigation has produced a method of safe working which complies with the requirements of the notice.

(b) Station Road Opencast Coal Quarry, Derbyshire—owned by Northern Strip Mining plc—Mineral: Coal, and

(c) Dixon Opencast Coal Quarry, Derbyshire—owned by Coal Contractors Ltd.—Mineral: Coal.

At both the above sites, action was taken to redirect the river Rother into purpose-built main river courses, which included flood plains and banks.

(d) Blindwell Opencast Coal Quarry, East Lothian—owned by Fairclough Parkingson of Wakefield—Mineral: Coal.

The proposed stand-off distance between the highwall and the main Edinburgh-London railway line was increased and the slope of the highwall redesigned to increase the safety margin.

Youth Training

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fatalities, major injuries, and minor injuries occurred to those in training on YTS programmes during *(a)* 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986, *(b)* 1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987 and *(c)* 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988; and what was the incidence rate for fatal and major accidents per 100,000 at risk during each of these years.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 27 January 1989]:* The following table sets out the YTS accident figures and incidence rates per 100,000 trainees on YTS for fatal and major accidents.

Period	*Average number in training*	*Accidents*[1]			*Annual incidence rate per 100,000 trainees*	
		Fatalities	*Major injuries*	*Minor injuries*	*Fatalities*	*Major injuries*
1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986	263,748	[4]2	[2]220	1,891	0·8	[2]83·4
1 April 1986 to 31 March 1987	296,298	[5]9	[2]315	1,728	3·0	[2]106·3
1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988	[3]375,844	[6]7	[2]505	2,604	1·9	[2]134·3

[1]Training Agency accident figures for YTS are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, Training agency figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments, which may not have been reportable to the Executive had the individuals been employed.

[2]The figures on major accidents and the incidence rates on major accidents in 1985-86 are not comparable to those in 1986-87 and in subsequent years due to a reclassification of major injuries effective from 1 April 1986. The reclassification means that some injuries, in particular broken wrists and ankles, which were classified as minor injuries before that date, are now classified as major injuries.

[3]These figures are provisional.

[4]This figure includes 1 road traffic accident.

[5]This figure includes 4 road traffic accidents.

[6]This figure includes 2 road traffic accidents.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish details, as soon as they become available, of *(a)* compensation paid to YTS trainees because of accidents in 1988, *(b)* the amount paid to families whose daughter or son died whilst on a YTS during 1988 and *(c)* the lowest and highest payment made in relation to *(a)* and *(b)* above.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 25 January 1989]:* Payments made to YTS trainees or their families in these circumstances are not intended as compensation.

Managing agents and training managers are contractually obliged to obtain insurance cover for any claims for compensation or damages.

Until 11 April 1988 the Training Commission paid industrial death grants under its analogous industrial injuries scheme to ensure that trainees' families received the same amount of benefit as families of employees would have received under the (then) Department of Health and Social Security scheme. Death grants were payable at the standard rates of £52 for single parent and £78 for two parents. During the period 1 January 1988 to 10 April 1988 there was one death for which a death grant was claimed and a payment of £52 was made. The Training Commission grant was discontinued from 11 April 1988 when the equivalent grant in respect of employees was abolished by social security regulations.

The Training Agency continues to pay industrial injuries benefit to trainees on the same basis as that paid to employees. The total amount paid out in 1988 was £534,092. Details of the highest and lowest amounts paid could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report*, the *(a)* date, *(b)* cause of fatality, *(c)* parliamentary constituency and *(d)* amount of compensation received for each death on youth opportunities programme and YTS since the schemes' inceptions, to the latest available date.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 25 January 1989]:* The available information for fatalities on the youth opportunities programme and YTS is provided in the table. Information on the location is available only by Training Agency area. The Training Agency and its predecessors do not pay compensation, but under YTS managing agents and training managers are contractually obliged to obtain insurance to cover any claims to compensation or damages. Until 11 April 1988 the Training Agency paid an industrial death grant equivalent to the payments received from DHSS had the young people been employees.

Date of death	*Circumstances of death*	*Training Agency area office*
Youth opportunities programme		
24 October 1980	Road traffic accident	Wrexham
1 December 1980	Clothing caught fire	Grampian and Tayside
27 January 1981	Electrocuted	Wrexham
13 March 1981	Struck by gas cylinder	Birmingham
16 June 1981	Trapped between vehicles	Swansea
1 October 1981	Road traffic accident	Lancashire
2 October 1981	Struck by load which fell off fork lift truck	Nottingham
24 November 1981	Road traffic accident	Highlands and Islands
11 December 1981	Collapsed while clearing snow	London
8 January 1982	Fell from rope hoist	Humberside
14 May 1982	Drowned while swimming during lunch break	High Wycombe
16 July 1982	Tractor overturned	Devon and Cornwall
20 July 1982	Drowned while swimming during lunch break	Glasgow
14 October 1982	Clothing caught fire	Lanarkshire
2 December 1982	Trapped in machinery	Cardiff
20 December 1982	Hit by moving machinery	Sheffield
1 April 1983	Road traffic accident	Beds and Cambs
16 April 1983	Tractor accident	Coventry
12 July 1983	Drowned while swimming during lunch break	Lanarkshire
Youth training scheme		
27 June 1983	Road traffic accident	Leicester
7 September 1983	Fell down mine shaft	Newcastle
12 October 1983	Fork lift truck accident	Lanarkshire
1 March 1984	Tractor accident	Gloucester
27 July 1984	Road traffic accident	Lothian and Borders
22 August 1984	Road traffic accident	Horsham
24 September 1984	Dumper truck overturned	Avon
12 February 1985	Clothing caught fire	Cheshire
26 February 1985	Trapped under vehicle when jack collapsed	Ayrshire, Dumfries Galloway
29 July 1985	Electrocuted	Lancashire
20 August 1985	Road traffic accident	Greater Manchester Central
7 May 1986	Road traffic accident	Wrexham
14 May 1986	Fall from ladder	Avon
30 June 1986	Road traffic accident	Chatham
3 October 1986	Loading materials—trapped neck	Grampian and Tayside
11 November 1986	Trapped between trailer roof and workshop roof beam	Wrexham
26 November 1986	Electrocuted	Gloucester
23 December 1986	Road traffic accident	Wakefield
4 March 1987	Fell into grain silo on farm	Wrexham
18 March 1987	Road traffic accident	Ipswich
14 April 1987	Road traffic accident	Dudley/Sandwell (b)
17 August 1987	Trapped under tractor wheels	Derby
23 October 1987	Struck by material falling off fork lift truck	Leeds/North Yorks
16 November 1987	Tractor accident	Devon/Cornwall
14 December 1987	Trapped in silage machine	Gwent
12 January 1988	Road traffic accident	Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll
13-15 January 1988 (exact date not known)	Lost at sea	Devon/Cornwall

Date of death	Circumstances of death	Training Agency area office
5 August 1988 (c)	Explosion in garage	Cardiff
17 August 1988 (c)	Fall from ladder	Marches
18 August 1988 (c)	Struck by arm and bucket of mechanical digger	Grampian and Tayside
14 September 1988 (c)	Road traffic accident	Staffs
6 October 1988 (c)	Road traffic accident	Central and Fife
2 November 1988 (c)	Road traffic accident	Merseyside
2 November 1988 (c)	Flash during fire at paint manufacturers	Humberside

ENERGY

Electricity Interconnector

13. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate available to him from the South of Scotland electricity board and the Central Electricity Generating Board of the cost of *(a)* doubling and *(b)* trebling the carrying capacity of the interconnector between Scotland and England.

47. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what meetings or representations he has recently had on the potential transmission of spare electricity generating capacity from Scotland into England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that the industry announced today that it will, in the near future, proceed with preparatory work which will involve a full environmental study and discussions with local authorities and other interested bodies with a view to upgrading the interconnector to 1·6 GW by 1994. The cost of upgrading the interconnector and the decision to proceed beyond preparatory work will be a matter for commercial negotiation.

Berkeley Power Station

17. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received any representations from the Central Electricity Generating Board on the financial implications for privatisation of its most recent estimate of the cost of decommissioning Berkeley nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

British Gas

19. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the British Gas Corporation; and what matters he discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of British Gas plc in November, when a range of issues of mutual interest were discussed.

Energy Efficiency

20. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has received from housing authorities and associations concerning the insulation of domestic properties as part of the energy efficiency programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Housing authorities and associations deal mainly with the Department of the Environment, with which my Department has regular contact.

Energy Efficiency Office

21. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has plans to restore the budget of his Energy Efficiency Office to the level allocated in 1985-86.

Mr. Parkinson: The budget of my Energy Efficiency Office for 1989-90 is £15 million.

European Fast Reactor

22. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had about the European fast reactor programme; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in the European collaborative programme on the development of fast reactor technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority is now discussing with our partners in the European collaboration the details of an integrated programme of research on fast reactors. The implementing agreements, which provide the framework for this work, should be signed shortly.

North Sea Oil

23. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give *(a)* the estimates and *(b)* the actual amounts of recoverable oil resources obtained from the North sea for each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the forecasts and actual levels of oil production published annually in the Brown Book, my Department's report to Parliament on the development of United Kingdom oil and gas resources; following is a summary.

Million tonnes of oil produced in United Kingdom from 1984-1988 (includes condensate and gross natural gas liquid output)

Year of Brown Book forecast	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
1983	95-125	95-125	85-120	—	—
1984	110-130	110-130	100-125	85-115	80-115
1985	—	120-135	110-130	95-125	85-120
1986	—	—	120-135	110-130	100-125
1987	—	—	—	115-130	105-125
1988	—	—	—	—	105-125
Actual	126	127	127	123·	—

Note: Forecasts may vary from year to year, as new information on resources becomes available and as companies' plans develop. Actual production for 1988 is not yet available. Non-North Sea production accounts for about 0·5 mt of production a year.

41. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the costs of abandoning oil installations in the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) on 12 December 1988 at column *482*.

Energy Demand

24. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his assessment of the impact of the introduction of the European Commission directive on energy information in buildings on the level of energy demand in the United Kingdom by the year 2000.

Mr. Peter Morrison: No such assessment has been made. In its present form, the draft directive would require energy audits to be carried out on a mandatory basis; as I told my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on 9 November 1988, I consider that, while the Government encourage consumers to take energy efficiency into account, it is entirely a matter for the seller and the buyer and one in which it would not be appropriate for the Government to intervene.

Electricity Privatisation

25. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the total cost to public funds of the consultancy fees for advice on the sale to the private sector of the electricity supply industry in each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Estimate provision for 1988-89 for expenditure associated with the sale of shares in the electricity supply industry in England and Wales is for £6 million, mainly for advisers. Latest forecasts of requirement for 1989-90 will be published as part of the Supply Estimates in March.

37. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the United Kingdom's total national energy needs he estimates will be met by the private sector following privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Parkinson: If the market shares held by the various fuel producers stay unchanged, some 87 per cent. of final energy consumption will be met by the private sector after electricity privatisation, compared to 73 per cent. in 1987.

44. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the total cost of advertising the proposed sale to the private sector of the 17 parts of the electricity supply industry in each of the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-91

Mr. Michael Spicer: The total costs of advertising, public relations and publicity will not be determined until much closer to the date at which the successor companies to the electricity supply industry are offered for sale.

Independent Electricity Producers

26. **Mr. Rost:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of electrical capacity likely to be provided by new independent producers who have so far indicated proposals.

Mr. Parkinson: We know of nearly 20 proposed independent generation projects with a total capacity of some 7 GW.

Neighbourhood Energy Action

27. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress with the neighbourhood energy action community insulation programme.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the current financial year to end December an estimated 105,000 homes have been insulated by community insulation projects, bringing the total number of homes insulated under this programme to more than 580,000. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy informed the House on 13 January at column *772*, uptake of places for unemployed people has been slow under employment training. My Department is therefore in discussion with the Training Agency on initiatives to increase the number of filled places.

Offshore Trade Unions

28. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the representatives of the offshore trade unions.

Mr. Parkinson: I will be meeting the EETPU on 27 February and the TUC on 28 February. On 5 April, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will be chairing a meeting of the offshore industry liaison committee which includes representatives of the oil industry, suppliers, and trades unions.

Energy Conservation

29. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his responsibilities in relation to energy conservation.

Mr. Parkinson: Under the Ministry of Fuel and Power Act 1945, the Secretary of State for Energy is charged with promoting economy and efficiency in the supply, distribution, use and consumption of fuel and power. Under the Gas Act 1986, the Secretary of State has a duty to promote efficiency and economy on the part of persons authorised to supply gas through pipes and the efficient use of gas supplied through pipes.

18. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his target for energy conservation in the Government estate and the progress of interdepartmental co-ordination.

Mr. Parkinson: Plans are being drawn up for a fresh campaign to improve energy efficiency in the public sector.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state the number of jobs that would be created in a programme of domestic energy conservation, namely draught proofing and the insulation of homes, to displace the equivalent energy supplied by one large power station.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There is no straightforward relationship between energy efficiency programmes and displaced electrical energy.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what expenditure is going into research into energy conservation and implementation of an energy conservation strategy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The 1988-89 estimate provision available to the Energy Efficiency Office of my Department is £20·8 million, of which £5·4 million is for research and development, including the monitoring and targeting programme, and £7·1 million for the demonstration programme.

Burgoyne Committee

30. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to implement the recommendations of the Burgoyne committee on safety in the offshore oil and gas industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 12 December 1988, at columns *477-78*.

British Coal

31. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the level of employment in British Coal in 1990 and 1995.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) on 12 December 1988 at column *477*.

Electricity Council

32. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Electricity Council, and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet the chairman of the Electricity Council regularly to discuss a variety of issues of mutual interest.

Wind Energy

33. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what target he has set for the percentage of electricity to be generated by wind energy by the year 2000 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No targets have been set for the year 2000. Renewable energy technologies are at an early stage of development and there is great uncertainty about future projections. Energy paper 55 estimated that by the year 2025 wind energy might provide up to the equivalent of 10 per cent. of current electricity requirements if the technology can be proven and applied commercially. It is Government policy to encourage the maximum exploitation of renewable energy sources wherever they have prospects of being economically viable and environmentally acceptable.

British Nuclear Fuels plc

35. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the contribution made to the west Cumbrian economy by British Nuclear Fuels plc at Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Nuclear Fuels plc makes a major contribution to the economy of west Cumbria, and the capital investment programme for Sellafield will amount to some £4 billion by the end of the century. The company currently employs some 7,200 people at the site, while those employed there by contractors is expected to rise from the current level of some 6,000 to some 8,000 by 1991. In recent years, BNFL spent an average of £1 million a year on major schemes to help the local community. The company has recently committed itself to contribute £1 million a year over the next 10 years to a fund with local authorities and other local companies to promote new and expanding businesses in the area.

48. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the statistics for nuclear discharges into the Irish sea from the British Nuclear Fuels site at Sellafield for each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Discharges to the Irish sea from Sellafield between 1983 and 1987 (the latest year for which figures are currently available) were as follows:

	Alpha (terabecquerels)	*Beta (terabecquerels)*
1983	14	2,489
1984	14	1,190
1985	6	587
1986	4·4	118
1987	2·2	89

Nuclear Power

34. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has regarding the likely growth of nuclear power generation worldwide over the next 15 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department of Energy does not forecast total world nuclear power generation; but the IAEA has recently published a range of estimates to 2005. These are shown in the table:

	Total World Nuclear Generation (TWh)
1987	1,652
1995	2,362-2,461
2000	2,813-3,081
2005	3,205-3,695

Source: International Atomic Energy Agency. Energy, Electricity and Nuclear Power Estimates for the period up to 2005. July 1988 Edition.

36. **Sir Trevor Skeet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the proportion of energy needs which are currently met by nuclear power generation in *(a)* Britain, *(b)* France, *(c)* West Germany, *(d)* Belgium, *(e)* Spain, *(f)* Japan and *(g)* the United States of America for each of the last two years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The proportions of nuclear generation to total primary energy requirement for 1985 and 1986, the latest full two years for which figures are available, are shown in the table:

Proportion of Nuclear Electricity to total primary energy requirement

Country	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom	6·7	6·4
France	25·2	28·3
West Germany	10·5	9·9

Country	1985	1986
Belgium	17·9	19·8
Spain	8·3	11·1
Japan	10·5	11·0
United States of America	5·0	5·4

Source: International Energy Agency Energy Balances of OECD Countries 1985-86.

British Coal (Scotland)

38. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current levels of output and manning, both deep mined and opencast, related to British Coal's operations in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised by the British Coal Corporation that, in the nine months to December 1988, British Coal's deep-mined output in Scotland was 1,444,822 tonnes and opencast output was 2,709,067 tonnes. There were 2,918 men on colliery books at the end December 1988, and 1,053 contractors' industrials at opencast sites at end November 1988.

Leicester Combined Heat and Power Project

39. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations or meetings he has had recently concerning the Leicester combined heat and power project.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has had discussions with the general manager of Leicester Energy Ltd. and my Department is also in regular touch with the company. Officials keep Ministers informed of progress on the Leicester combined heat and power district heating scheme.

Restart

5. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received on the effects of the restart scheme on beneficiaries of the redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) at Question Time today.

40. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the pension rights and concessionary coal entitlements of former miners who have been directed to fill out restart job forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Barrage Schemes

42. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made estimates of the future contribution to United Kingdom energy needs from barrage schemes.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Feasibility studies of major barrages are currently under way. If they could be constructed, the Severn barrage would provide the equivalent of around 6 per cent. of today's electricity requirement and the Mersey around 0·5 per cent. Energy paper 55 provided a maximum estimate equivalent to 10 per cent. of current electricity requirement by the year 2025.

Electricity Generation

43. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the maximum proportion of United Kingdom energy needs that could be derived from *(a)* wind power, *(b)* wave power, *(c)* solar power and *(d)* geothermal power over the next 50 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Estimates of the contribution that could be made by each renewable energy source in the year 2025 have been published in energy paper 55, copies of which are in the Libraries of both Houses. It is Government policy to encourage the maximum exploitation of renewable energy sources wherever they have prospects of being economically viable and environmentally acceptable.

Electricity Supply Industry

45. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the employment level in the electricity supply industry in England and Wales, in 1990 and 1995.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The planned staffing level in the electricity supply industry in England and Wales for March 1990 is 129,580. Any estimate for 1995 will be a matter for the industry.

Drax Power Station

46. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what reductions in sulphur emissions are expected from the proposed sulphur removal plant at Drax power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The flue gas desulphurisation plant which will be installed at Drax power station is designed to remove at least 90 per cent. of the sulphur dioxide in the flue gases. When fully completed, it is expected to eliminate about 10 per cent. of the board's current sulphur dioxide emissions.

Electricity (Rural Areas)

49. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the steps he is taking to encourage area boards to improve the supply of electricity to rural areas.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Consumers in rural areas in particular will benefit from our proposals. For the first time, all owners or occupiers of premises will have a right to require a supply of electricity from the area boards' successors, the public electricity suppliers. This right applies irrespective of the distance from the premises to the main. The suppliers will be under a statutory duty to comply on reasonable terms with all such requests, if it is technically practical to do so.

NATO Wartime Oil Organisation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United

Kingdom representatives designated to form part of the staff of the NATO wartime oil organisation in transition to war and in war.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information requested is classified.

Fusion Research

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what advantages will be gained for United Kingdom fusion research by the planned reduction in programme funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Fusion, like any other new technology, will need to win its place in competition with the other sources of energy expected to be available over the next century. On present prospects, we have decided that there is no justification for continuing as broad a programme of fusion research as we have had in the past. However, we are continuing to fund the most promising line of research in our own programme and have also agreed with our Community partners that we shall maintain the present level of support to JET, whose total expenditure is around £75 million a year, through to its scheduled completion in 1992.

CEGB (Research)

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has reviewed the continuation of Central Electricity Generating Board research as a requirement of the privatisation programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Advisory Council on Research and Development will be considering the CEGB's plans for research in the run up to privatisation and conveying its views to me.

After privatisation, the nature and level of the successor companies' research programmes will be matters for them to decide.

Power Stations (Employment)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state the total number of jobs created by *(a)* the design and construction and *(b)* the operation of (i) nuclear power station, (ii) fossil fuel power station and (iii) tidal power barrage, and indicate for each set of data the proportion of spin-off jobs thus created.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I will write to the hon. Member with the information he has requested as soon as possible.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 31 January 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Assets (Seizure)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what stage has been reached with regard to a bilateral treaty with the United States of America for receiving the moneys payable where United Kingdom police have assisted United States' police in serious crimes and assets have been seized by the courts; and what is the timetable for the conclusion of the treaty.

Mr. John Patten: We are still seeking clarification of the exact requirements of United States law and how they might be met. It is not yet certain whether either the agreement on drug trafficking which we concluded with the United States last year or any future agreement of wider scope would in itself provide a sufficient legal basis for the transfer of money.

Prisons

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what areas in the county of Avon are currently under consideration by Her Majesty's prison board for the construction of new prison provision.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department has been looking at a number of possible sites in Avon as part of a general site search exercise covering the whole of England and Wales. Preliminary inquiries into these sites are continuing and it would be wrong at this stage to make specific reference to particular locations in advance of the outcome of those inquiries.

Broadcasting Standards Council

Mr Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff the Broadcasting Standards Council will have; and what its total annual budget will be.

Mr. Tim Renton: The Broadcasting Standards Council will employ fewer than 20 staff and the annual budget is likely to be just over £1 million.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of the Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday or after school care, is provided for employees' children aged five years and over; and what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At present, the Home Office provides no facilities for the pre-school age children of its staff, but it is examining the feasibility of setting up a nursery in Croydon. A play-scheme for older children already operates there during the school holidays. Children of Home Office staff are also eligible to attend holiday play-schemes in Bootle and Westminster, and the Department has agreed to contribute to the initial funding of these schemes. Further proposals for child care, and their funding, are likely to be considered over the next five years.

Black Detainees

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year for the last 10 years and by place of detention the number of black detainees held in custody at police stations in the Metropolitan police area who have died whilst in custody; what the figures are for areas outside the metropolis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available. Information on the total number of deaths in police custody, including the force area, place where death occurred and the cause of death, is published annually in the report of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary.

Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what are *(a)* the average earnings of prisoners and *(b)* the range of prisoners' earnings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The average weekly pay of inmates in prison service establishments in England and Wales is estimated to be about £2·38. It ranges between £1·55 for those for whom no work is available and £5·36 for those on maximum pay under various incentive schemes.

Israeli Ambassador (Letter Bomb)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet able to make a statement about the origins of the letter bomb recently sent to the Israeli ambassador.

Mr. Hurd: A postal bomb addressed to the Israeli ambassador was successfully defused by a Metropolitan police explosives officer at the embassy on 16 January. The package was posted in north London on 13 January, but it is not known who was responsible for sending the device. Police inquiries are continuing.

Prison Medical Services

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further progress has been made with respect to the recommendations of the Social Services Select Committee report on prison medical services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government welcomed the Select Committee's report and accepted in whole or in part the majority of the 58 recommendations it contained.

The accepted recommendations cover a wide range of subjects. Where it has been possible to deal with them quickly that has been done. Some by their very nature are susceptible of implementation only in the long-term. Advance on others is determined by the results of

negotiations with the central Departments or in discussion with, or after deliberation by, appropriate professional bodies. In this last category I include the important subject of the training of prison medical officers, which will be reviewed in the light of a report being prepared by a working group under the chairmanship of the president of the Royal College of Physicians. Subject to those provisos, progress is being maintained.

Illegal Parking

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is issued to the Metropolitan police as to the circumstances in which it is appropriate *(a)* to tow away illegally parked vehicles, *(b)* to clamp illegally parked vehicles and *(c)* to issue a fixed penalty notice for an illegally parked vehicle.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner that all police officers and traffic wardens are trained in the enforcement of parking restrictions. Those police officers deployed on wheel-clamping and vehicle removal duties receive further training specifically related to those tasks, and operate under written instructions from senior officers.

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have nothing to add to the information which I gave to the hon. Member in my reply of 16 January 1989 at columns *5-6*.

Guardian Angels

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any entrants to the United Kingdom belonging to the group known as the Guardian Angels, currently visiting the United Kingdom, visited the United Kingdom previously; whether any of these persons overstayed previously; and who is sponsoring these persons during their visit to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: At least one member of the group has been here before. I am not aware that any have overstayed. I understand that the costs of the visit are being met in part by the group themselves, and in part by friends here.

Football

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many exclusion orders were issued in England and Wales during the 1987-88 football season; and how many of these arose from incidents connected with Football League matches.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The exclusion order provisions of the Public Order Act 1986 came into force on 1 August 1987. For the 12 months ending 31 July 1988, a total of 925 orders had been recorded by the Football Association. The information readily available does not distinguish which of these were related to incidents connected specifically with Football League matches.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by *(a)* type of offence, *(b)* gender and *(c)* over or under 21 years of age, those charged with football-related offences in the course of the 1987-88 season.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on charges brought for football related offences is not available.

Breath Tests

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) on 18 January, *Official Report*, columns 202-3, he will express the number of breath tests given and the number positive as a percentage of *(a)* resident population of the police area, *(b)* per mile of road in the police area and *(c)* per registered motor vehicle in the police area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Civil Defence

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made by local authorities in fulfilling their civil defence obligations during the first two years of the planned programme for implementation of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) 1983.

Mr. Hurd: Copies of a report on implementation of the 1983 regulations by 1 October 1988 have been placed in the Library. The report discusses local authorities' progress in meeting their civil defence obligations since the last such report, which covered progress up to March 1986.

On 22 July 1986 my hon. Friend the then Minister of State announced the Government's proposals for a planned programme for implementation (PPI) of the 1983 regulations. The PPI is a rolling three-year programme, setting priorities and a timetable for systematic monitoring by the Home Office. Provision exists for the payment of grants towards expenses incurred by local authorities in connection with the discharge of their civil defence functions. The PPI provides a framework enabling the Government to establish whether those functions are being efficiently performed so that grant can properly be paid. Detailed discussions with individual county councils and fire and civil defence authorities focus on schemes of work in the context of their estimates of grant-aided expenditure, and enable the progress each authority has made to be fully assessed.

Since the introduction of the PPI with effect from 1 October 1986, the number of grant-aided emergency planning staff in local authorities has risen by about 30 per cent. About half of these staff resources have been committed to the preparation of the plans required under schedule 2 to the 1983 regulations. In March 1986 many of those plans were found to be incomplete and in a number of cases they amounted to little more than statements of intent. Under the PPI all county-level authorities are required to submit copies of plans for monitoring in accordance with the timetable. All have responded to this requirement and analysis of the material indicates a significant overall improvement in the quality of operational plans. Nevertheless, the position still varies from authority to authority and even the best plans require further work. There is also a continuing need to test, review and revise plans once they have been made, and this need will be directly addressed in the next stage.

Local authorities are required to make arrangements for the training and exercising of volunteers and their own staff. There have been encouraging increases in the volume of such training. The number of volunteers stood at around 25,000 last year; this year they are expected to total about 27,000. Time spent by volunteers on training and exercises this year is expected to exceed the time spent last year by about 15 per cent., while the figure for staff training this year is expected to exceed last year's by about 70 per cent.

Progress has been less satisfactory in meeting the requirement to establish emergency centres in which to control and co-ordinate civil defence actions. A total of 513 such centres should be provided in England and Wales, but only 195 were reported to be operational by 1 October 1988. In a further 139, work was reported in progress or identified as needed, while in the remaining 179 no suitable site had been identified. Local authorities which are not fulfilling their statutory obligations in this respect will be asked for specific proposals to remedy the position.

In 1985-86 the total grant-aided civil defence expenditure by local authorities stood at £15·25 million. The provisional figure for 1987-88 is £21·25 million and in 1988-89 it is expected to rise to about £23 million. This expansion has been well above levels of inflation and reflects the Government's commitment to civil defence planning. It is our intention that current levels of expenditure will be maintained for the next few years.

The Government believe that the PPI has brought about significant improvements in local authorities' states of civil defence preparedness. Results have been achieved and the concept has been widely supported in the local authority community. But a great deal remains to be done to consolidate and extend the advances which have been made, by continuing the programme well into the 1990s. A circular is today being issued to local authorities, setting out the Government's intentions for the PPI for a further two years which will cover the period from October 1989 to October 1991. A similar circular is being issued by the Scottish Home and Health Department. Each county council and fire and civil defence authority will be asked to set specific targets for that period, with the highest priority being given to continuing the planning process and to training key staff. The Government will continue to monitor local authority activity and the value for money in the grant paid by calling for annual progress reports and costed programmes of work which will be the subject of individual discussion.

Firearms

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the prohibition under section 1 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 came into effect; and if he will give details of the Government buy-in scheme.

Mr. Hurd: As I stated in my reply of 20 December at column *184*, to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on this matter, the new categories of prohibited weapons, including self-loading and pump action rifles, come into effect on 1 February. The buy-in scheme will run for a period of three months until 30 April. Leaflets providing full details of the scheme and incorporating a claim form are available from police stations and rifle and pistol clubs.

Owners of newly prohibited weapons are eligible to make a claim under the scheme if they legitimately acquired or entered into a contract to purchase their weapons before 23 September 1987 or have already sold their weapon since that date for less than the amount available under the scheme.

Owners of weapons affected by the prohibition who are ineligible to apply or who do not wish to take advantage of the buy-in scheme must arrange to dispose of their weapons by not later than 30 April. They must do so either by sale to a registered firearms dealer or by transferring the weapon to such a dealer for deactivation; or by surrender to the police.

The penalty for possession of a prohibited weapon without the appropriate authority is up to five years' imprisonment or a fine of up to £2,000 or both.

Women Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of females currently serving a prison sentence in England and Wales; what is the proportion and number of such females who have committed an offence involving robbery or violence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: *[holding answer 24 January 1989]:* Information for 30 June 1988 is given in the table.

Population of sentenced females[1] in Prison Service establisments in England and Wales: by offence group 30 June 1988

Offence group	*Number[2]*
Violence against the person	240
Sexual offences	15
Robbery	75
Other offences	850
Not recorded	80
All offences	1,260

[1] Provisional figures, including fine defaulters.
[2] Rounded estimates.

WALES

Benzodiazepines

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of people in Wales addicted to benzodiazepines.

Mr. Grist: There are no official figures on the level of benzodiazepine dependence in Wales. However, an estimate given in a report published in 1986 suggested that perhaps half a million people in the United Kingdom as a whole were dependent on benzodiazepines.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many prescriptions for benzodiazepines and what total quantity of benzodiazepines were dispensed by *(a)* community and *(b)* hospital pharmacists in each year from 1979 to 1987 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The number of prescriptions for benzodiazepines dispensed by community pharmacists in 1979 was approximately 1,999,100 and in 1987 was 1,894,300. Information for the years 1980 to 1986 could only be obtained at disproportionate cost and information on the total quantity of benzodiazepines and the number of prescriptions dispensed by hospital pharmacists is not available centrally.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds are currently available to assist people in Wales to withdraw from benzodiazepines; and whether these funds will be increased in the future.

Mr. Grist: Information on services specifically targeted on benzodiazepine dependency and provided by local statutory bodies or voluntary agencies is not available centrally.

In recent years, the Department has made available additional funds for the development of services—on a local and multi-authority basis—to combat drug misuse generally. Since April 1985, over £2·8 million has been provided in response to bids submitted by drug advisory committees and the voluntary sector. While such bids do not normally apply to specific substances, many of the proposals provide a service for people who need assistance over benzodiazepine dependence. We are currently considering bids for additional support in 1989-90.

Mr. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many working days are being currently lost in Wales each year as a result of people withdrawing from benzodiazepines.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of people currently withdrawing from benzodiazepines in National Health Service hospitals in Wales and in each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: The information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many special units, with how many places, have been set up in psychiatric hospitals in Wales to assist people to withdraw from benzodiazepines.

Mr. Grist: None as such, but there are two units in Wales (one in the north and one in the south) which specialise in services for those having problems associated with substance misuse or dependency. More generally, however, assistance and support is available through a range of services including GPs, primary care services, general psychiatric services and many voluntary groups and organisations.

Aerial Monitoring

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will explain the operation of CADW's programme of aerial monitoring.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: An aerial monitoring programme was established for Wales in 1985-86 following the success of a pilot study initiated in 1983-84. The programme concentrates primarily on earthworks and field monuments with the aims of monitoring the condition of these scheduled monuments and recording the extent of the remains at each site. It is administered by CADW who provide grant-aid to the four Welsh archaeological trusts to undertake the work. It is expected that the whole of Wales will have been covered by the end of 1989 and consideration is being given as to how the programme should proceed after this date. Copies of all photographs are held in CADW and in the national monuments record held by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales.

National Monument Record (Staffing and Funding)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement on the staffing and funding of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monument's national monument record; how many posts are unfilled through lack of finance; and what steps he intends to take to remedy this.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales is responsible for the administration, staffing and funding of the national monuments record from within its allocated resources. I understand that at present 5½ staff are engaged on this work and that there are no posts on complement unfilled.

Expenditure

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish an analysis of expenditure shown in table 17.1 of the Government's expenditure plans 1989-90 to 1991-92, chapter 17—Wales, Cm 617, on a similar basis to the tables published in his reply of 25 January 1988, *Official Report*, columns *107-20*.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is set out in the tables. In all the tables the totals have been derived from unrounded figures and the components may not therefore always add to the totals shown.

Planned provision within the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales

(£ million)

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Agriculture, fisheries and food	78	93	81	77	82	85
Industry, energy, trade and employment	79	78	148	157	138	194
Other services						
Tourism	6	6	7	8	8	9
Roads and transport	299	287	286	300	319	322
Housing	143	118	126	140	166	166
Other environmental services	294	284	272	293	323	333
Education	682	665	694	730	846	922
Arts and libraries		28	30	31	38	38
Health and personal social services	915	968	1,035	1,115	1,220	1,330
Other public services	31	32	32	37	38	42
Total other services	2,370	2,388	2,482	2,655	2,958	3,162
Nationalised industries' EFL						

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
National Bus Company	}	}		—	—	—
Welsh Water Authority		26	27	16	13	11
Total nationalised industries external financing		26	27	16	13	11
Total expenditure within the Secretary of State's responsibility	2,528	2,585	2,737	2,904	3,192	3,451

Programme 16.1: Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

£ million

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Estimated Outturn	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
Intervention board for agricultural produce and other expenditure:									
Market support[1]	20	25	27	41	25	64	36	—	—
Total IBAP and Other EC expenditure	20	25	27	41	25	64	36	—	—
Domestic agriculture, fisheries and food:									
Structural Measures for Agriculture	59	53	57	52	45	44	45	—	—
Animal health	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Agriculture and Food Services	—	1	1	2	1	1	1	—	—
Support for the Fishing Industry[2]	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	—
Total domestic agriculture, fisheries and food	59	55	60	55	47	46	46	—	—
Total agriculture, fisheries and food	79	80	87	96	72	110	82	80	80

[1] Includes national supplement to EC market support.
[2] Includes projects assisted by EC.

Programme 16.2 and 16.3: Industry and Employment

£ million

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Estimated Outturn	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
Industry:									
Regional and general industrial support	85	93	108	120	85	112	121	—	—
Other Public Corporations (WDA and DBRW):									
i. Voted in estimates	46	44	39	42	64	72	81	—	—
ii. Other	8	6	5	4	2	5	4	—	—
iii. Total Other Public Corporations	53	51	44	45	66	77	85	—	—
Total industry	138	144	152	165	151	189	206	—	—
Employment:									
Tourism	5	6	8	8	9	9	10	—	—
Careers Service—local authorities									
(i) Relevant current expenditure	3	3	3	4	4	4	6	—	—
(ii) Non-relevant current expenditure	1	1	1	1	1	2	0	—	—
(iii) Total careers service	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	—	—
Total employment	9	10	12	13	14	15	16	—	—
Total industry and employment	147	154	164	178	165	204	222	220	210

Programme 16·4 Roads and Transport

£ million

	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 outturn	1988-89 estimated outturn	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans	1991-92 plans
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT:									
National roads system:									
Current	12	12	14	15	14	14	14	—	—
Capital	136	93	85	97	116	[1]117	138	—	—
Access road grants	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—
Rural bus grants[2]	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—
Freight facilities and Other grants	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	—	—

	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 outturn	1988-89 estimated outturn	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans	1991-92 plans
Other (including research and development, road safety, etc.)	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	—	—
All Central Government expenditure	149	105	100	112	130	133	154	—	—
LOCAL AUTHORITIES:									
Relevant current spending:									
Roads[3]	88	89	90	98	110	116	118	—	—
Other transport:									
Car parks (net of receipts)	−1	−1	−2	−2	−2	−2	−2	—	—
Revenue support for public transport[4]	4	4	4	9	8	8	10	—	—
Concessionary fares	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	—	—
Total relevant current spending	97	98	99	111	122	129	132	—	—
Local authority capital:									
Road[5]	61	57	65	68	83	66	69	—	—
Public transport	3	2	4	1	1	1	1	—	—
Total local authority capital	64	59	69	70	84	67	70	—	—
Total local authorities	161	158	168	181	207	196	203	—	—
PUBLIC CORPORATIONS:									
Nationalised industries EFL's:									
National Bus Company, EFL's	7	7	7	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other public corporations:									
New Towns	1	3	1	3	3	—	—	—	—
Grand total roads and transport	317	272	275	295	340	329	356	380	400

[1] This figure does not take into account the cash limit increase announced by the Secretary of State on 25 January 1989.
[2] Scores as capital and current expenditure.
[3] Includes "Road safety" and "Professional and technical services" related to roads.
[4] Includes "Public transport" part of "Professional and technical services".
[5] Includes "car parks".

Programme 16.5 (Housing)

£ million

	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 outturn	1988-89 estimated outturn	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans	1991-92 plans
Gross capital expenditure									
Central government									
Housing Corporation									
Support to private sector									
Provision for rent by Housing Associations (including low cost home ownership)	49	43	44	51	64	69	72	—	—
Local authorities									
Public sector provision									
Renovation	48	44	52	78	89	89	70	—	—
Provision for rent	47	34	26	29	37	33	21	—	—
Support for private sector									
Renovation and clearance	112	86	59	75	83	88	103	—	—
Home Ownership	9	7	4	5	6	7	3	—	—
Public corporations									
New Towns									
Public sector provision									
Renovation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	—	—
Provision for rent	3	4	3	1	0	0	0	—	—
Total public sector provision	99	82	80	107	126	122	91	—	—
Total support to private sector	169	136	107	132	154	164	178	—	—
Total renovation	161	130	111	153	172	177	173	—	—

	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 outturn	1988-89 estimated outturn	1989-90 plans	1990-91 plans	1991-92 plans
Total provision for rent (including support for home ownership)	108	88	76	86	108	109	96	—	—
Total Housing Corporation	49	43	44	51	64	69	72	—	—
Total local authorities	216	171	141	187	216	217	197	—	—
Total New Towns	4	4	3	1	0	0	0	—	—
Total gross capital expenditure	269	219	187	239	280	286	269	—	—
Capital receipts									
Housing Corporation	−8	−4	−4	−5	−7	−7	−7	—	—
Local authorities	−79	−91	−71	−82	−84	−112	−143	—	—
New Towns	−5	−7	−5	−2	−6	0	0	—	—
Total capital receipts	−92	−102	−79	−89	−97	−119	−150	—	—
Net capital expenditure									
Housing Corporation	41	39	40	46	57	62	65	—	—
Local authorities	137	80	70	105	132	105	54	—	—
New Towns	−2	−3	−2	−1	−6	0	0	—	—
Total net capital expenditure	176	117	108	150	184	166	119	—	—
Current Expenditure									
Central government									
Subsidies to:									
Housing Associations	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	—	—
Local authorities	2	6	7	12	10	11	11	—	—
Housing Corporation and central government: current	1	1	1	2	2	2	4	—	—
Local authorities									
Subsidies to revenue deficits on local authority housing for rent	8	5	2	2	3	3	2	—	—
Other current	7	7	7	8	7	8	9	—	—
Public corporations									
Subsidies to New Towns	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	—	—
Total current expenditure	19	20	20	24	23	25	26	—	—
Total housing	196	137	128	174	206	192	145	180	190

Programme 16.6: Other environmental services

£ million

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 [1] Outturn	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
Urban Group									
Cardiff Bay U.D.C.	—	—	—	—	12	16	22	—	—
Urban programme (including urban regeneration grant)	15	19	25	27	25	32	34	—	—
Urban regeneration grant	—	—	—	—	—	0	3	—	—
Derelict land reclaimation	11	9	10	13	13	13	12	—	—
New Towns									
Gross expenditure	2	2	3	4	2	—	—	—	—
Receipts	—	1	14	3	16	—	—	—	—
Net expenditure	2	1	−11	1	−14	—	—	—	—
Environment									
Recreation and environmental bodies (including research)	4	4	4	5	5	5	7	—	—
Heritage (C.A.D.W.)									
Historic buildings and ancient monuments	2	3	4	4	6	5	6	—	—
Local environmental services [2]									
Capital:									
Gross expenditure	61	64	69	90	99	108	83	—	—
Receipts	14	18	10	16	25	34	28	—	—
Net expenditure	47	47	58	74	73	74	56	—	—
Current expenditure	167	174	178	187	200	215	222	—	—

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 [1]Outturn	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
Other Local Authority Current Expenditure									
Local authority rate collection	7	8	8	8	9	10	17	—	—
Records and registrations of births, deaths and marriages	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
Water									
Welsh Water Authority E.F.L.	19	24	21	17	17	9	12	—	—
Civil defence	—	0	0	0	0	1	1	—	—
Other water services	1	1	1	2	9	5	12	—	—
Total other environmental services[3]	276	290	300	340	356	387	404	370	380

[1] Estimated.
[2] "Local environmental services" in Wales include land drainage, flood prevention and coast protection, which in England, is included in Agriculture.
[3] Includes Welsh Water Authority E.F.L.

Programme 16.7 Education

£ million

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Estimate	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
Central Government									
Schools									
Primary Secondary and other									
Capital	1	1	1	1	2	2	3	—	—
Current	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	—	—
Higher and Further Education									
Voluntary									
Current	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	—	—
Capital									
Adult Education (incl. Awards)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	—	—
Misc. education services & research									
Youth Services	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
Other Educational Services	—	—	1	1	1	2	3		
Support for the Welsh Language	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	—	—
Total Central Government	7	8	9	10	12	13	16	—	—
Local Authorities									
Relevant current spending									
Schools									
Under 5s	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	—	—
Primary	190	191	204	226	252	278	279	—	—
Secondary	231	238	238	272	296	318	335	—	—
Special Schools	20	22	23	23	30	32	29	—	—
Other (including supporting services)									
Child Guidance	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	—	—
Pupil Support	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	—	—
Transport	23	23	23	24	22	24	29	—	—
Meals and Milk	28	30	28	30	30	30	31	—	—
Further Education									
AFE	29	31	33	35	37	41	40	—	—
NAFE	55	56	56	61	66	72	76	—	—
Adult Education	1	3	3	3	4	4	4	—	—
Awards to Students	8	9	9	9	8	9	12	—	—
Miscellaneous education services									
Youth Services	6	6	6	7	6	7	9	—	—
Other Education Services	6	5	7	9	14	17	20	—	—
Administration	31	32	33	33	31	34	41	—	—
Total Relevant Current spending	636	655	672	740	806	877	916	—	—
Local Authority Capital	35	34	29	40	50	49	51	—	—
Total Local Authorities	672	689	701	780	856	925	968	—	—
Total Education	679	697	710	790	868	939	984	1,010	1,040

Programme 16.8 Arts and Libraries

£ million

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Estimate	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
Central Government									
National Library of Wales									
Current	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	—	—
Capital	1	1	1	1	1	—	1	—	—
National Museum of Wales									
Current	5	6	7	7	7	8	9	—	—
Capital	1	1	1	1	2	4	8	—	—
Total Central Government	9	10	11	11	13	15	21	—	—
Local Authorities									
Relevant current spending									
Libraries	15	16	17	18	19	21	22	—	—
Museums and Galleries	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	—	—
Total relevant current spending	17	17	18	20	22	24	25	—	—
Local Authority capital									
Libraries	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	—	—
Museums and Galleries	1	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
Total Local Authority Capital	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	—	—
Total Local Authorities	19	19	21	23	24	27	26	—	—
Total Libraries, Museums and Arts	28	29	32	34	37	42	47	50	50

Programme 16.9 Health and Personal Social Services

£ million

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Estimated Outturn	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
HEALTH SERVICES:									
Hospital and community health services:									
Current expenditure:									
Gross	558	595	641	683	762	851	900	—	—
Charges and receipts	11	7	13	14	15	15	18	—	—
Net	547	588	627	669	747	836	881	—	—
Capital expenditure:									
Gross	50	53	55	61	61	67	78	—	—
Receipts	1	2	2	3	2	10	4	—	—
Net	49	52	53	58	59	58	73	—	—
Family practitioner services:									
Current expenditure:									
Gross	202	221	234	253	280	314	342	—	—
Charges and receipts	17	18	18	19	21	25	30	—	—
Net	185	203	216	233	259	289	312	—	—
Capital expenditure (net)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
Central health and miscellaneous services:									
Current expenditure:									
Gross	15	19	22	27	33	40	48	—	—
Charges and receipts	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
Net	15	18	22	27	32	40	47	—	—
Capital expenditure (net)	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Total National Health services:									
Current expenditure:									
Gross	776	835	897	963	1,075	1,205	1,289	—	—
Net	747	809	865	930	1,038	1,165	1,240	—	—
Capital expenditure:									
Gross	50	54	56	62	62	68	78	—	—
Net	49	52	55	59	60	58	74	—	—
PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES:									
Central government services:									
Current expenditure	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
Local authority services									
Current expenditure:									
Gross	137	140	150	161	177	192	205	—	—
Charges	24	23	25	27	29	32	34	—	—
Net	113	117	126	134	148	161	171	—	—
Capital expenditure:									
Gross	6	7	5	8	11	10	9	—	—
Receipts	1	1	—	—	1	1	1	—	—
Net	5	6	5	8	10	10	8	—	—

	1983-84 Outturn	1984-85 Outturn	1985-86 Outturn	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Estimated Outturn	1989-90 Plans	1990-91 Plans	1991-92 Plans
Total personal social services:									
Current expenditure:									
Gross	138	141	151	162	178	193	206	—	—
Net	114	118	126	135	149	162	173	—	—
Capital expenditure:									
Gross	6	7	5	8	11	10	9	—	—
Net	5	6	5	8	10	10	8	—	—
Total health and personal social services:									
Current expenditure:									
Gross	914	977	1,048	1,125	1,253	1,398	1,495	—	—
Charges and receipts	53	48	56	60	66	72	83	—	—
Net	861	928	992	1,065	1,187	1,327	1,413	—	—
Capital expenditure:									
Gross	56	60	62	70	72	77	87	—	—
Receipts	2	2	2	3	2	10	5	—	—
Net	54	59	60	67	70	68	82	—	—
Total health and personal social services current and capital (net)	915	986	1,051	1,131	1,256	1,394	1,495	1,560	1,610

Departmental Spending

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of gross and net public sector capital spending by his Department by both central government and local authorities for 1988-89 and for each of the next three years, at current prices and at constant 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 25 January 1989]:* Information about public sector capital spending by the Department from 1983-84 to 1991-92 was given in table 21.1.11 of the 1989 public expenditure White Paper "Supplementary Analyses and Index", Cm. 621.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Madden: To ask the Attorney-General when copies of leaflets, which call for an end to immigration to the United Kingdom and are headed, "Civil War in Bradford," were passed to the Crown Prosecution Service; what organisation and address is shown on the leaflets distributed in Bradford recently; and when he expects the Crown Prosecution Service to reach any decision about prosecuting those responsible for the production and distribution of such leaflets.

The Attorney-General: A copy of a leaflet headed "Civil War in Bradford" was passed to the Crown Prosecution Service in West Yorkshire on 25 January 1989. The leaflet contains the address of the Monday Club, 4 Orlando Road, London SW4. On 27 January 1989, the Crown Prosecution Service concluded that the production and distribution of the leaflet did not contravene the criminal law.

Criminal Justice Act 1988

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Attorney-General how he envisages exercising the power to refer unduly lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal under section 36 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, after it comes into force on 1 February.

The Attorney-General: I shall exercise this important power conscientiously and with discrimination. I do not envisage that the cases will be numerous in which it will be appropriate to use it. It applies to sentencing for offences triable only on indictment. These are the more harmful offences, tending to give rise to the greatest public concern. Reference is available only for a sentence that is characterised by undue leniency, not for one that is no more than arguably on the lenient side.

A strict time limit is imposed for a reference. Application to the court must be made by me within 28 days of the sentence being passed, and it is accordingly important that steps are taken to put the necessary machinery in action as soon as possible. I therefore hope that those who wish to make representations will do so, in the first instance, to the authority responsible for conducting the relevant prosecution. In the majority of cases the prosecution will have been conducted by the Crown Prosecution Service and in those cases representations should accordingly be made to the Director of Public Prosecution.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South African (Prisons)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about the detention and torture of children in South African prisons.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made frequent representations to the South African Government, both bilaterally and with our European partners, to express our concern about human rights abuses including reports of maltreatment of both children and adults. We have made clear our view that the South African Government should release all those detained without charge.

Minority Languages

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there is any provision for a new commissioner of the European Community to take the oath in Welsh or in Gaelic.

Mrs. Chalker: The treaty does not specify the language to be used when giving the solemn undertaking. Commissioner MacSharry gave it in Irish.

Palestinian Refugees

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the response by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to recommendation 1090 [1988] on the situation of the Palestine refugees.

Mrs. Chalker: The Committee of Ministers decided to bring recommendation 1090 (1988) to the attention of the Governments of member states.

Eastern Europe (Religion)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the response by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to recommendation 1086 [1988] on the situation of the Church and freedom of religion in Eastern Europe.

Mrs. Chalker: The Committee of Ministers decided to bring recommendation 1086 (1988) to the attention of the Governments of member states and intend to submit it for discussion by national experts on the CSCE.

Incomes

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the most recent annual average income per head for *(a)* the seven Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, *(b)* the Warsaw Pact countries including Russia and *(c)* China.

Mrs. Chalker: GDP per head (in United States dollars) in the major seven OECD countries in 1987 was as follows:

	At current prices and current exchange rates	*At current prices and purchasing power parity*
USA	18,338	18,338
Japan	19,465	13,182
West Germany	18,280	13,323
France	15,818	12,803
United Kingdom	11,765	12,340
Italy	13,224	12,254
Canada	16,019	17,211

Source: OECD, Department of Economics and Statistics: National Accounts 1960-1987.

Because the currencies of the Warsaw pact countries are not fully convertible, conversion of local currency output estimates to dollars is not straightforward. Different procedures can produce very different results. The first column of figures below shows estimates of GNP per head calculated by the IBRD for the three members of the Warsaw pact who are also members of the IMF/IBRD. The second column shows estimates for all members of the Warsaw pact published by a United States Government agency:

	GNP per head at current prices and 3-year moving average exchange rates[1] *1987* $	*GNP per head at current prices*[2] *1987* $
Hungary	2,240	8,264
Poland	1,920	6,883
Romania	1,500-3,000	6,376
Bulgaria	n/a	7,200
Czechoslovakia	n/a	9,705
GDR	n/a	11,873
USSR	n/a	8,363

[1] *Source:* World Bank Atlas, 1988.
[2] *Source:* Economic Handbook, 1985—an unclassified publication of the CIA Directorate of Intelligence.

The People's Republic of China's GNP per head (at current prices and three-year moving average exchange rates) is estimated by the IBRD at $300 in 1987. Figures for Warsaw pact countries and for China should be treated with caution.

Weapons Technology

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to use Britain's presidency of the Western European Union to further discussions on the harmonisation of weapons technology research for the 21st century.

Mr. Waldegrave: NATO and, for its European members, the independent European programme group, are the operational fora in which allies examine how they can harmonise research in this area. The Western European Union gave political support in this work in the platform on European security interests adopted in The Hague on 27 October 1987.

Namibia

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs say what contribution in terms of cost and personnel Her Majesty's Government proposes to make to the United Nations force to supervise the elections and independence of Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 21 December 1988 at column *274*.

Baby Seal Skins

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had any discussion with members of the European Commission regarding the apparent breaking of European Community directive 85/444/EC, amending 84/129/EC, through the import into the European Community of baby seal skins referred to by Mr. Clinton Davies on 14 April 1988.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Unita

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policies

of President Bush's letter to Mr. Savimbi indicating that his Government would continue appropriate and effective assistance to Unita.

Mrs. Chalker: It remains our policy not to provide assistance to Unita although we maintain contact form time to time at official level.

European Community (Spanish Presidency)

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the objectives which the Spanish have identified for achievment during their presidency of the European Communities.

Mrs. Chalker: Spanish objectives for achievement during their presidency were identified in the programme speech given by the Spanish Foreign Minister to the European Parliament on 17 January. They included further progress to complete the single market, social area, monetary co-operation, research and development, the environment, and the Community's external relations.

European Community (Council of Ministers)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 13 February. The Commission is expected to present proposals for harmonising the taxation of savings. The Council may also consider a further extension of the new community instrument (NIC V), and may need to consider two own resources implementing regulations.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 13 and 14 February to discuss 1989 CAP price-fixing proposals, aid for the production of grain legumes and extensification. It may also consider beef balance sheets, controls in the wine sector, and veterinary and phytosanitary harmonisation measures.

The Foreign Affairs Council, meeting on 20 and 21 February, will review progress on resolving the dispute between the EC and the United States over hormone-treated beef, discuss the EC's position for the San Jose V meeting with central American states in San Pedro de Sula, Honduras 27 and 28 February; and adopt a position for the EC/Tunisia co-operation council, to be held in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Counil. It may also discuss: the outcome of the EC/ACP ministerial meeting in Brazzaville on 16 and 17 February, where negotiations on a successor to the present Lomé convention will continue; preparations for the EC/EFTA informal ministerial meeting to be held alongside the Foreign Affairs Council in March; draft mandates for negotiations on trade and co-operation agreements with Poland and Bulgaria and EC/Israel purchase tax discrimination.

The Fisheries Council will meet on 23 February to discuss autonomous tariff quotas and possibly the EC/USSR fish agreement.

The Internal Market Council on 27 February will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

THE ARTS

Benjamin Banks

Mr. Key: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will visit Salisbury in April to visit the exhibition in the museum celebrating the life and work of the eighteenth century violinist Benjamin Banks.

Mr. Luce: I will be in touch with my hon. Friend to see whether it will be possible for me to visit Salisbury in April.

Opera North

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next plans to undertake a visit to Opera North.

Mr. Luce: I was sorry not to have been able to visit Opera North as part of its 10th anniversary celebrations in 1988, but I hope to attend a performance in the future.

Public Library Services

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the number of responses so far received by his Department to the Green Paper on financing our public library services; and if he will give the number of those responses in favour of the proposals and the number of those opposed.

Mr. Luce: I shall shortly be making a statement on the consultation exercise. I shall then be in a position to give a more detailed answer to this question.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Appointments

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total cost of any European Economic Community appointments either in the United Kingdom or the rest of the European Economic Community paid for by the Treasury.

Mr. Brooke: Under the detached national experts scheme, Government employees from member states may be temporarily seconded to the European Commission. In such cases the member states continue to pay the basic salaries of the officials concerned.

Comprehensive information about the total cost of United Kingdom-paid salaries under this scheme is not available.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government have any plans to introduce income tax relief on premiums for private medical insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: In the White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm 555) the Government today announced a new income tax relief on premiums for private medical insurance for those aged 60 and over. The relief will be given at the basic rate by deduction at source (in a similar way to the MIRAS arrangement for mortgagees). It will be available either where an individual aged 60 or over pays his or her own premiums on an eligible policy, or where

someone else, such as a relative, pays on their behalf. Where higher rate relief is due, the additional amount will be given by the tax office, for example by adjustment to the PAYE code or in an assessment.

Legislation to introduce the relief will be contained in the next Finance Bill, and will take effect from 6 April 1990. I have authorised the Inland Revenue to consult the medical insurance industry urgently about the details of the relief.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to collect information on persons whose entitlement to unemployment benefit is disallowed because they are not available for work.

Mr. Lee: Figures are compiled quarterly of the number of persons whose entitlement to unemployment benefit is disallowed because they are considered not to be available for work. They are included in the analysis of all decisions made by adjudication officers published each half-year by the Department of Social Security.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much has been spent advertising employment training; and how much this is per filled place.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of approximately £7 million has been spent on advertising employment training in the period July to December 1988. A total of £4·2 million of this was spent in July and August to raise employers' awareness of the importance of training, in readiness for the launch of the programme in September. Following the launch, a further £2·8 million was spent on advertising to potential trainees. So far, there have been 141,000 people training on the programme.

Construction Workers

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many construction workers are unemployed.

Mr. Lee: Information from the labour force survey indicates that in spring 1987 there were an estimated 107,000 people in Great Britain aged 16 or over who were currently unemployed and whose last employment (within the previous three years) was as a construction worker. An occupational analysis of the Department's monthly claimant unemployment count is not available.

Disabled People

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered disabled people were in employment on 1 January; and how many were in employment five years ago.

Mr. Lee: I regret that this information is not available.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of employers does not operate the 3 per cent. quota for employing disabled people; and how this differs from the percentage five years ago.

Mr. Lee: In 1988 a total of 76 per cent. of employers within scope of the quota scheme employed less than 3 per cent. of people registered as disabled compared with 69 per cent. in 1983. The quota scheme is being considered as part of my Department's internal review of services to the disabled.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made in the last five years in achieving the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Lee: A total of 93,500 people with disabilities, including some with severe disabilities, were placed in employment through jobcentres in 1987-88 compared with 63,200 in 1983-84. Over the same period, the number of people with severe disabilities supported in the sheltered employment programme rose from 14,936 to 18,413.

Support for employment and training programmes specifically for people with disabilities has generally been maintained between 1983-84 and 1987-88. At the same time, increasing attention has been given to improving access to the Department's general employment and training programmes. It is estimated that in 1987-88 some 51,000 people with disabilities were accepted on to these programmes.

The Department has also given close attention to promoting the adoption by employers of positive policies towards the employment of people with disabilities—in particular through the establishment of the disablement advisory service and the publication and distribution of the code of good practice on the employment of disabled people.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing employment in manufacturing industry by county using the data from the last three censuses of employment; and if he will also state the intercensal change for each county in an index form with the earliest of the three censuses of employment as the base.

Mr. Lee: The available information from censuses of employment taken in June 1978, September 1981 and September 1984 is given in the table. Because of changes in the standard industrial classification, and in the compilation of the county data, the June 1978 figures are not strictly comparable with the figures for later years. Indices using June 1978 as base cannot therefore be meaningfully calculated.

Employees in employment in manufacturing industries

Counties	*June[1] 1978*	*September[2] 1981*	*September[2] 1984*
South East			
Bedfordshire	88·1	71·5	67·8
Berkshire	89·1	85·4	76·5
Buckinghamshire	65·3	65·7	66·8
East Sussex	37·5	36·4	32·7
Essex	156·7	140·4	119·5
Greater London	768·8	684·6	569·0
Hampshire	166·6	153·3	146·7
Hertfordshire	151·5	132·4	118·1
Isle of Wight	10·4	9·0	8·8
Kent	137·7	118·3	103·5

Counties	June[1] 1978	September[2] 1981	September[2] 1984
Oxfordshire	54·2	47·6	43·8
Surrey	81·3	77·4	74·5
West Sussex	60·9	61·1	58·3
East Anglia			
Cambridgeshire	61·5	60·7	68·2
Norfolk	71·3	63·3	63·2
Suffolk	67·0	61·9	58·3
South West			
Avon	110·4	94·9	89·2
Cornwall	21·3	23·6	22·3
Devon	67·0	68·9	69·1
Dorset	47·6	44·3	41·2
Gloucestershire	71·1	65·2	57·6
Somerset	48·2	46·0	45·6
Wiltshire	62·8	52·6	51·2
West Midlands			
Hereford and Worcester	76·5	67·9	64·3
Shropshire	39·2	32·0	33·0
Staffordshire	163·8	144·3	141·9
Warwickshire	55·5	61·6	56·3
West Midlands	651·0	494·8	413·7
East Midlands			
Derbyshire	161·6	133·2	122·2
Leicestershire	160·5	150·5	140·9
Lincolnshire	50·7	44·3	40·7
Northamptonshire	88·6	73·7	69·5
Nottinghamshire	136·9	131·5	115·1
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Humberside	110·5	92·1	81·9
North Yorkshire	56·1	53·5	49·7
South Yorkshire	206·3	158·6	122·4
West Yorkshire	336·2	274·6	230·8
North West			
Cheshire	140·5	116·7	105·9
Greater Manchester	443·2	345·8	291·3
Lancashire	210·9	182·5	153·6
Merseyside	203·1	154·7	119·8
North			
Cumbria	69·8	56·9	49·6
Cleveland	93·7	74·9	53·3
Durham	74·6	62·1	54·7
Northumberland	23·0	19·5	19·3
Tyne and Wear	162·4	126·0	99·0
Wales			
Clwyd	43·9	33·7	35·2
Dyfed	23·6	17·1	15·9
Gwent	65·8	52·8	46·1
Gwynedd	11·8	11·5	9·3
Mid Glamorgan	70·8	52·5	44·7
Powys	5·8	7·0	6·9
South Glamorgan	30·0	26·6	25·2
West Glamorgan	57·9	36·9	28·8
Scotland (Region and Islands areas)			
Borders	14·2	12·9	12·6
Central	38·2	31·1	22·8
Dumfries and Galloway	11·7	12·2	11·3
Fife	42·8	40·0	35·8
Grampian	36·9	36·8	35·2
Highlands	12·6	12·4	10·2
Lothians	67·2	66·2	55·3
Strathclyde	331·3	249·8	215·4
Tayside	45·5	37·1	32·1
Orkney Islands	0·5	0·7	0·5
Shetland Islands	1·1	1·1	1·2
Western Isles	0·9	1·5	1·2

[1] Jobcentre based information: 1968 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Orders III-XIX.

[2] Ward based information (ward boundaries as at September 1981): 1980 SIC Divisions 2-4.

Note:

Jobcentre and ward based aggregates are not strictly comparable. The former are based on an amalgamation of jobcentre areas which may not be coterminous with the county boundary and, unlike the ward based aggregates, they include no allowance for non response and undetected duplication in census returns.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the unadjusted figures for December 1985 and June 1988, for each region and nationally, giving data for men and women separately and in total, of *(a)* the number of unemployed for each date and the percentage change between the dates, and *(b)* the number of employed for each date and the percentage difference between the dates in total and broken down by employees in employment, self-employment, Her Majesty's Forces and work-related government training programmes.

Mr. Lee: Table A shows the number of unemployed claimants for each region and the United Kingdom at December 1985 and June 1988, together with the percentage changes over the period. These unadjusted figures are affected by the change in the compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and also by seasonal influences.

Table B shows the available information for the civilian workforce in employment. Figures for Her Majesty's forces are not available below national level. Comparisons of data for December 1985 and June 1988 are affected by seasonal variations.

Table A
Unemployment, unadjusted

	December 1985	*June 1988*	*Percentage change December 1985 to June 1988*
Males			
South East	524,118	342,614	−34·6
East Anglia	54,346	32,777	−39·7
London	277,856	205,019	−26·2
South West	135,139	84,350	−37·6
West Midlands	239,596	162,554	−32·2
East Midlands	136,372	100,898	−26·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	217,137	164,859	−24·1
North West	315,505	233,497	−26·0
Northern	169,556	130,611	−23·0
Wales	128,324	91,101	−29·0
Scotland	245,250	204,432	−16·6
Northern Ireland	88,605	84,348	−4·8
United Kingdom	2,253,948	1,632,041	−27·6
Females			
South East	255,650	158,970	−37·8
East Anglia	28,886	18,139	−37·2
London	124,027	85,754	−30·9
South West	75,193	46,523	−38·1
West Midlands	106,044	74,893	−29·4
East Midlands	64,822	45,346	−30·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	92,986	68,996	−25·8
North West	133,492	95,949	−28·1
Northern	68,032	48,264	−29·1
Wales	53,172	36,016	−32·3
Scotland	107,999	84,360	−21·9
Northern Ireland	32,865	31,292	−4·8
United Kingdom	1,019,141	708,748	−30·5
Totals			
South East	779,768	501,584	−35·7
East Anglia	83,232	50,916	−38·8
London	401,883	290,773	−27·7
South West	210,332	130,873	−37·8
West Midlands	345,640	237,447	−31·3
East Midlands	201,194	146,244	−27·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	310,123	233,855	−24·6
North West	448,997	329,446	−26·6
Northern	237,588	178,875	−24·7
Wales	181,496	127,117	−30·0
Scotland	353,249	288,792	−18·3
Northern Ireland	121,470	115,640	−4·8
United Kingdom	3,273,089	2,340,789	−28·5

Table B
Civilian workforce in employment, unadjusted for the effects of seasonal variations

Thousands

Region	*December 1985*	*June 1988*	*Percentage change December 1985 to June 1988*
Males			
South East			
Employees in employment	4,054	4,052	−·0
Self-employed[1]	677	813	20·1
Work-related government training programmes	22	30	37·8
Civilian workforce in employment	4,753	4,895	3·0
East Anglia			
Employees in employment	436	483	10·9
Self-employed[1]	84	91	8·3
Work-related government training programmes	4	6	51·6
Civilian workforce in employment	524	581	10·8
South West			
Employees in employment	863	864	·2
Self-employed[1]	190	210	10·5
Work-related government training programmes	10	15	49·2
Civilian workforce in employment	1,063	1,089	2·5
West Midlands			
Employees in employment	1,154	1,172	1·6

Region	December 1985	June 1988	Percentage change December 1985 to June 1988
Self-employed[1]	145	169	16·6
Work-related government training programmes	13	24	83·6
Civilian workforce in employment	1,311	1,365	4·1
East Midlands			
Employees in employment	843	863	2·4
Self-employed[1]	126	149	18·3
Work-related government training programmes	11	15	33·9
Civilian workforce in employment	980	1,027	4·8
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Employees in employment	1,002	986	−1·6
Self-employed[1]	163	184	12·9
Work-related government training programmes	13	24	93·1
Civilian workforce in employment	1,178	1,194	1·4
North West			
Employees in employment	1,234	1,185	−4·0
Self-employed[1]	195	216	10·8
Work-related government training programmes	15	29	100·0
Civilian workforce in employment	1,444	1,430	−1·0
North			
Employees in employment	604	605	·3
Self-employed[1]	79	80	1·3
Work-related government training programmes	9	18	112·7
Civilian workforce in employment	691	704	1·8
Wales			
Employees in employment	491	477	−2·8
Self-employed[1]	116	108	−6·9
Work-related government training programmes	7	13	90·2
Civilian workforce in employment	614	598	−2·5
Scotland			
Employees in employment	1,031	996	−3·5
Self-employed[1]	158	157	−·6
Work-related government training programmes	12	25	111·9
Civilian workforce in employment	1,201	1,177	−2·0
Northern Ireland			
Employees in employment	269	262	−2·5
Self-employed[1]	53	53	−·2
Work-related government training programmes	6	5	−11·4
Civilian workforce in employment	327	320	−2·3
United Kingdom			
Employees in employment	1,980	11,945	−·3
Self-employed[1]	1,982	2,228	12·4
HM forces	307	300	−2·5
Work-related government training programmes	120	205	70·2
Workforce in employment	14,390	14,678	2·0
Females			
South East			
Employees in employment	3,311	3,516	6·2
Self-employed[1]	227	274	20·7
Work-related government training programmes	16	21	26·1
Civilian workforce in employment	3,554	3,811	7·2
East Anglia			
Employees in employment	314	351	11·6
Self-employed[1]	26	43	65·4
Work-related government training programmes	3	4	23·9
Civilian workforce in employment	343	398	15·8

Region	December 1985	June 1988	Percentage change December 1985 to June 1988
South West			
Employees in employment	685	735	7·2
Self-employed[1]	64	77	20·3
Work-related government training programme	8	10	28·7
Civilian workforce in employment	757	822	8·6
West Midlands			
Employees in employment	871	924	6·1
Self-employed[1]	41	47	14·6
Work-related government training programmes	11	18	62·5
Civilian workforce in employment	923	989	7·1
East Midlands			
Employees in employment	660	696	5·6
Self-employed[1]	36	48	33·3
Work-related government training programmes	9	10	14·7
Civilian workforce in employment	705	755	7·1
Yorkshire & Humberside			
Employees in employment	792	833	5·2
Self-employed[1]	56	64	14·3
Work-related government training programmes	11	16	50·9
Civilian workforce in employment	859	913	6·3
North West			
Employees in employment	1,062	1,079	1·6
Self-employed[1]	72	73	1·4
Work-related government training programmes	13	20	53·3
Civilian workforce in employment	1,147	1,172	2·2
North			
Employees in employment	476	500	4·9
Self-employed[1]	26	32	23·1
Work-related government training programmes	8	12	52·8
Civilian workforce in employment	510	544	6·6
Wales			
Employees in employment	381	396	3·9
Self-employed[1]	34	46	35·3
Work-related government training programmes	6	8	36·2
Civilian workforce in employment	421	450	6·9
Scotland			
Employees in employment	866	892	3·1
Self-employed[1]	45	45	0·0
Work-related government training programmes	9	17	85·3
Civilian workforce in employment	920	954	3·7
Northern Ireland			
Employees in employment	233	235	0·8
Self-employed[1]	7	7	−1·8
Work-related government training programmes	3	3	−16·7
Civilian workforce in employment	244	245	0·4
United Kingdom			
Employees in employment	9,653	10,158	5·2
Self-employed[1]	636	757	18·9
HM Forces	16	16	−0·6
Work-related government training programmes	97	138	42·4
Workforce in employment	10,402	11,069	6·4
Total			
South East			
Employees in employment	7,365	7,568	2·8
Self-employed[1]	904	1,087	20·2

Region	December 1985	June 1988	Percentage change December 1985 to June 1988
Work-related government training programmes	38	50	32·8
Civilian workforce in employment	8,307	8,705	4·8
East Anglia			
Employees in employment	750	834	11·2
Self-employed[1]	110	134	21·8
Work-related government training programmes	7	10	39·7
Civilian workforce in employment	867	978	12·8
South West			
Employees in employment	1,548	1,599	3·3
Self-employed[1]	254	287	13·0
Work-related government training programmes	18	25	40·2
Civilian workforce in employment	1,819	1,911	5·0
West Midlands			
Employees in employment	2,025	2,096	3·5
Self-employed[1]	186	216	16·1
Work-related government training programmes	24	41	74·0
Civilian workforce in employment	2,235	2,354	5·3
East Midlands			
Employees in employment	1,502	1,559	3·8
Self-employed[1]	162	197	21·6
Work-related government training programmes	21	26	25·4
Civilian workforce in employment	1,685	1,782	5·7
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Employees in employment	1,795	1,819	1·4
Self-employed[1]	219	248	13·2
Work-related government training programmes	23	40	73·8
Civilian workforce in employment	2,037	2,108	3·5
North West			
Employees in employment	2,297	2,264	−1·4
Self-employed[1]	267	289	8·2
Work-related government training programmes	28	49	77·9
Civilian workforce in employment	2,591	2,603	0·4
North			
Employees in employment	1,080	1,105	2·3
Self-employed[1]	105	112	6·7
Work-related government training programmes	17	30	84·0
Civilian workforce in employment	1,202	1,248	3·8
Wales			
Employees in employment	872	874	0·2
Self-employed[1]	150	154	2·7
Work-related government training programmes	12	21	65·8
Civilian workforce in employment	1,035	1,048	1·3
Scotland			
Employees in employment	1,897	1,888	−0·5
Self-employed[1]	203	202	−0·5
Work-related government training programmes	21	41	100·2
Civilian workforce in employment	2,121	2,131	0·5
Northern Ireland			
Employees in employment	502	497	−1·0
Self-employed[1]	60	60	−0·4
Work-related government training programmes	9	8	−13·4
Civilian workforce in employment	571	565	−1·1
United Kingdom			
Employees in employment	21,632	22,103	2·2

Region	*December 1985*	*June 1988*	*Percentage change December 1985 to June 1988*
Self-employed[1]	2,619	2,985	14·0
Her Majesty's Forces	323	316	−2·4
Work-related government training programmes	217	343	57·8
Workforce in employment	24,792	25,746	3·9

[1] Self-employed figures for June 1988 are projections.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will indicate for each year since 1979 and for each country and region of the United Kingdom *(a)* the number of female employees in employment, *(b)* the number of females in full-time employment, *(c)* the number of females in part-time employment; and if he will express *(c)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Mr. Lee *[pursuant to his reply, 26 January 1989, c. 742]:* I regret that my reply of 26 January 1989 contained an error in referring to the data for Northern Ireland. Estimates of full and part-time employment for Northern Ireland are made, but only at census of employment dates and the data for female employees in employment are set out in the table:

	September 1981	*September 1984*
All	224	229
Of which full-time	147	147
Part-time	78	81
Part-time employees as percentage of all employees	34·8	35·6

Employment Training (Child Care Allowance)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now make the child care allowance, previously confined to single parents on employment training, available to all trainees with children.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* My right hon. Friend is considering the implications of the recent industrial tribunal decision about the arrangements for making child care payments in employment training.

Women With Children

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what help is available to women with children, who wish to undertake a course of training, who are not registered as unemployed and who cannot afford a child minder; what training courses are available; and what support is available to enable such women to undertake training.

Mr. Nicholls: *[holding answer 20 January 1989]:* Women aged 18 to 59 in the circumstances described are eligible for the full range of training opportunities under employment training if they are:

(a) returning to the labour market after an absence of two years or more for domestic reasons;

(b) the partner of someone who is claiming benefit for them as a dependant and satisfies the eligibility rules for Employment Training;

(c) seeking training in enterprise, or for skill shortage occupations or require help with English as a Second Language or have a disability; or

(d) a lone parent on an Income Support Order Book for at least 6 months and whose youngest child is of school age.

All trainees on employment training receive a weekly allowance equivalent to any state benefit entitlement before starting the programme plus at least £10 and help with travel costs over £5 per week. All lone parents on the programme are entitled to child care assistance of up to £50 per week per child. Women trainees may also be able to attend part-time where they have continuing domestic commitments which prevent full-time participation.

The full range of YTS opportunities is also available to women in a similar position and who are under the age of 18 and who satisfy the normal eligibility rules. YTS trainees are entitled to an alowance of £29·50 per week rising to £35 per week in the second year.

SCOTLAND

European Reprocessing Plant

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will make an announcement on the planning application for the European demonstration reprocessing plant.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering the report of the public local inquiry into the proposed development and he is not yet in a position to predict a date for the announcement of his decision.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the sites and hectarages of sites for which compensation payments are made under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to prevent damage to areas of special conservation interest and the sums of compensation paid in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Compensation payments under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are made by the NCC, which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment. Details of individual sites and payments are confidential, but data on the numbers and costs of such payments are published in the council's annual report, copies of which are in the Library.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what methods are used by him to gauge public opinion on the competence of the board and general manager of Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have recently commissioned a market research study of the National Health Service in Scotland. The sample size will enable some analysis of opinion at board level to be undertaken.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the non-hospital properties currently owned by the Greater Glasgow health board; and what is the board's assessment of their total value.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board currently administers over 400 non-hospital properties of which it estimates the total value to be about £14·5 million.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many empty dwelling houses are owned by Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The board is responsible for 71 such properties, of which 47 are in process of being sold.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many consultants are employed by Greater Glasgow health board; if he will give a breakdown by hospital and specialty; and if he will show how many of the consultants by specialty are employed on a full-time or part-time basis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest available information is shown in the table below.

Hospital medical and dental consultants in Greater Glasgow Health Board; by hospital, specialty and type of contract
Number at 30 September 1987

Location and specialty	*Whole time*	*Maximum part time*	*Part time*	*Honorary*	*Total all*
Health Board HQ					
Occupational health	1	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	0	0	1
Clinics East District					
Orthodon and paeditric dentistry	1	0	0	0	1
STD	1	1	0	0	2
Forensic psychiatry	1	0	0	0	1
Total	3	1	0	0	4
Belvidere Hospital					
Orthopaedic surgery	1	0	0	0	1
Dermatology	1	0	0	0	1
Respiratory medicine	2	0	0	0	2
Radiotherapy	1	0	0	0	1
Haematology	0	0	0	1	1
Total	5	0	0	1	6
Canniesburn Hospital					
Ophthalmology	0	2	0	0	2
Plastic surgery	0	4	0	0	4
Oral surgery and medicine	1	1	0	0	2
Pathology	1	0	0	0	1
Total	2	7	0	0	9
Duke Street Hospital					
Psychiatry-mentally ill	3	0	0	0	3
Psychotherapy	0	1	0	0	1
Total	3	1	0	0	4
Gartloch Hospital					
Psychiatry-mentally Ill	4	1	0	0	5
Total	4	1	0	0	5
Glasgow Dental Hospital					
Orthodon and Paediatric Dentistry	2	0	0	4	6
Oral Surgery and Medicine	4	0	0	9	13
Restorative Dentistry	3	0	0	9	12
Pathology	0	0	0	1	1
Total	9	0	0	23	32
Glasgow Royal Infirmary					
General Surgery	7	1	0	4	12
Orthopaedic Surgery	2	2	0	0	4
Ent Surgery	1	2	0	1	4
Urology	2	1	0	0	3
Cardiothoracic Surgery	1	0	0	2	3
General Medicine	5	0	0	7	12
Cardiology	1	0	0	1	2
Endocrin and Diabetes	1	0	0	0	1
Neurology	1	0	0	0	1
Dermatology	1	1	0	0	2
Nephrology	1	0	0	0	1
Rheumatology	1	0	0	0	1

Location and specialty	Whole time	Maximum part time	Part time	Honorary	Total all
Respiratory Medicine	2	0	0	0	2
STD	1	0	0	0	1
Radiodiagnosis	4	1	0	0	5
Radiotherapy	1	0	0	0	1
Medical Oncology	1	0	0	0	1
Anaesthetics	14	4	0	4	22
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	4	0	0	1	5
Accident and Emergency	2	0	0	0	2
Haematology	4	0	0	0	4
Pathology	3	0	0	3	6
Clinical Chemistry	2	0	1	2	5
Microbiology	3	0	0	2	5
Immunology	1	0	0	0	1
Virology	0	0	0	1	1
Total	66	12	1	28	107
Glasgow Royal Maternity					
Medical Paediatrics	2	1	0	0	3
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	2	0	0	1	3
Pathology	1	0	0	0	1
Total	5	1	0	1	7
Lightburn Hospital					
Geriatric Medicine	3	0	0	0	3
Total	3	0	0	0	3
Lennox Castle Hospital					
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	3	0	0	0	3
Total	3	0	0	0	3
Ruchill Hospital					
General Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Respiratory Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Communicable Disease	3	0	0	0	3
Pathology	0	0	0	1	1
Microbiology	1	0	0	0	1
Virology	0	0	0	1	1
Total	6	0	0	2	8
Stobhill Hospital					
General Surgery	4	2	0	0	6
Orthopaedic Surgery	1	1	0	0	2
Ent-Surgery	3	0	0	0	3
Ophthalmology	2	0	0	0	2
Urology	1	1	0	0	2
General Medicine	4	0	0	4	8
Cardiology	2	0	0	0	2
Clin Pharm and Therap	0	0	0	1	1
Dermatology	1	1	0	0	2
Nephrology	1	0	0	0	1
Respiratory Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Radiodiagnosis	3	1	0	0	4
Medical Oncology	0	0	0	1	1
Paediatric Surgery	0	1	0	0	1
Medical Paediatrics	2	1	0	0	3
Anaesthetics	8	2	0	0	10
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	4	2	0	0	6
Geriatric Medicine	5	0	0	1	6
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	4	0	0	0	4
Haematology	2	0	0	0	2
Pathology	3	0	0	0	3
Clinical Chemistry	1	0	0	0	1
Microbiology	2	0	0	0	2
Total	54	12	0	7	73
Woodilee Hospital					
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	6	0	3	0	9
Total	6	0	3	0	9
Leverndale Hospital					

Location and specialty	Whole time	Maximum part time	Part time	Honorary	Total all
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	6	0	1	0	7
Total	6	0	1	0	7
Mearnskirk General Hospital					
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	1	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	0	0	1
Philipshill Hospital					
General Medicine	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	1	0	0	1
Royal Samaritan Hospital					
Neurology	0	1	0	0	1
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	2	0	0	0	2
Total	2	1	0	0	3
Victoria Infirmary					
General Surgery	4	2	0	0	6
Orthopaedic Surgery	1	4	0	0	5
ENT Surgery	1	3	0	0	4
Urology	0	2	0	0	2
General Medicine	3	2	0	0	5
Endocrin and Diabetes	1	0	0	0	1
Dermatology	0	1	0	0	1
Respiratory Medicine	2	0	0	0	2
Radiodiagnosis	4	0	0	0	4
Anaesthetics	10	2	0	0	12
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	0	1	0	0	1
Accident and Emergency	1	0	0	0	1
Haematology	1	0	0	0	1
Pathology	2	0	0	0	2
Clinical Chemistry	1	0	0	0	1
Microbiology	2	0	0	0	2
Total	33	17	0	0	50
Victoria Infirmary Geriatric Unit					
Geriatric Medicine	3	1	0	0	4
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	1	0	0	0	1
Haematology	1	0	0	0	1
Total	5	1	0	0	6
Rutherglen Maternity Hospital					
Medical Paediatrics	1	0	0	0	1
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	1	1	0	0	2
Total	2	1	0	0	3
Clinics: South West District					
Forensic Psychiatry	1	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	0	0	1
Southern General Hospital					
General Surgery	2	2	0	0	4
Orthopaedic Surgery	2	0	0	0	2
Ophtahlmology	2	0	0	0	2
Urology	1	1	0	0	2
Neurosurgery	4	0	0	2	6
General Medicine	5	2	0	0	7
Cardiology	1	0	0	0	1
Neurology	2	0	0	1	3
Respiratory Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
STD	1	0	0	0	1
Radiodiagnosis	5	1	0	1	7
Medical Paediatrics	1	0	0	0	1
Anaesthetics	11	2	2	0	15
Obstetrics and Gynae	3	2	0	0	5
Geriatric Medicine	3	0	0	0	3
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	4	1	0	2	7
Psychotherapy	1	0	0	0	1
Forensic Psychiatry	1	0	0	0	1

Location and specialty	Whole time	Maximum part time	Part time	Honorary	Total all
Haematology	2	0	0	0	2
Pathology	1	0	0	2	3
Microbiology	1	0	0	0	1
Total	54	11	2	8	75
Clinics; Western District					
Forensic Psychiatry	1	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	0	0	1
Gartnavel General Hospital					
General Surgery	5	1	0	0	6
E.N.T.	0	1	0	0	1
Ophthalmology	2	1	0	0	3
Radioadiagnosis	1	0	0	0	1
Medical Oncology	0	0	0	2	2
Geriatric Medicine	3	0	0	0	3
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	1	0	0	0	1
Psychotherapy	1	0	0	0	1
Child Psychiatry	1	0	0	0	1
Microbiology	1	0	0	0	1
Total	15	3	0	2	20
Gartnavel Royal Hospital					
Geriatric Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Psychiatry-Mentally Ill	4	1	0	0	5
Psychotherapy	1	0	0	0	1
Total	6	1	0	0	7
Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital					
Homeopathy	1	1	0	0	2
Total	1	1	0	0	2
Knightswood Hospital					
General Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Respiratory Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Geriatric Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Total	3	0	0	0	3
RHSC Drumchapel					
Medical Daediatrics	1	0	0	0	1
Clinical Chemistry	0	0	0	1	1
Total	1	0	0	1	2
Royal Hospital for Sick Children					
Orthopaedic Surgery	3	0	0	0	3
Cardiothoracic Surgery	2	0	0	0	2
Dermatology	1	0	0	0	1
Radiodiagnosis	2	0	0	0	2
Paediatric Surgery	4	0	0	1	5
Medical Paediatrics	7	0	0	3	10
Anaesthetics	4	0	0	0	4
Child Psychiatry	3	0	0	0	3
Psychiatry-Mentally Handicapped	0	0	0	1	1
Haematology	1	0	0	0	1
Pathology	2	0	0	0	2
Clinical Genetics	1	0	0	1	2
Microbiology	1	0	0	0	1
Total	31	0	0	6	37
Queen Mother's Hospital					
Radiodiagnosis	1	0	0	0	1
Medical Paediatrics	1	0	0	0	1
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	3	2	0	0	5
Clinical Genetics	0	0	0	1	1
Total	5	2	0	1	8
Glasgow Western Infirmary					
General Surgery	1	0	0	5	6

Location and specialty	Whole time	Maximum part time	Part time	Honorary	Total all
Orthopaedic Surgery	3	2	0	2	7
ENT Surgery	1	0	0	0	1
Ophthalmology	3	1	0	3	7
Urology	0	2	0	0	2
Cardiothoracic Surgery	2	0	0	0	2
Plastic Surgery	1	0	0	0	1
General Medicine	6	1	0	11	18
Cardiology	3	0	0	0	3
Neurology	2	0	0	1	3
Dermatology	1	1	0	2	4
Nephrology	2	0	0	0	2
Rheumatology	1	0	0	0	1
Respiratory Medicine	1	0	0	0	1
Radiodiagnosis	3	3	0	0	6
Radiotherapy	6	0	0	2	8
Medical Oncology	0	0	0	1	1
Medical Paediatrics	1	0	0	0	1
Anaesthetics	17	1	0	1	19
Obstetrics and Gynaecology	0	0	0	2	2
Haematology	2	0	0	0	2
Pathology	2	0	0	11	13
Clinical Chemistry	0	0	1	0	1
Microbiology	0	0	0	3	3
Immunology	0	0	0	1	1
Virology	0	0	0	2	2
Total	58	11	1	47	117
Beatson Oncology Centre					
Radiotherapy	1	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	0	0	1
Glasgow Eye Infirmary					
Ophthalmology	1	0	0	0	1
Total	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	397	85	8	127	617

Note: The data collection system used to provide these data records the main location of each consultant. (S)he may work in different subsidiary locations. This table does not reflect the distribution of consultant sessions by subsidiary locations.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria have been employed by Greater Glasgow health board in the conduct of the review of accident and emergency services in the city of Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board is applying a wide range of criteria including the location of services, the different procedures followed at these locations, the staffing levels, and the usage. The review which is still in progress is intended to ensure that these services are delivered effectively.

Southern general hospital

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many non-medical staff are employed at the Southern general hospital; and if he will give a breakdown by department or category; and if he will give comparable figures for the past three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The non-medical staff whose main work location is the Southern general hospital are shown in the table.

Non-Medical staff located at the Southern general hospital Glasgow: at 30 September

	1985 Whole-time equivalent	1986 Whole-time equivalent	1987 Whole-time equivalent
Nursing and Midwifery	1,073·4	1,045·5	1,072·3
Trainee Nurses	208·0	173·0	165·0
Scientific	3·0	4·0	4·0
Paramedical	103·6	104·2	109·4
Technical	62·2	59·6	43·2
Works	5·0	6·0	6·0
Administration and Clerical	236·4	231·2	223·3
Ancillary	512·3	493·8	494·4
Tradesmen	78·0	77·0	75·0
Pharmacists	14·0	15·0	15·0
TOTAL	2,297·9	2,209·3	2,207·6

Only learner nurses' time spent in giving service contribution to the hospital is included.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases have been treated at the Southern general accident and emergency unit in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out in the table.

Patients treated as accident and emergency at the Southern general hospital

Year ending 31 March	*Inpatient discharges*[1]	*Day cases*	*Outpatient attendances*
1984	706	98	40,378
1985	616	105	41,727
1986	658	23	41,313
1987	662	99	42,598
1988	760	84	42,639

[1]Including deaths and transfers out.

Health Boards (Property Disposals)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether health boards have discretion to take into account factors other than the highest offer when deciding on disposal of heritable property.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Where surplus Health Service land is offered for sale, the sellers are not bound to accept the highest, or any, offer. All offers received are considered in their entirety, taking into account not only their monetary value but any conditions and any other relevant information. The decision on which offer is the best is made in the light of expert professional advice from the district valuer and the selling agent.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average gross domestic product per head in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The provisional estimate of Scottish gross domestic product at factor cost for 1987 is £5,725 per head of population.

Average Wages

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average weekly wage for *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time (i) male and (ii) female workers in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is given in the table. It has been derived from the new earnings survey, which is conducted by the Department of Employment in April each year, and covers a 1 per cent. sample of employees who are members of PAYE schemes.

Average gross weekly earnings of employees on adult rates[1]
Scotland, April 1988 *£/week*[2]

Male full-time	*Male part-time*	*Female full-time*	*Female part-time*
233·3	57·8	152·2	62·4

[1]Excluding those whose pay for the survey pay-period was affected by absence.
[2]All figures are subject to sampling errors.

Industry Act

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for the amount of special assistance granted under the Industry Act in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The figures are contained in the annual report of the "Industrial Development Act 1982". The most recent report for the year ended 31 March 1988 was presented to the House on 28 July 1988.

Gross Domestic Fixed Capital

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the present levels of gross domestic fixed capital formation in Scotland ; and what is the percentage change over *(a)* the last year and *(b)* 1978-79, in cash and real terms;

(2) what is the gross domestic fixed capital formation in Scotland as a percentage of gross domestic product (E) for each year since 1959.

Mr. Rifkind: Estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation (GDFCF) for Scotland, prepared by the Central Statistical Office, are available only for agriculture, forestry and fishing, energy and water supply, manufacturing, transport and communications (excluding shipping and air transport), together with dwellings. In 1986 these sectors accounted for 57 per cent. of United Kingdom GDFCF (excluding the continental shelf region).

Changes between 1978 and 1986 and between 1985 and 1986, are set out in Table 1A. Owing to methodological and classification changes, there is slight discontinuity in the series in 1980.

Table 1B gives GDFCF in Scotland for those industries for which it is available as a percentage of Scottish gross domestic product (GDP) at factor cost for a broadly equivalent group of industries. In addition, alternative estimates including investment in dwellings are given as a percentage of total GDP. The GDP estimates are based on income GDP(I) at factor cost; there are no expenditure-based estimates (GDP(E)) for Scotland.

Table 1A
GDFCF in certain industries[1] *and dwellings*

	1978-1986 percentage change	*1985-1986 percentage change*
Current prices	+49	−1
Constant 1985 prices[2]	−22	−6

Table 1B

	GDFCF in certain industries[1] *as a percentage of GDP in equivalent industries*[3]		*GDFCF in certain industries*[1] *and dwellings as a percentage of total GDP*[4] *at factor cost*	
	Old basis	*New basis*	*Old basis*	*New basis*
1971	20·1	—	14·7	—
1972	19·3	—	13·7	—
1973	19·4	—	14·0	—
1974	22·8	—	16·9	—
1975	26·6	—	17·8	—
1976	25·0	—	17·2	—
1977	23·6	—	16·0	—
1978	24·4	—	16·1	—
1979	24·1	—	16·1	—
1980	26·5	26·9	16·1	16·0

	GDFCF in certain industries[1] as a percentage of GDP in equivalent industries[3]		GDFCF in certain industries[1] and dwellings as a percentage of total GDP[4] at factor cost	
	Old basis	New basis	Old basis	New basis
1981	—	23·3	—	14·1
1982	—	20·6	—	13·0
1983	—	18·9	—	12·0
1984	—	20·2	—	12·6
1985	—	20·9	—	12·6
1986	—	18·3	—	11·4

[1] Agriculture, forestry and fishing; energy and water supply; manufacturing; transport and communication (excluding shipping and air transport).

[2] Using United Kingdom deflators for the relevant sectors and dwellings—such deflators are likely to be particularly unreliable for dwellings.

[3] GDP(I) for the industries listed at footnote [1] and also including shipping and air transport. The difference in the basis of comparison leads to a likely slight understatement of the GDFCF share of about 0·3 percentage points.

[4] GDP for the whole economy, including industries for which no GDFCF estimates are available.

National Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total Health Service expenditure per head of population in Scotland for each of the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Total gross expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland per head of population in 1986-87 was £418 and in 1987-88 £457. The corresponding figure for 1988-89 is expected to be £504.

As my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 13 December we plan to spend some £2,683 million on the National Health Service in Scotland next year. This will result in an increase in real terms of about 32 per cent. over the level of expenditure in 1979-80. These figures clearly demonstrate the Government's commitment to the continued development and improvement of health services in Scotland.

National Health Service Beds

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of staffed National Health Service beds in Scotland per 1,000 people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: 10·7.

Colleges of Education (Staff)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teaching staff vacancies in Scottish colleges of education have been filled by permanent appointment in the academic session 1987-88 and in session 1988-89 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of teaching staff vacancies in the colleges filled by temporary secondments is as follows:

	(a) from primary schools	*(b) from secondary schools*
Academic session 1987-88	12	14
Academic session 1988-89 (to date)	13	15

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teaching staff vacancies in Scottish colleges of education have been filled by temporary secondments from *(a)* primary, and *(b)* secondary schools in the academic session 1987-88 and in session 1988-89 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Among teaching staff for teacher training courses, nine vacancies in session 1987-88 and so far 13 vacancies in session 1988-89 have been filled by permanent appointment.

Home Condition Survey

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to order a house condition survey in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have, as yet, nothing further to add to the answers which I gave to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 2 November 1987, column *431*, and again on 13 May 1988 at column *279* and the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 8 March 1988 at column *85*.

Housing Repairs

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest information regarding housing in need of major structural repairs in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Greater Glasgow, *(c)* Edinburgh, *(d)* Dundee and *(e)* Aberdeen.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not held centrally.

Skye (Road Bridge)

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer of 25 January to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, he will indicate *(a)* the likely time-scale involved in considering the range of options and the financial implications currently before him in respect of the possibility of building a bridge to Skye and *(b)* whether he proposes any public consultation over the use and level of tolls associated with such a project; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not possible at this stage to indicate any precise time scale for the consideration of options or what procedures will be involved.

Prisoners

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pensioners there are in Scotland; and what proportion this is of the total population.

Mr. Rifkind: The registrar general's population estimates for 30 June 1987 give the total number of women over 60 and men over 65 as 893,629 which is 17·5 per cent. of the population of Scotland on that date.

Pensioners (New Towns)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pensioners, expressed as a percentage of the total population, are resident in each of the new towns; and what is the projected figure for each of the next five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 January 1989]:* I regret that the information requested is not available.

The registrar general prepares population estimates and projections by age for local government districts but only estimates of total population for new towns. The most recent census information relates to 1981. There are likely to have been significant changes in the new towns since then.

Hospital Waiting Lists (Gynaecology Patients)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to reduce the hospital treatment waiting lists for gynaecology patients.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The gynaecology in-patient waiting list is estimated to have falled by 10 per cent. in the year to March 1988. Of the £3 million which I have allocated to health boards to reduce waiting lists in 1988-89, a total of £218,000 has been allocated to projects to reduce gynaecology waiting lists. Boards have set targets to see or treat 3,510 extra out-patients, 614 extra in-patients and 690 extra day cases in this specialty. The £7 million which has been allocated for action to reduce waiting lists in 1989-90 will further improve the situation substantially.

Radioactivity Monitoring

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now consider funding and authorising the Clyde River Purification Board to undertake direct radioactivity monitoring in the river areas for which they have responsibility.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* We have no plans for this. But if the hon. Member has a particular objective in mind which such monitoring might achieve he may like to let me know.

TRANSPORT

Parking Facilities (Greater London)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he is having with the Metropolitan police and borough councils to improve parking facilities in Greater London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have advised London boroughs to develop coherent policies on parking, waiting and loading as part of their approach to traffic management.

In his statement on transport in London issued last week to all London borough councils and to the Metropolitan police, my right hon. Friend noted his support for more effective parking controls; the need for users of off-street public car parks to pay the full commercial price; his support to local authorities' policies of limiting private non-residential off-street parking in new developments; and the contribution of park-and-ride facilities in outer areas to relieve congestion on radial routes.

Officials are in regular contact with the Metropolitan police and London borough councils on a wide range of parking topics.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school-age children of his Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday or after-school care, is provided for employees' children aged five years and over; and what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The driver and behicle licensing centre at Swansea runs an annual summer holiday play scheme for children of school age which is being extended to the Easter holidays this year for the first time.

Child care for 5 to 12-year-olds is again being provided for two weeks in August at the Cardington residential training centre.

The Department is considering what scope there is for further provision without continuing subsidy.

King's Cross (Traffic and Roads)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has commissioned into traffic and roads in the King's Cross area; when they are due to be completed; and who are carrying them out.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The east London assessment study area has been extended to include King's Cross. Ove Arup and Partners have been asked to consider the impact on transport of proposed developments in the King's Cross area as part of their commission.

The consultants' report on the assessment study is expected this summer. They will provide advice as necessary on issues arising from development proposals in the meantime.

Road Transport

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will be seeking in the context of the single European market to bring road transport cabotage into line with continental countries, whether heavy goods vehicles will be forbidden to travel on Sundays and restricted to specific roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 12 January at column *122* about the need for compliance by all vehicles with Community law and the national laws of the countries they visit. It is for highway authorities to decide whether to restrict the movement of heavy goods vehicles on the roads for which they are responsible.

Harbour Authorities (Shipping Services)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many competent harbour authorities are charging firms which maintain scheduled services between United Kingdom offshore islands and the United Kindom mainland, under the Pilotage Act; and if he will list them.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that the following competent harbour authorities make charges under the Pilotage Act 1987 to firms operating such services:

Aberdeen Harbour Board
Clyde Port Authority
Cowes Harbour Commissioners
Lerwick Harbour Trust
Penwith District Council
City of Portsmouth

I further understand that Associated British Ports, as competent harbour authority for the port of Southampton, intends shortly to introduce such charges on firms operating services of this kind.

Ferry Services

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many complaints about charges on scheduled United Kingdom territorial ferry services he has received; and if he will list them.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend has received complaints from my hon. Friend about charges made under the Pilotage Act 1987 by the city of Portsmouth to Solent Cruises and Wight Line Cruises and by the Cowes harbour commissioners to the Red Funnel Group; and from another hon. Member about such charges made by the city of Portsmouth to Gosport Ferry Limited. I understand that following discussions between the city of Portsmouth and Solent and Wight Line Cruises an acceptable arrangement has been reached in those cases.

My right hon. Friend has received no objection under section 10 of the Pilotage Act 1987 about charges made on ferry services operating entirely within United Kingdom territorial waters or between the mainland and United Kingdom offshore islands.

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have nothing to add to the information which I gave to the hon. Member in my reply of 16 January at column *98*.

Personal Injury Accidents

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Pembroke on 24 January, *Official Report*, column *513-14*, he will express the personal injury accidents given in the reply as a percentage of *(a)* resident population in the police area, *(b)* per mile of road in the police area and *(c)* per registered motor vehicle in the police area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Population, road length and vehicle stock figures are not readily available by police force area. Figures are available for counties. I will write to my hon. Friend when the official road accident statistics for 1988 are available.

BAA Airports (Security)

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet received from Sir Norman Payne the report on improvements in security at BAA airports that he requested on 13 January.

Mr. Channon: Yes, I received Sir Norman Payne's report on Thursday 19 January.

The report is thorough and detailed. It identifies well over 100 points on which security improvements have recently been made at BAA's seven airports, are now being made, or are under urgent review.

These improvements cover the following areas in particular:

(a) conditions for the issue of airside passes;
(b) the searching of staff and of any articles they carry when entering airside;
(c) the searching of vehicles when entering airside.
(d) reducing existing landside/airside control posts to release staff for improving security elsewhere; and
(e) increasing patrolling of restricted areas.

In identifying these improvements BAA have been guided by the following principles:

(i) All staff in possession of unescorted airside passes must have been satisfactorily checked to ensure their integrity. Subsequent to the issue of their passes appropriate positive monitoring must be implemented on an ongoing basis.
(ii) Procedures must be in operation which satisfactorily monitor the articles carried airside by staff.
(iii) Procedures must be in operation which either ensure that goods on delivery are escorted to the offload point or minimise the risk of prohibited goods entering airside.
(iv) Better security is achieved by the minimum number of airside/landside control points.
(v) Monitoring of restricted areas by patrolling must be at a level consistent with the risks.

I do not propose to have BAA's report as a whole published. It would not be in the interests of good security to release detailed material on airport security measures in force or under consideration.

I have replied to Sir Norman Payne accepting his report. My officials will keep in touch with BAA about its implementation. I have asked Sir Norman for an account of progress on outstanding matters in three months.

Invalid Carriages

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when regulations allowing for a new class of invalid carriage that can travel at 8 mph will be introduced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Use of Invalid Carriages on Highways Regulations 1988 (SI 1988/2268) came into force yesterday. These regulations allow for the introduction of the type of vehicle my hon. Friend describes, that is, an "invalid carriage" (powered outdoor vehicle for a disabled person) able to travel at a speed of up to 8 mph on the carriageway with the restriction remaining at 4 mph on the footway.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the individuals and organisations that have registered their objections to the proposed increase in tolls on the Severn bridge and which intend to give evidence at the inquiry which starts on 21 February.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At the pre-inquiry meeting held in Thornbury on 17 January, the following signified their intention of giving evidence at the inquiry:

The Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales
Avon County Council
The Automobile Association
The Royal Automobile Club
The Freight Transport Association

The Road Haulage Association
Mr. John Jackson of the Railway Development Society Severnside
Mr. Steve Hoselitz, Editor of the *South Wales Argus*

All registered objectors have been asked to say by 7 February whether they wish to give evidence.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what interest charges were incurred in the building of the Severn bridge;

(2) what was the basic cost of building the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The total cost of building the Severn crossing, comprising the Severn bridge, the Wye bridge and viaduct, and the approach roads, with all ancillary equipment, was £14,362,334. This includes £1,710,143 in respect of interest capitalised during construction.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of the current repair work on the Severn bridge at the latest available date; and what is the total amount expected to be on completion.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* To date £38·9 million has been spent on strengthening and repair work to the Severn crossing. The current estimate for the whole of the works including maintenance is £70 million.

PRIME MINISTER

Israel (Prime Minister)

Q29. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she has any plans to seek to meet the Prime Minister of Israel.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Social Reform (EEC Proposals)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister is she will make a statement on her policy on the EEC's proposals on social reform, with particular reference to the draft directives on sex discrimination, parental leave and the rights of part-time employees.

The Prime Minister: The Government support the conclusion of the European Council that the single market offers the best prospect for promoting employment and increasing the general prosperity of the Community for the benefit of all our people, women and men. We therefore encourage those measures that help the achievement of the single market, and bring down unemployment. But we must resist unnecessary directives which would be an obstacle to growth. We believe that such matters as parental leave and terms and conditions for part-time workers are best dealt with not by inflexible directives but by negotiation between employers and employees.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Speed: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters she has received objecting to the proposed high-speed rail link from London to the Channel tunnel; and what replies she has sent.

The Prime Minister: I have received several hundred letters, including some from hon. Members.

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total expenditure on salaries on ministerial advisers in her office for each completed year since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Following is the information:

Year	*£*
1981	35,762·50
1982	75,569·25
[1]1983	167,126·97
1984	145,022·52
1985	188,654·82
1986	210,746·87
1987	239,459·46
1988	215,379·85

[1] In 1983 the CPRS was abolished and some members became Ministerial advisers.

Engagements

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether she will publish tables listing all the arts: *(a)* companies, *(b)* projects and *(c)* events that she has visited or attended in her official capacity in each of the past 10 years;

(2) whether she will publish a table showing the total number of official engagements she has undertaken in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years.

The Prime Minister: I undertake a substantial number of official engagements each year and visit a wide variety of organisations.

Press Statements

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether she will publish tables listing all the *(a)* dates and *(b)* titles of all press releases on the arts that her office has released in each of the last 10 years;

(2) whether she will publish a table showing the total number of press statements released by her office in each of the past 10 years.

The Prime Minister: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Speeches

Mr. Fisher : To ask the Prime Minister (1) whether she will list the *(a)* dates, *(b)* locations and *(c)* titles of all the speeches she has made on the arts in each of the last 10 years;

(2) whether she will publish a table showing the total number of speeches she has delivered in her official capacity in the United Kingdom in each of the past 10 years.

The Prime Minister: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Insurance

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost to each Government Department which carries its own risks and has its own insurance

arrangements in each year since 1974 of paying damages and associated administrative costs; and what estimate she has as to the cost for each Department in each year of subscribing to normal third party cover afforded by insurance companies in respect of *(a)* employees, *(b)* properties and *(c)* vehicles.

The Prime Minister: I regret that this information cannot be provided without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Non-ministerial Appointments (Salaries)

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list those non-ministerial appointments for which she is responsible, to which a salary is attached.

The Prime Minister: The information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Engagements

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Key: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 31 January.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new steps he proposes in overseas aid to seek to prevent future large-scale deforestation in areas of tropical rain forest.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to encourage the wise and sustainable use of forest resources including support for alternative activities which deter deforestation. Countries receiving British aid will be asked to devote more of our aid resources to forestry.

We will make more aid funds available for international collaborative forestry research. We will encourage British charities to put forward more forestry projects for support from the aid programme. We will continue to help strengthen the institutional capacity of developing countries to deal with forestry issues by, for example, funding overseas trainees on forestry courses in the United Kingdom.

We shall continue to collaborate with other donors in the tropical forestry action plan which is now active in more than 50 countries. We remain strong supporters of the International Tropical Timber Organisation.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a table showing for each of the last complete financial years *(a)* the public expenditure planned on overseas development administration in the public expenditure White Paper published immediately prior to each financial year and *(b)* the outturn public expenditure for each year, including any mid-year additions to the overseas aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: The table, derived from relevant public expenditure White Papers, shows for each of the last four financial years the originally planned provision, estimated outturn (including adjustments to planned provision announced during the year) and final outturn for overseas aid. Since 1984-85, with Treasury agreement, aid programme underspends have been added to provision for the next year rather than, as previously, the year after next. An increase in the planned provision for overseas aid in 1988-89, taking account of the underspend in 1987-88, was announced on 14 November 1988, at column *371*.

Overseas Aid[1]*: Plans and outturn 1984-85 to 1987-88*

£ million

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Originally planned provision	1,125	1,157	1,214	1,263
Estimated Outturn	1,124	1,160	1,224	1,277
Final Outturn	1,120	1,151	1,209	1,224

[1] Overseas aid includes aid administration and amounts attributed to overseas aid for European Community budgetary spending on aid.

DEFENCE

Emergency Response Team

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual budget for the counter improvised nuclear device emergency response team; what liaison it has with the nuclear emergency search team in the United States of America; and with which other national counter-nuclear terrorist squads the United Kingdom team liaises.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir Michael McNair-Wilson) on 13 January at column *784*.

North Korea (Weapons Capacity)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the possession by North Korea of chemical or biological weapons capacity.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our normal practice to comment in detail on the information available to the Government on such matters.

Nuclear Materials (Storage)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what specific licensing arrangements exist with the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution covering the storage of nuclear materials at *(a)* Devonport, Rosyth and Faslane shipyards and *(b)* the Atomic Weapons Research establishment Aldermaston, Atomic Weapon Research Establishment Burghfield and the Royal Ordnance plant at Caerwent.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since their privatisation, the Devonport and Rosyth Dockyard Companies' nuclear facilities have been licensed, via the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate, under the terms of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 (NIA). The disposals of waste radioactive substances from these facilities are now made under authorisations issued, under the terms of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 (RSA), by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in the Department of the Environment (HMIP/DOE) for Devonport and by Her Majesty's Industrial pollution inspectorate of the Scottish Development Department (HMIPI/SDD) for Rosyth.

Crown and Government Departments including Her Majesty's forces nuclear and radioactive facilities are not subject to licensing under the NIA. These MOD facilities are, however, subject to appropriate regulation, inspection and enforcement by Her Majesty's inspectors of HSE (HMI/HSE) under the terms of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSWA). Although the terms of the RSA are not applicable to such facilities, disposals of waste radioactive substances are subject to "agreements", made with the relevant environmental Departments, approved by the Secretaries of State for those relevant Departments.

Although safety enactments and statutes are not applicable to defence facilities, it is Her Majesty's Government policy that the standards of the health and safety requirements set by Secretary of State for Defence are, and shall be, at least as stringent as those set by enactments and other legislation for similar civil (non-defence) installations.

The following are the current positions:

(a) The Naval Base at Faslane is not licensed under the NIA. Waste disposals are under an agreement with HMIPI/SDD.

(b) None of the Stations of the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) based on Aldermaston, Burghfield and Cardiff (the former ROF Cardiff) is licensed under the NIA. Radioactive waste disposals are made in accordance with Agreements with the relevant Environmental Departments; viz: HMIP/DOE and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for AWE (Aldermaston); HMIP/DOE for AWE (Burghfield); and the Welsh Office, in consultation with HMIP/DOE, for AWE (Cardiff).

Anti-submarine Atomic Depth Charges

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Admiralty research establishment at Portsmouth conducts any development or defence preparedness research on anti-submarine atomic depth charges.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our policy to disclose details of any research work of this nature.

Radioactive Contamination

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantities of *(a)* beryllium and *(b)* depleted uranium are stored at the Royal Ordnance factory Caerwent at Llanishen, Cardiff; and what safety measures are implemented to stop radioactive contamination of surrounding land areas and water supplies.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not the policy of the Ministry of Defence to reveal the amounts of nuclear, radioactive and other associated materials held at defence establishments including the atomic weapons establishment at Cardif (AWE (Cardiff)) (formerly the Royal Ordnance factory, Cardiff).

All work involving radioactive and toxic materials is undertaken in facilities which are designed and built to ensure a safe working environment and to protect other workers, the general public and the environment against any potential hazard. Residual radioactive and beryllium wastes are treated before discharge. The airborne discharges are continuously monitored; liquids are collected and each batch monitored prior to discharge. The total amounts discharged are very small. Monitoring outside the buildings involved does not indicate any significant level of dispersed materials. The radiation doses from these discharges are assessed to be negligible, less than one thousandth of the annual United Kingdom dose limit for members of the public.

We are therefore confident that the storage of quantities of both beryllium and depleted uraniaum held at AWE (Cardiff) does not pose any danger to the work force or the public.

Fissile Material Stockpile

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has recently received any reports from *(a)* the director of atomic weapon research establishment, Aldermaston and *(b)* the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces on the preparedness of the United Kingdom fissile material stockpile to meet defence requirements into the 1990s.

Mr. Sainsbury: Future requirements for fissile material are kept under regular review as part of the overall process of planning the defence programme. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to reveal details.

Chemical Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any report on the chemical weapons capability of *(a)* Libya, *(b)* Israel, *(c)* Iraq, *(d)* the Soviet Union, *(e)* France, *(f)* South Africa and *(g)* the United States of America.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Reports are received from time to time on the military capabilities of many countries. However, it is not our normal practice to comment in detail on individual reports.

Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what places, over what time period and using what methods United Kingdom stocks of chemical and biological warfare agents were destroyed.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 25 January at column *653*.

Fighter Pilots

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots qualified for flying jet fighter planes during 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: A total of 83 pilots graduated to fly fast jet in 1988, which represents a slight increase on 1987 figures.

Chemical Warfare

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any stocks of chemical or biological warfare agents are kept at Porton Down or other Ministry of Defence research establishments for the purpose of experimental research on protective measures for civilians and military personnel against chemical warfare attack.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 25 January at column *653*.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any tests have been undertaken at Porton Down on any soil samples from the Kurdish areas of Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The CDE Porton Down has carried out a scientific analysis of soil samples provided by Mr. Gwynne Roberts, a Channel 4 reporter. The analysis, which was given to Mr. Roberts on 11 January, shows that the samples contained traces of sulphur mustard and related compounds together with traces of the explosive Tetryl. We cannot confirm the circumstances in which these samples were collected, but have no reason to doubt Mr. Roberts' account that these were collected in northern Iraq. The Government believe that this, following previous indications, amounts to convincing evidence that chemical weapons have been used by Iraq against their Kurdish population.

Military Construction Projects

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list military construction projects in the United Kingdom that are used in support of *(a)* British forces and *(b)* United States forces that are to be funded in whole or in part by NATO infrastructure funds from NATO slices 41 and 42.

Mr. Neubert: The composition of NATO infrastructure slices 41 and 42 will not be agreed until December 1989 and December 1990 respectively.

Military Exercises (Noise and Damage)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action has been taken since 1986 to lessen the effects of the firing of guns on the Castlemartin range, Pembrokeshire on the range's neighbour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: A number of measures have been adopted in an effort to reduce the effects of firing at Castlemartin range on the local community. When weather conditions are likely to attenuate firing, noise limitations are placed on the types of ammunition which may be fired and firing on certain areas of the range is prohibited. Night firing is restricted to two hours only between 1830 hours and 2359 hours according to the season and may take place on only two non-consecutive nights per week and not on Fridays, weekends or public holidays; only the quieter ammunition may be fired.

Castlemartin is an extremely important training facility for tank units of the British and Federal German armies. Live firing is an indispensible part of troop training and Castlemartin is one of the few places where this can be done.

Nevertheless, the range authorities maintain close liaison with the local community and seek to do all that is possible, given training needs, to lessen the burden on those living close to the range.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any compensation is paid by his Department in respect of damage caused to civilian properties as a result of vibration from British or West German military guns or aircraft in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence deals with, and, where appropriate, settles, third party claims for compensation for loss of or damage to property in this country arising from the on-duty activities of the United Kingdom's armed forces. The Ministry also deals, under the terms of article VIII of the NATO status of forces agreement (Cmnd. 9363), with claims arising from on-duty activities of the armed forces of other NATO member nations training in this country.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the types of British and West German tank together with their gun calibre used on the Castlemartin range, Pembrokeshire, since 1959, with the dates when new types of tank were introduced.

Mr. Neubert: The following types of tank have been used on the Castlemartin range since 1959.

British		*Date*
Centurion	20 pounder gun	1959-64
Centurion	105 mm gun	1965-72
Centurion	120 mm gun	1970-date

Note: Some minor trials were conducted with Chieftain 120 mm during 1966-67.

German		*Date*
M48	90 mm gun	1961-67
Leopard 1	105 mm gun	1968-69
M48	90 mm gun	1970-73
Leopard 1	105 mm gun	1974-75
M48	90 mm gun	1976-79

German		Date
Leopard 1	105 mm gun	1980-85
Leopard 2	120 mm gun	1986-date

Note: The Federal Republic of Germany first made use of the facilities at Castlemartin in 1961.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any arrangements exist for the provision of finance or other assistance for sound insulation of civilian properties adjacent to military ranges in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence has no arrangements for the provision of finance or other assistance for the sound insulation of civilian properties adjacent to military ranges in the United Kingdom. As with all military activities, however, where a reasonable connection can be made between an activity and specific damage or loss, the Ministry of Defence would be prepared to consider individual claims.

ENERGY

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The ministerial advisers appointed in my Department since 1979 are as follows:

1979 Mr. M. Portillo
1983 Ms. L. Rouse
1987 Mr. J. Derrick
1989 Mr. N. D. Martin

It is not the practice to reveal the salaries of advisers as they are individually negotiated in relation to previous outside earnings and are therefore confidential. The length of appointment for each adviser varied.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy for how long the Didcot Pluto reactors at Harwell have been in use; if any United Kingdom reactor has been in use longer; what *(a)* primary containment or *(b)* secondary shutdown system exists in these reactors; what assessment he has made of the safety of these reactors and of the possibility of a melt-down accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The UKAEA's reactors Dido and Pluto were commissioned in 1956 and 1957 respectively, contemporary with the first United Kingdom commercial power reactors. On the matters raised by the hon. Member relating to the design of the reactors, I have asked the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to write to him.

The Health and Safety Executive carried out a safety audit of Dido and Pluto in late 1987. This audit considered all aspects of the safety of the reactors and concluded that the two reactors were safe for current operation, but the HSE made a number of recommendations with which the authority would have to comply to provide justification for operation beyond 1989. The AEA have accepted all the recommendations, the timely implementation of which the HSE will continue to monitor closely.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make available to the public the full report of inspections carried out by the nuclear installations inspectorate towards the end of 1987 on the Didcot Pluto reactors at Harwell.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The technical commentaries on plant operation and arrangements which the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate produced in the course of its review were not prepared with a view to future publication. They include information of a commercially sensitive nature which it would not be appropriate to publish. The conclusions and recommendations arising from the audit were published by the HSE in a press notice dated 21 June 1988 a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House.

Offshore Installations (Safety)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made regarding proposals for the application off shore of regulations dealing with safety representatives and safety committees.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A consultative document containing our proposals for a set of regulations to deal with the election of safety representatives and for the formation of safety committees on offshore installations has been issued today. Copies of these proposals are available in the Libraries of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Bill Procedure

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Lord President of the Council what representations he has received other than from hon. and right hon. Members urging an early debate of the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure.

Mr. Wakeham: I have received no such representations.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the private bills laid before the House since 1979 and indicate which have been enacted.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Bills presented after 27 November 1979

Alexandra Park and Palace *[Lords]*
*Bangor Market *[Lords]*
*British Olivetti Limited *[Lords]*
*British Railways
*British Railways (Castlefield)
*British Transport Docks
*Clifton Suspension Bridge
*County of Kent *[Lords]*
*Derbyshire *[Lords]*
*Eagle & Globe Steel Limited *[Lords]*
*Eastbourne Harbour *[Lords]*
*East Sussex *[Lords]*
*Edward Berry and Doris Eilleen Ward (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
*Falmouth Container Terminal
*Felixstowe Dock and Railway (No. 2) *(Late Bill)*
*Friends Meeting House (Reigate) *[Lords]*
*Greater London Council (General Powers) (No. 2)
*Greater London Council (Money) (No. 2)
*Humberside *[Lords]*
*London Transport (No. 2)
Portsmouth City Council

*Salvation Army *[Lords]*
*Scottish Widows' Fund and Life Assurance Society
*Southern Water Authority *[Lords]*
*Standard Life Assurance Company
Stevenage Development Authority
*United Reformed Church Lion Walk Colchester (*changed from* United Reformed Church (Lion Walk Colchester))
*Wesley's Chapel, City Road

Bills presented after 27 November 1980
*Allied Irish Banks
*Barnsley Borough Council
*British Railways (No. 2)
*British Railways (Pension Schemes)
*British Railways (Victoria) *[Lords]*
*British Transport Docks
*Charterhouse Japhet
*County of Avon *[Lords]*
*Cumbria *[Lords]*
*Greater London Council (General Powers)
*Greater London Council (Money)
*Great Yarmouth Borough Council *[Lords]*
*Lloyd's
*Lloyd's Bank
*London Transport
*Milford Docks *[Lords]*
*Northumbrian Water Authority
*Peterborough Development Corporation *[Lords]*
*Preston Borough Council *[Lords]*
*Sion College *[Lords]*
*South Yorkshire *(Late Bill)*
*United Reformed Church *[Lords]*
United Reformed Church (Slough) *[Lords]*
*Wallerawang Collieries, Limited *[Lords]*
*Whitehaven Harbour
Yarmouth (Isle of Wight) Pier

Bills presented after 27 November 1981
Alexandra Park and Palace
*British Railways
*British Railways (Liverpool Street Station)
*British Transport Docks
*British Waterways *[Lords]*
*Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Limited (Merger) *[Lords] (Late Bill)*
*Cornwall County Council *[Lords]*
*County of Lancashire *[Lords]*
*Derwent Valley Railway *[Lords]*
*East Lindsey District Council *[Lords]*
*Epsom and Walton Downs Regulation *[Lords]*
*Feltham Station Area Redevelopment (Longford River)
*Greater London Council (General Powers) (No. 2)
*Grater London Council (Money)
*Hampshire *[Lords]*
*Hertsmere Borough Council (Rowley Lane)
*Hong Kong and China Gas Company plc Bill *[Lords] (changed from* Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited Bill *[Lords]*
*Hugh Small and Norma Small (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
*John Francis Dare and Gillian Loder Dare (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
*London Transport (General Powers)
*London Transport (Liverpool Street)
Norwich City Council *[Lords]*
*Nottingham County Council *[Lords]*
*Port of London
*Saint Thomas' Burial Ground (Southwark)
*Severn-Trent Water Authority
*Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council *[Lords]*
*Southern Water Authority
Swindford Bridge *[Lords]*
*Tees and Harlepool Port Authority
*Thomas Brown and Sons, Limited *[Lords]*
*West Yorkshire (Parking and Transport)

Bills presented after 27 November 1982
*Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust
*British Railways
*Commons Registration (Glamorgan)
*Dartford Tunnel *[Lords]*
Ginns and Gutteridge, Leicester (Crematorium)
Greater London Council (General Powers)
*Greater London Council (Money)
*King's College London *[Lords]*
*Kingston upon Hull *[Lords]*
*Lloyds Bowmaker *[Lords]*
*London Docklands Railway
*Milford Haven Conservancy
*Parkeston Quay *[Lords]*
*Pwllheli Harbour *[Lords]*
*Staffordshire *[Lords]*
*Standard Chartered Merchant Bank *(late Bill)*
Tees and Hartlepool Port Authority
*Tor Bay Harbour (Torquay Marina &c.) *changed from* Tor Bay Harbour (Torquay Marina etc.)

Bills presented after 27 November 1983
*Alexandra Park and Palace
*Anglian Water Authority (King's Lynn Tidal Defences)
*Associated British Ports (No. 2)
*Aylesbury Vale District Council *[Lords]*
*Barclays Bank
*Bournemouth Borough Council *[Lords]*
*British Railways (No. 2)
*Cardiff City Council
*Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School *[Lords]*
*Dartmoor Commons
*Derwent Valley Railway *[Lords]*
*Greater London Council (General Powers)
*Greater London Council (Money) (No. 2)
*Hereford City Council *[Lords]*
*Leicestershire *[Lords]*
*London Docklands Railway (No. 2)
*London Transport
*London Transport (Tower Hill) *[Lords]*
*Merseyside Development Corporation
*Metals Society *[Lords]*
*Norwich City Council *[Lords]*
*Oxfordshire *[Lords]*
Piece Hall, Halifax
Piece Hall, Halifax (No. 2) *(late Bill)*
*Portsea Harbour Company
*Selby Bridge
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council *[Lords]*
*Standard Chartered Bank
*Surrey *[Lords]*
*Swavesey Bye-Ways *[Lords]*
*Warwick District Council *[Lords]*
*Worcester City Council *[Lords]*

Bills presented after 27 November 1984
*Associated British Ports (Hull Fish Docks) *[Lords]*
*Bath City Council *[Lords]*
*Berkshire *[Lords]*
*Birmingham City Council
*British Railways
*British Railways (Trowse Bridge) *[Lords]*
*Cambridge City Council
*Clwyd County Council *[Lords]*
*C-Poultry Company Limited
*Durham City Council *[Lords]*
*Essex *[Lords]*
*Felixstowe Dock and Railway
*Gosport Borough Council
*Greater London Council (General Powers)
*Greater London Council (Money)
*Greater Manchester *[Lords]*
*Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) *[Lords]*
*Harrogate Stray
*Hastings Pier
*King's College London *[Lords]*
*Lincoln City Council
*Lloyds Bank (Merger)
*Luton Borough Council *[Lords]*

*National Bank of New Zealand Limited
*Nottinghamshire County Council (Superannuation) *[Lords]*
*Plymouth Marine Events Base
*Poole Borough Council *[Lords]*
*Royal Bank of Scotland
*Royal Holloway and Bedford New College *[Lords]*
*Scarborough Borough Council
*South Yorkshire Passenger Transport
*Streatham Park Cemetery
*Swansea City Council (Tawe Barrage) *[Lords]*
*Valerie Mary Hill and Alan Monk (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
*West Glamorgan *[Lords]*
*Yorkshire Water Authority

Bills presented after 27 November 1985
*Aberystwyth Harbour
*Alcoholics Anonymous (Dispositions) *[Lords]*
Bexley London Borough Council
Blyth Harbour *[Lords]*
*Bournemouth-Swanage Motor Road and Ferry *[Lords]*
*Brighton Marine Palace and Pier *[Lords]*
*British Railways (No.2)
*British Railways (Stansted)
*Bromborough Dock *[Lords]*
*City of London (Various Powers)
*Clifton Suspension Bridge *[Lords]* *[Late Bill]*
*County of Cleveland *[Lords]*
*County of South Glamorgan (Taff Crossing)
*Dyfed *[Lords]*
*Exeter City Council *[Lords]*
*Great Yarmouth Outer Harbour
*Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 2) *[Lords]*
*Gull Island Protection *[Lords]*
*Harrogate Borough Council *[Lords]* (*changed from* Harrogate Bogs Field etc. *[Lords]*)
*Harwich Parkeston Quay
*Ipswich Port Authority
*Isle of Wight
Lloyds Bank (Merger) (Amendent)
*London Docklands Railway (City Extension)
*London Underground (Goodge Street) *[Lords]*
*Mersey Docks and Harbour *[Lords]*
*Mid Glamorgan County Council *[Lords]*
*Milford Haven Port Authority
*Plymouth City Council *[Lords]*
*Pontypridd Markets Fairs and Town Hall
*Port of Fosdyke *[Lords]*
*River Humber (Burcom Outfall) *[Lords]*
Shoreham Port Authority†
*South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit
Teignmouth Quay Company
York City Council *[Lords]*

Bills presented after 27 November 1986
*Associated British Ports
*Bexley London Borough Council
*Brighton Marine Palace and Pier (Finance, &c.)
*British Railways
*British Railways (London) *[Lords]*
*British Waterways
*City of Westminster
*Corn Exchange *[Lords]*
*George Donald Evans and Deborah Jane Evans (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
Hampshire (Lyndhurst Bypass) *[Lords]*
*Hastings Borough Council
*John Ernest Rolfe and Florence Iveen Rolfe (Marriage Enabling) *[Lords]*
*Keble College Oxford *[Lords]*
*Liverpool Exchange *[Lords]*
London Docklands Railway (Beckton)
London Regional Transport
London Regional Transport (Penalty Fares) *[Lords]*
*Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys
*National Provident Institution *[Lords]*
*Newcastle upon Tyne Town Moor *[Lords]*
*Selwyn College Cambridge *[Lords]*
Swanage Yacht Haven *[Lords]*
Teignmouth Quay Company
*University College London *[Lords]*
*Whitchurch Bridge

Bills presented after 27 November 1987
*Associated British Ports (Barrow) *[Lords]*
Associated British Ports (No. 2)
Avon Light Rail Transit *[Lords]*
*Birmingham City Council
*Brighton and Preston Cemetery
British Railways (No. 2)
British Railways (Penalty Fares) *[Lords]*
*British Waterways (No. 2) *[Lords]*
Cardiff Bay Barrage
City of London (Spitalfields Market)
*Dartmouth-Kingswear Floating Bridge
*Eastbourne Harbour *[Lords]*
Falmouh Container Terminal
Greater Manchester (Light Rapid Transit System) (No. 3) *[Lords]*
Hampstead Radio Station *[Lords]*
*Harwich Harbour *[Lords]*
*Imperial College *[Lords]*
International Management Centre from Buckingham
London Local Authorities *[Lords]*
London Regional Transport (No. 2)
*Northampton *[Lords]*
North Killingholme Cargo Terminal
Port of Tyne *[Lords]*
River Humber (Burcom Outfall) *[Lords]*
*Saint Bennet Fink Burial Ground (City of London) *[Lords]*
St. George's Hill, Weybridge, Estate
*Southern Water Authority
*Tor Bay Harbour (Oxen Cove and Coastal Footpath, Brixham)
*University of Wales, College of Cardiff *[Lords]* (*Changed from* University of Wales, Cardiff *[Lords]*)

Bills presented after 27 November 1988
Associated British Ports (Hull)
Birmingham City Council (No. 2)
British Film Institute Southbank
British Railways
Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace)
City of London (Various Powers)
Hythe, Kent, Marina
Hythe Marina Village (Southampton) Wavescreen
International Westminster Bank
Isle of Wight
King's Cross Railways
London Underground (Victoria)
Midland Metro
New Southgate Cemetery and Crematorium Limited
Penzance Albert Pier Extension
Redbridge London Borough Council
Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport
Wentworth Estate
Wesleyan Assurance Society

Note: Bills which have been enacted are indicated by '*'.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Rural Schools

13. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the standards of primary and secondary schools in rural areas.

Mr. Butcher: Responsibility for educational provision in maintained primary and secondary schools in rural as well as in other areas rests with local education authorities. My right hon. Friend is supporting through education support grant some £1·5 million of expenditure per annum

on pilot projects in 14 LEAs with a view to improving the quality and range of the curriculum in rural primary schools.

Nursery Education

14. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many under-fives have been placed in nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures to be published shortly by my right hon. Friend show that, in January 1988, 285,000 children were in nursery schools or classes in England. Another 248,000 under-fives were in infant classes. The combined figure has increased by nearly 25 per cent. in eight years.

Nursery Places

15. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage West Sussex education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

18. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage Hereford and Worcester education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

30. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage West Sussex local education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

40. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage Kent education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

42. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage Oxfordshire education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

45. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage Wiltshire education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

69. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage Essex education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

75. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he proposes to take to encourage Kent education authority to provide more nursery places; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Education is not compulsory below the age of five. The scope and form of provision for under-fives are wholly within local authorities' discretion. My right hon. Friend sees no cause to change that.

Higher Education (Fees)

16. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals for introducing changes in the administration of fees in higher education.

Mr. Jackson: We are considering the possibility of increasing the impact of student enrolments through some shift in the public funding of higher education from the grant to be disbursed by the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council towards students' fees met under the mandatory awards arrangements. When we have a clear proposal, we shall consult the various interests before taking a decision.

Science Teachers

17. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the recruitment of science teachers.

Mr. Butcher: Recruitment to secondary science teacher training courses has increased by 9 per cent. since the launch in 1986 of our action programme on teacher supply. We shall continue and reinforce our action programme to ensure that we have the science teachers we need in the 1990s.

37. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to increase the number of science teachers in primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: We project no particular problems with the supply of primary teachers. Most teaching in primary schools is carried out by the class teacher. The Government are already supporting in-service training for primary teachers through the LEA training grants scheme, and the provision of advisory staff through education support grants. Both of these schemes are providing primary teachers with extra subject expertise and support in science.

57. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to increase the number of science teachers in secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: We have had in place for over two years an action programme to increase the number of science teachers in secondary schools. This includes a £1,300 bursary for those undertaking initial teacher training in physics, an energetic teacher teacher recruitment publicity campaign spearheaded by the teaching as a career unit and new courses of initial teacher training. My right hon. Friend has just announced that the bursary will be extended to chemistry in September.

Universities (Sciences)

19. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what part he expects teaching and research in physics and chemistry to play in universities in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The University Grants Committee has recently published for consultation reports on the principles which might inform subsequent proposals for the rationalisation of physics and chemistry in universities. As in other subject reviews, the objective is to strengthen national provision in both teaching and research.

Schools (Staffordshire)

20. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil in

secondary schools in Staffordshire in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Butcher: Staffordshire spent an average of £1,040 per secondary pupil in 1978-79 and £1,255 per secondary pupil in 1986-87. The figure for the earlier year has been repriced to 1986-87 prices using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Teachers

21. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to increase the supply of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths).

31. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take further steps to support better recruitment and retention of school teachers in geographical areas of shortage or high turnover; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Department's action programme to combat teacher shortages is designed to help relieve pressure on regions with recruitment difficulties. The teaching as a career unit continues to hold discussions with local authorities on how best to improve teacher recruitment and retention.

Grant-maintained Schools

22. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of schools who have indicated their intention to seek grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

26. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have now approached his Department with a view to seeking grant-maintained status.

28. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have used the Education Reform Act 1988 to opt for grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

39. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the number of schools which so far have made application for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Butcher: Eight schools have now published proposals for grant-maintained status, which my right hon. Friend will determine on their merits in due course. Parents have voted for publication of such proposals at 10 other schools, and further ballots are in preparation. The Department continues to receive numerous inquiries from parents and governors about grant-maintained status and the application procedures.

41. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the results of the recently held ballots of parents to determine whether they wish to seek grant-maintained status for their children's schools.

Mr. Butcher: Parents at 21 schools have voted on whether to apply to my right hon. Friend for grant-maintained status. They voted in favour at 18 schools, nearly all by a very large majority. I am pleased to note that the average turnout in the ballots so far has been 72 per cent.

50. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements he has made for the handling of applications by schools for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Butcher: Where parents vote in favour of seeking grant-maintained status for a school, section 62(2) of the Education Reform Act 1988 requires the governing body to publish proposals accordingly. My right hon. Friend will consider such proposals on their merits after taking account of any objections received.

Air Pollution

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future level of funding for research into air pollution.

Mr. Jackson: The Natural Environment Research Council plans to undertake research relevant to air pollution in the financial year 1989-90 at a level of some £1·1 million. This includes research on acid rain, fluorine and radionuclides. The NERC is helping organise the Glasgow international conference on acid deposition in 1990. Longer-term funding levels will be influenced by the trend of income from research commissioned by other Government Departments.

Spelling

24. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to ensure that teachers have reached an acceptable standard of spelling.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since 1 September 1984, all entrants to initial teacher training courses in England and Wales and all new entrants to teaching in the maintained sector by the non-standard routes have had to have attained the standard required for grade C in the GCE at O-level or the equivalent in English.

Scottish Universities

25. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next expects to meet the principals of Scottish universities; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Jackson: We have no present plans to meet the principals of the Scottish universities.

School Meals

27. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will establish an inquiry into the price-sensitivity of demand for school meals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has no such intentions at present.

GCSE

29. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has completed a review of the first year's GCSE examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses copies of a report from the School Examinations and Assessment Council on the first GCSE courses and examinations, and the reply I have sent today. The report confirms that the GCSE is off to a good start, and identifies a number of areas where improvement is required. I look to the council to play a central role in effecting these improvements so that we can realise the full benefits of the GCSE.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on general certificate of secondary education examinations from parents over the past nine months.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend and I have received about 700 letters on GCSE since June 1987, from parents and other interested parties. The vast majority have been supportive of the principles behind the new examination.

34. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has inquired into the reasons for the delays by some boards in announcing general certificate of secondary education results; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The issuing of GCSE results is the responsibility of the independent GCSE examining groups. My right hon. Friend has made it clear to them that late results cannot be tolerated. The examining groups regret the delays that affected a small percentage of results in 1988, and have undertaken to review administrative arrangements and to take corrective measures to ensure that the problems do not recur.

Student Loans

32. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning his proposals for student loans.

36. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received since the publication of the White Paper entitled "Top-up Loans for Students".

62. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from students in Wales, and their representatives, concerning his proposals for student loans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning his proposals over changes to the method of student financing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Since the publication on 9 November 1988 of the White Paper on top-up loans for students, some 3,912 representations have been received. Representations from Wales are not separately recorded.

33. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of banks and financial institutions to discuss proposals to introduce a loan scheme for maintenance of students in higher education.

Mr. Jackson: In November. Discussions are continuing between the Department and representatives of financial institutions.

University Lecturers

35. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding a pay settlement for university lecturers.

Mr. Jackson: The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Teachers are discussing university lecturers' pay with each other: since last April, my right hon. Friend has received just over 200 letters on the topic.

School Transport

38. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the rules relating to school transport.

Mr. Butcher: The law governing home-to-school transport is laid down by section 55 of the Education Act 1944, as amended by section 53 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Anti-racist Policies

43. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities currently implement anti-racist policies in their schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Information about how many local education authorities currently implement anti-racist policies in their schools is not collected centrally. It is Government policy that ethnic minority pupils should have the same opportunity as all others to profit from what schools can offer them and that schools should preserve and transmit our national values in a way which accepts Britain's ethnic diversity and promotes tolerance and racial harmony. It is for individual local education authorities and schools to determine, in the light of their own needs and circumstances, how to give effect to this policy.

Education Reform

44. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on what progress has been made in the implementation of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: Implementation of the Act is proceeding on schedule. The following steps have been taken:

The Government plan to implement section 5, which is concerned with the approval of qualifications and syllabuses for pupils of compulsory school age, with effect from 1 August 1989. The proposed arrangements are set out in a draft circular which was issued for consultation before Christmas.

We are on course to start the phased implementation of the national curriculum from this autumn: development work has begun on the attainment tests in readiness for the first run in 1991.

Local education authorities have been required to submit, in most cases, by September 1989 schemes for the local management of schools, for introduction the following April. Local education authorities and governors of secondary schools must also be prepared from August 1990 to admit eligible pupils up to the assessed capacity of the school building. Preparations for the transfer of education responsibilities from ILEA to the inner London boroughs in April 1990 are well in hand.

The Act gives schools the opportunity to opt out of local authority control and become grant-maintained. Parental ballots have now been held at 19 schools on whether to seek grant-maintained status.

There has been excellent progress in the establishment of city technology colleges. Sponsorship has already been announced for 10 CTCs, and further announcements will be made soon.

The Department's circulars 8/88 and 9/88 were issued in September 1988 requiring local education authorities to reform the governing bodies of their further education colleges and to draw up schemes of planning and delegation for those colleges.

Sections 214-216, on bogus degrees, came into force on 30 November 1988; orders made under section 216 came into effect on the same date.

The Act's new arrangements for higher education will be in full operation from 1 April 1989. We have established the higher education corporations to take over the running of polytechnics and major colleges of higher education as independent institutions, as well as the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

We have also established the Education Assets Board to oversee the transfer of assets and liabilities from local education authorities to relevant institutions in the PCFC sector and to grant-maintained schools.

With respect to the provisions on academic tenure, the university commissioners and their staff have been appointed and they have begun their work of reviewing statutes for modification.

Gifted Children

46. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources are made available *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in north Yorkshire for the education of gifted children; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not held centrally at present. However, the Department is sponsoring a survey of current local education authority provision for the most able pupils to be carried out by the National Association for Gifted Children. The association intends to invite all LEAs in England and Wales to participate and hopes to complete the survey by the summer.

Languages

47. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to encourage more pupils to learn to speak foreign languages.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's policy on modern foreign languages in the school curriculum was set out in the January 1988 policy statement, a copy of which I am sending to my hon. Friend. The national curriculum will include a modern foreign language as a foundation subject at secondary level to be studied by each pupil between the ages of 11 and 16. Within this framework, my right hon. Friend is encouraging a greater diversity of languages offered in the school curriculum.

72. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secrertary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to encourage a growth in, and the take-up of, places available in foreign language courses at further and higher education levels.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are concerned to increase the number of pupils continuing to study a foreign language until age 16 and beyond. Our proposals for a national curriculum include a modern foreign language as a foundation subject at secondary level to be studied by all pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. We hope that the greater numbers studying a language to that age will result in an increase in those continuing with further language learning not only in the sixth form but also in further and higher education, so stimulating demand.

The Government are working to make the whole of the education system, including the provision for foreign languages in further and higher education, more responsive to demand.

In addition, the network of language export centres, funded by the Department's professional, industrial and commercial updating programme (PICKUP) and the Training Agency, brings together universities, polytechnics and colleges to help firms meet their language training needs.

Truancy

48. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will hold a national inquiry into truancy among school children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend does not intend to hold such an inquiry. Under the Education Acts, the responsibility for taking action on truancy rests with local education authorities. They should ensure that attendance levels in their schools are monitored and that action is taken to keep them under control.

Environmental Research

49. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to support and develop fundamental research into factors affecting the environment and to encourage the work of the Natural Environment Research Council.

66. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to promote fundamental research into the greenhouse effect and other global environmental issues and to fund the research programmes of the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Jackson: The Government are committed to support for fundamental research, in particular in the environmental field. It is for the Natural Environment Research Council and other Research Councils to plan scientific priorities within the overall funds available. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce the 1989-90 allocations to research councils as soon as possible.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

51. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he expects the pupil-teacher ratio on average for Inner London boroughs to be higher or

lower than the indicated ratio for the Inner London education authority of 16:1 for nursery, 17:1 for primary, 13:1 for secondary and 5:7 for special.

Mrs. Rumbold: All teaching and non-teaching staff in ILEA schools will on 1 April 1990 transfer to the employment of the council by which their school is to be maintained. Thereafter, staffing policy will be the responsibility of the inner London councils and, with the implementation of schemes of local management, the governors of the schools.

52. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current pupil-teacher ratio for secondary schools in Greater London.

Mr. Butcher: In January 1988, the pupil-teacher ratio within maintained secondary schools in Greater London was 14:1.

School Improvements

53. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to encourage developers to make financial contributions towards school improvements in areas where significant numbers of children of school age have been added to school rolls.

Mr. Butcher: Local education authorities are responsible for ensuring that sufficient school places are available in their areas. My right hon. Friend welcomes, in principle, any agreement between an LEA and developer that leads to the private sector investing in improvements in schools.

School Inspectors

54. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that Her Majesty's inspectors are sufficiently diligent in detecting below average standards of teaching and achievement of pupils.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Her Majesty's Inspector's central concern has always been with standards of teaching and learning, and it reports regularly to me on those and other such matters. The senior chief inspector is directly responsible for the performance of the inspectorate, but I study carefully the reports that are submitted to me, which are also open to public scrutiny. I am satisfied that HMI already carries out its functions effectively and diligently.

School Activities (Charges)

55. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has received from education authorities to departmental circular 2/89 entitled, "Education Reform Act 1988, Charges for School Activities".

Mr. Butcher: None.

Capital Allocations

56. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received following the announcement of the 1989-90 capital allocations to local education authorities.

Mr. Butcher: A total of 26 representations have been received from hon. Members, local authorities and school governors. Fourteen of these relate to the prescribed capital allocations to local education authorities and 12 to the allocations for voluntary aided and special agreement schools.

Durham University

58. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received from the university of Durham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The university has recently made representations about the cost of repairs to Durham castle, on which my right hon. Friend has seen no case for the supplementation of help available through existing channels. It has also notified us of an outline proposal to establish a college on Teesside which, depending on the outcome of local consultations, may lead to the need for decisions at national level.

City Technology Colleges

59. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many city technology colleges are now envisaged.

63. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many city technology colleges he has planned to open during the present year.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many city technology colleges he expects to commence in 1989.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many city technology colleges have so far been announced.

Mrs. Rumbold: The city technology colleges programme continues to make excellent progress. Kingshurst CTC opened last year and two more, at Teesside and Nottingham, will open in September this year. CTCs in Bradford and Gateshead are planned to open in September 1990. In addition, sponsors have announced their intention to establish five other CTCs. Further announcements will be made soon.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

60. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any proposals to restore negotiating machinery for teachers' pay and conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key).

School Curriculum

61. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make regulations under section 22 of the Education Act 1988 governing the supply and publication of information concerning the school curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has today issued for statutory consultations a draft of the first regulations

he proposes to make under section 22. These are intended to take effect from the 1989-90 school year. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Graduates

64. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many graduates entered industry during the latest year that figures are available; and what proportion this was of the total number of students graduating.

Mr. Jackson: In 1987, 16,600 first degree graduates in Great Britain entered industry. This accounted for 17 per cent. of the total first degree graduates of known destination in Great Britain. The destination of graduates from part-time courses in polytechnics and colleges is not obtained.

Science Budget

65. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the advice he has received from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the allocation of the science budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement shortly.

Teacher Training

67. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is planning to introduce any proposals for teacher training in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the near future, my right hon. Friend will be announcing his decision on the outcome of the consultation on the proposals for the reform of non-standard routes into teaching; the aggregate intake numbers for initial teacher training for 1990, together with the split between sectors, undergraduate and postgraduate courses, phases and secondary phase subjects—and later the proposed distribution between institutions in the PCFC sector; his proposals for the approval of courses of initial teacher training when the term of office of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education expires at the end of 1989; his proposals for the national priority areas in the LEA training grant scheme for 1990-91. In addition, the Government keep under constant review the scope for encouraging innovatory developments in teacher training designed to enhance the quality of the teaching force and help to meet the demand for teachers.

Literacy and Numeracy

68. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children are estimated to leave Britain's primary schools and secondary schools with inadequate literacy and numeracy.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information is not available in the form requested. Attainment targets for English and mathematics in the national curriculum will establish what pupils should be able to achieve at ages seven, 11, 14 and 16. The introduction of assessment at those ages will mean that any pupils having difficulty will be identified at an early stage and can be given help.

Classics

70. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on the teaching of classics in schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend attaches importance to the study of classics in schools. Its potential was illustrated in Her Majesty's inspectorate's recent publication "Classics from 5 to 16". Schools will still be able to offer classics outside the national curriculum in the early secondary years, as an option to fourth and fifth year pupils, and in the sixth form. We hope that parental and public demand will encourage such provision. In addition my right hon. Friend has asked the national curriculum working groups on English and history to consider the contribution of classical studies, as a cross-curricular theme, to the attainment targets and programmes of study for these subjects.

Degrees

71. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies have been undertaken by his Department as to the effect on education of the single European market, with special regard to the common recognition of degrees and the outlawing of bogus degrees.

Mr. Jackson: The implications of the single European market for education are kept under continuous review. In further and higher education, many courses already address employers' single market training needs; further demand can be expected to develop in a wide range of fields. The Education Reform Act 1988, in providing for increased involvement of employers in the government of all education institutions, will facilitate a direct response to that demand. The United Kingdom is participating fully under the European Community's ERASMUS programme in the development of a European credit transfer scheme designed to contribute to the recognition for academic purposes of higher education qualifications obtained and periods of study spent in different member states. The Government gave full support during negotiations in Brussels to the principle of the directive on a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas for professional purposes which was adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers on 21 December 1988. Finally, although not as part of any European Community initiative, the Government brought into effect on 30 November 1988 sections 214 to 216 of the Education Reform Act 1988 under which it is now a criminal offence to award, or to offer to award, an unrecognised United Kingdom degree.

At school level, the work of the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council will have regard to the resolution of the Council of Ministers on the European dimension in education.

New Schools

73. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy for capital expenditure for new schools in areas of rapidly increasing population.

Mr. Butcher: Local education authorities are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient school places for

every child in their areas. To enable local authorities to meet their statutory obligations my right hon. Friend gives priority, when making capital allocations to those authorities who submit capital plans to provide additional school places to meet a rise in the local school population.

Schools-industry Links

74. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his recent discussions with industrialists about links between school and industry.

Mr. Butcher: My Department is keen to encourage the development of links between school and industry in many ways. To this end, my colleagues and I have regular meetings with industrialists to discuss ways in which they can take advantage of the opportunities offered by recent legislation to become involved with schools.

Computer Software

76. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he next plans to review the types of computer software available to schools.

Mr. Butcher: A statistical survey undertaken by the Department in February 1988 obtained information about the software packages used most regularly in schools. The result of this survey will be published shortly.

Association of University Teachers

77. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the Association of University Teachers; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not recently met the AUT, but we are in touch with it from time to time in the same way as we are in touch with a wide variety of bodies in order to keep abreast of developments.

University Students (Science Courses)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of first time university students entered full-time courses in science for each year since 1975.

Mr. Jackson: The information is as follows:

Full-time undergraduates new entrants to universities in Great Britain

Academic year beginning in	*Percentage science*
1975	49
1976	50
1977	50
1978	50
1979	50
1980	51
1981	55
1982	52
1983	52
1984	51
1985	50
1986	49
1987	49

In 1985 a new subject classification was introduced, and figures are not therefore comparable with previous years' data.

Food Poisoning (Research)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what university research departments in the United Kingdom are carrying out projects on food poisoning funded by his Department.

Mr. Jackson: The Agricultural and Food Research Council, which receives a grant-in-aid from this Department, is supporting the following projects at universities:

Project	*Principal investigator*	*Award*
Genetic engineering of listeria monocytogenes designed to enable the development of rapid bioluminescent phage detection.	Dr. G. S. A. B. Stewart, Department of Applied Biochemistry and Food Science, University of Nottingham.	£31,800 for 2 years from 1 October 1988.
Improvements in methods of detection and enumeration of sub-lethally injured bacteria.	Dr. G. S. A. B. Stewart, Department of Applied Biochemistry and Food Science, University of Nottingham.	£47,300 for 3 years from 1 January 1989.
Application of specific antibodies to enzymic methods for sensitive and routine detection of botulinum neurotoxins in foods.	Dr. J. O. Dolly, Department of Biochemistry, Imperial College of Science and Technology, University of London.	£59,000 for 3 years from 1 April 1986.

Note: In addition, universities carry out research from general university funds which may be of relevance to food poisoning.

School Inspections

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, South of 22 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *388*, when he expects a full inspection to be made of the Small School at Red House, Norwich; and if the reports by the inspector following his visit in November 1988 will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Butcher: There are no immediate plans to undertake a full inspection of the Small School at Red House, nor was the visit paid to the school by HMI in November 1988 a full inspection. Only full inspection reports are placed in the Library. HMI notes of visit are internal working documents and it is not appropriate to make their contents public. I am writing to the hon. Member.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the impact upon the educational abilities of children in Nottingham of the closure of hospitals in the Nottingham area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend understands that the Nottingham health authority is considering the closure of St. Anne's hospital, to which a special school is attached, and I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 16 January at column 17. Under the Education Act 1981, it is for the local education authority to consider how it provides for children in its area with special educational needs.

Local Education Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to his reply of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *265*, to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, he will publish a list of those local education authorities which, in respect of claims for 1987-88 *(a)* have claimed significantly less than the maximum allocated amount for 1987-88 or *(b)* have not yet made final claims for all quarters of 1987-88, showing for each of *(a)* and *(b)* the amount underspent or apparently unclaimed.

Mrs. Rumbold: *(a)* The following LEAs underspent by 5 per cent. or more in 1987-88:

Local Education Authority	*Total Amount Unclaimed* £	*Underspend as a percentage of total maxima*
Avon	712,654	19·4
Barnsley	[1]95,989	14·0
Berkshire	[1]280,415	10·5
Bexley	[1]54,897	7·1
Bradford	330,257	9·4
Brent	72,748	7·1
Haringey	[1]84,014	8·1
Hertfordshire	310,978	7·3
Isles of Scilly	1,800	18·0
Leeds	[1]385,346	9·8
Lincolnshire	357,926	16·9
Liverpool	221,760	8·7
Merton	[1]88,986	17·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	136,449	7·2
North Yorkshire	137,589	5·4
Redbridge	[1]69,790	10·1
Sandwell	[1]92,058	6·9
Sefton	116,427	8·9
Solihull	112,310	12·9
Sutton	[1]109,920	21·8
Warwickshire	[1]104,025	5·3

[1] Based on provisional end of year claims only.

(b) Waltham Forest has not yet submitted a final claim for all quarters of 1987-88:

Total Maxima £	*Total amount yet to be claimed* £
915,000	355,420

North Molton Primary School

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make additional funds available to Devon county council to include North Molton primary school replacement in the 1989-90 programme.

Mr. Butcher: It is for the Devon local education authority to decide what priority for funding to accord to particular projects, including North Molton, and to decide which of them to fund in 1989-90. For the 1989-90 financial year, the authority was allocated £14·177 million in respect of prescribed expenditure on county and voluntary controlled schools and FHE, representing a 68 per cent. increase on its allocation for 1988-89.

Class Sizes

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures showing the percentage of pupils in primary and secondary schools in classes of 30 and over for each local education authority in England in rank order.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The percentage of pupils in classes of 30 and over in maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1988 ranked in order was as follows. The analyses relate to classes taught by one teacher during a selected period on the day of the schools census and do not necessarily represent the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

Percentage of pupils in primary and secondary schools in classes of 30 and over in rank order—January 1988

	Per cent.
Primary	
Isles of Scilly	0·0
Barking	7·7
Haringey	8·4
North Tyneside	9·1
Inner London	10·2
South Tyneside	11·0
Sheffield	13·5
Gateshead	14·3
Newham	14·7
Rotherham	14·9
Barnsley	15·4
Brent	17·5
Salford	17·6
Wolverhampton	17·9
Ealing	18·1
Wirral	18·5
Nottinghamshire	18·9
Doncaster	19·7
Knowsley	20·1
Suffolk	21·3
Waltham Forest	21·3
Walsall	22·2
Hillingdon	22·7
Bradford	23·0
Sunderland	23·4
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	24·2
Cleveland	24·2
Barnet	24·3
Liverpool	24·9
Cumbria	25·5
Shropshire	25·6
Humberside	27·0
Surrey	27·0
Richmond upon Thames	27·1
Croydon	27·6
Wiltshire	28·0
Manchester	28·7
Hounslow	29·0
Coventry	29·3
North Yorkshire	29·5
Durham	29·6
Leicestershire	29·9
Norfolk	29·9
Wakefield	30·5
Staffordshire	31·1
Havering	31·4
Isle of Wight	31·4
Hertfordshire	31·5
Bedfordshire	31·7
Kirklees	32·1

	Per cent.
Oxfordshire	32·3
St. Helens	32·4
Bexley	32·6
Calderdale	33·4
Enfield	33·4
Bromley	33·6
Leeds	34·5
Northamptonshire	34·7
Sandwell	35·2
Derbyshire	35·2
Warwickshire	35·5
West Sussex	35·8
Sefton	36·0
Berkshire	36·3
Essex	36·6
Dudley	36·4
Bury	37·0
Stockport	37·3
Wigan	37·6
Devon	38·0
Sutton	38·1
Hereford and Worcester	38·7
Cambridgeshire	39·0
Hampshire	39·6
Rochdale	39·8
Tameside	40·0
Gloucestershire	40·1
Merton	40·1
Lincolnshire	41·6
Kingston upon Thames	42·2
East Sussex	42·7
Trafford	43·4
Cornwall	43·5
Solihull	43·6
Somerset	43·9
Harrow	44·7
Buckinghamshire	45·2
Lancashire	45·4
Bolton	45·7
Kent	46·2
Dorset	46·9
Northumberland	48·5
Oldham	48·6
Birmingham	49·3
Avon	49·8
Cheshire	50·3
Redbridge	56·4
England	32·9

Secondary

Haringey	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0·0
Brent	2·7
Salford	3·8
Trafford	4·5
Inner London	5·0
North Tyneside	5·2
Wigan	5·4
Waltham Forest	5·6
Wolverhampton	6·2
Barking	6·5
Newham	6·6
Leicestershire	6·7
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	7·0
Dudley	7·0
Cleveland	7·1
Knowsley	7·2
Ealing	7·6
Rochdale	7·6
Norfolk	8·4
Sheffield	8·4
Shropshire	8·6
Nottinghamshire	8·7
Sandwell	9·0
South Tyneside	9·3
Suffolk	9·8
Wakefield	9·8
Barnsley	10·1
Walsall	10·1
Kirklees	10·3
Manchester	10·3
Doncaster	10·8
Richmond upon Thames	10·9
Cumbria	10·9
Northamptonshire	11·8
Harrow	11·9
St. Helens	12·4
Hampshire	12·4
Humberside	12·6
Wiltshire	12·7
Derbyshire	13·1
Bolton	13·1
Leeds	13·1
Bradford	13·3
Buckinghamshire	13·4
Rotherham	13·6
Northumberland	13·8
Stockport	13·8
Warwickshire	13·8
Wirral	13·9
Surrey	14·3
Bedfordshire	14·3
Hounslow	14·4
Merton	14·4
Kent	14·4
Somerset	14·8
Cambridgeshire	15·0
Hertfordshire	15·0
Lincolnshire	15·2
Isle of Wight	15·2
Coventry	15·4
North Yorkshire	15·4
East Sussex	15·5
Oxfordshire	15·7
Hillingdon	15·7
Berkshire	16·0
Calderdale	16·0
Kingston upon Thames	16·1
Lancashire	16·8
Staffordshire	16·8
Solihull	16·8
Tameside	16·9
Bury	17·0
Croydon	17·1
Redbridge	17·2
Essex	17·2
Durham	17·3
Oldham	17·3
Barnet	17·4
Cheshire	17·8
Avon	18·1
Havering	18·1
Liverpool	18·2
Dorset	18·2
Sunderland	18·3
Devon	18·4
Sutton	18·5
Bromley	18·6
Cornwall	18·9
West Sussex	19·1
Sefton	19·6
Gloucestershire	19·6
Hereford and Worcester	19·7
Birmingham	20·7
Gateshead	21·3
Bexley	22·2
Enfield	24·5
ENGLAND	13·7

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official*

Report figures showing the percentage of pupils in primary and secondary schools in classes of 35 and over for each local education authority in England in rank order.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 30 January 1989]*: The percentage of pupils in classes of 35 and over in maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1988 ranked in order was as follows. The analyses relate to classes taught by one teacher during a selected period on the day of the schools census and do not necessarily represent the pattern of classes over the academic year as a whole.

Percentage of pupils in primary and secondary schools in classes of 35 and over in rank order January 1988

	Per cent.
Primary	
Isles of Scilly	0·0
Inner London	0·2
North Tyneside	0·3
Newham	0·3
Havering	0·4
Bradford	0·5
Ealing	0·5
Bromley	0·6
Suffolk	0·6
Haringey	0·6
Essex	0·8
Calderdale	0·9
Waltham Forest	0·9
Rotherham	0·9
Barking	0·9
Gateshead	0·9
Barent	1·0
Wiltshire	1·0
Barnsley	1·1
South Tyneside	1·2
Wirral	1·4
Sunderland	1·5
Brent	1·7
Richmond upon Thames	1·7
Walsall	2·0
Enfield	2·0
Sheffield	2·0
Norfolk	2·0
Gloucestershire	2·1
Croydon	2·2
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2·2
Bexley	2·3
Shropshire	2·3
Leicestershire	2·4
Isle of Wight	2·4
Liverpool	2·4
Hertfordshire	2·4
Tameside	2·5
Northamptonshire	2·6
Cumbria	2·6
Wolverhampton	2·7
Surrey	2·8
Oxfordshire	2·8
North Yorkshire	2·8
Doncaster	2·9
Hampshire	2·9
Coventry	3·0
Knowsley	3·0
Salford	3·0
Durham	3·2
Cambridgeshire	3·2
Dudley	3·2
Kent	3·2
Hereford and Worcester	3·3
West Sussex	3·3
Warwickshire	3·4
Berkshire	3·5
Nottinghamshire	3·6
Hillingdon	3·6
Humberside	3·7
Kirklees	3·8
Merton	4·0
Sandwell	4·0
Derbyshire	4·5
Cleveland	4·6
Manchester	4·6
Somerset	4·6
East Sussex	4·8
Wakefield	5·0
Staffordshire	5·1
Hounslow	5·2
Bedfordshire	5·2
Sefton	5·3
Birmingham	5·4
St. Helens	5·5
Stockport	5·6
Bury	5·9
Buckinghamshire	5·9
Avon	6·1
Leeds	6·2
Solihull	6·7
Cornwall	6·8
Devon	7·0
Sutton	7·1
Rochdale	7·1
Northumberland	7·1
Harrow	7·3
Kingston upon Thames	8·2
Wigan	9·3
Oldham	9·3
Lincolnshire	9·5
Dorset	9·8
Lancashire	10·0
Cheshire	10·8
Trafford	11·3
Redbridge	11·8
Bolton	12·3
England	3·9
Secondary	
Barnet	0·0
Barnsley	0·0
Bexley	0·0
Brent	0·0
Croydon	0·0
Cumbria	0·0
Doncaster	0·0
Dudley	0·0
Ealing	0·0
Gateshead	0·0
Haringey	0·0
Harrow	0·0
Hillingdon	0·0
Isles of Scilly	0·0
Merton	0·0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0·0
Newham	0·0
North Tyneside	0·0
Redbridge	0·0
Richmond upon Thames	0·0
Rochdale	0·0
Salford	0·0
Sheffield	0·0
South Tyneside	0·0
St. Helens	0·0
Suffolk	0·0
Sunderland	0·0
Sutton	0·0
Trafford	0·0
Walsall	0·0
Wigan	0·0
Wolverhampton	0·0
Kent	0·1
Inner London	0·1
Cleveland	0·1
Hertfordshire	0·1
Leicestershire	0·1
Gloucestershire	0·1

	Per cent.
Wakefield	0·2
Sandwell	0·2
Cambridgeshire	0·2
Havering	0·2
Bromley	0·2
Nottinghamshire	0·2
Durham	0·2
Somerset	0·3
Northamptonshire	0·3
Oldham	0·3
Shropshire	0·3
Kirklees	0·3
Warwickshire	0·3
Tameside	0·3
Norfolk	0·3
North Yorkshire	0·3
Northumberland	0·3
Lincolnshire	0·3
Hounslow	0·3
Coventry	0·3
Manchester	0·3
Buckinghamshire	0·3
Essex	0·4
Bury	0·4
Knowsley	0·4
Sefton	0·4
Hampshire	0·4
Birmingham	0·4
Isle of Wight	0·4
Waltham Forest	0·4
Humberside	0·4
Bolton	0·4
Oxfordshire	0·4
Barking	0·5
Enfield	0·5
Wirral	0·5
Devon	0·5
East Sussex	0·6
Berkshire	0·6
Kingston upon Thames	0·6
Surrey	0·6
Calderdale	0·6
Rotherham	0·6
Derbyshire	0·6
Lancashire	0·7
Bedfordshire	0·7
Bradford	0·7
Solihull	0·8
Cheshire	0·8
Staffordshire	0·9
Stockport	1·0
Hereford and Worcester	1·0
Dorset	1·0
Liverpool	1·2
Avon	1·2
West Sussex	1·2
Leeds	1·4
Cornwall	1·4
Wiltshire	1·4
England	0·4

Single European Market

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on educating European national school age children in British schools when their circumstances bring them to Britain for a period of time; and if he expects to change that policy in the light of 1992.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Under the Education Act 1944, local education authorities already have a duty to provide suitable and efficient primary and secondary education free of charge for all children in their areas. This duty applies equally to British children and to school-age children accompanying EC nationals and is not affected by the move to a single European market in 1992.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food (Storage)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the estimated food types and quantities which were in storage in the United Kingdom under European Economic Community agreements on 3 January.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Food types and quantities in storage under EC regulationary provisions on 31 December 1988, (the nearest available date) were as follows:

Tonnes

	Intervention stocks	*Private storage*
Beef	25,000	2,497
Butter	24,179	448
Grain[1]	1,162,000	0
Pigmeat	0	62
Sugar	0	[2]967,878

[1] Including grain for animal feed.
[2] Stocks held under community storage refund scheme plus regional minimum stock held by cane sugar refiner.

Pig Farmers

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the information he has on the number of pig farmers that have gone into liquidation in Derbyshire in the past 12 months.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I regret that this information is not available.

Meat Production (Hormones)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has that the use of hormones in United States of America meat production poses hazards to human health; and if he will make a statement on the ban imposed on the import of such meat.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no evidence that the use of growth-promoting hormone products under appropriate conditions poses any hazard to human health. This Government have therefore consistently opposed the EC hormones ban and are continuing to work for a solution to the trade difficulties with the United States it has caused.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of slaughterhouses in England and Wales; and what is the total number approved for exporting to the European Economic Community, for each year since 1983.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

Slaughterhouses in England and Wales

December	Total	EC-approved
1983	942	59
1984	931	61
1985	916	64
1986	867	67
1987	853	60
1988	[1]—	57

[1] Not yet available.

Plasticisers (Clingfilm)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implications for the health of consumers of the use of plasticisers in clingfilm, used to wrap food products.

Mr. Ryder: This matter has been the subject of detailed investigation, the results of which have been assessed by an independent expert committee. The committee's advice was that it was very unlikely that there were any adverse health effects from the current or past use of plasticisers in clingfilm.

Nevertheless, as a matter of prudence, action has been taken to secure the reformulation of clingfilm so as to reduce dietary intakes of the major plasticiser, and further survey work is in hand within the Government's comprehensive food surveillance arrangements.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure consumer awareness of the health implications of the use of plasticisers in clingfilm and of the existence of products without plasticisers.

Mr. Ryder: My Department has agreed with the industry the wording to be used on clingfilm packaging which gives advice to consumers on the use of the product. This advice applies to all clingfilms, whether or not they contain plasticisers. In a press statement on 22 December 1986 my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary drew the attention of the public to the need to follow the guidance provided.

Beef

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give in tabular form the proportion of the beef production of each member state of the European Community which will not benefit from the recently agreed special beef premiums.

Mr. [illegible]ld Thompson: Precise information of the kind requested is not available. The Community special premium for beef will apply to the first 90 male animals per holding. An indication of the effect of the limitation of the premium to male animals only is provided by the table which shows the proportion of slaughterings of male and female cattle in each member state. The limitation to 90 head will also have an effect on uptake. This will depend on farm structure, decisions by farmers on how they manage their enterprises and market cattle and on the methods used to administer the premium.

Proportion of male cattle (steers and bulls) and female cattle (cows and heifers) slaughtered in each EC member state (1987)

	Male animals (per cent.)	Female animals (per cent.)
Belgium	40·4	59·6
Denmark	48·5	51·5
Germany	49·0	51·0
Greece	71·6	28·4
Spain	50·4	49·6
France	33·7	66·3
Ireland	55·0	45·0
Italy	70·4	29·6
Luxembourg	34·3	65·7
Netherlands	27·0	73·0
Portugal	50·1	49·9
United Kingdom	48·3	51·7
EC12	48·3	51·7

Source: EUROSTAT.

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have nothing to add to the information that I gave the hon. Member in my reply of 16 January at column *55*.

Bovine Somatotropin

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what evidence or advice he has received from his veterinary products committee on the safety of the Monsanto experimental farm trials with bovine somatotropin in cows;

(2) what advice he has received from the veterinary products committee on the safety of BST, including that based on the evidence received from Townsend.

Mr. Ryder: No field trials of veterinary products, including BST, are authorised until the veterinary products committee, following a rigorous evaluation of all pertinent data, advises that they are safe.

Butter

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Pembroke on 26 January 1989, he will give the figures for each year since 1973 for the percentage of the United Kingdom packet butter market, retailed to the non-industrial consumer accounted for by *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Republic of Ireland, *(c)* France, *(d)* New Zealand, *(e)* Denmark, *(f)* the Netherlands and *(g)* Belgium and Luxembourg.

Mr. Ryder: The information requested is not available except in the form given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary in his reply of 26 January at columns *697-98*.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has as to whether salmonella is transmitted from rats to poultry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have no specific evidence that salmonella is transmitted from rats to poultry although it is recognised that animals such as rats are susceptible to salmonella. As part of the further measures to combat salmonella, I propose to strengthen the statutory controls for the control of rodents on poultry farms.

Radiation (Sheep)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food under what powers he served his direction on the owner of the flock of sheep in North Yorkshire where radioactivity readings were found to be above 1,000 bq/kg.

Mr. Ryder: The direction was served under section 2(3) of part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

EC Structural Funds

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria were used by the Government in selecting the United Kingdom agricultural areas to benefit under section 5(b) of the European Economic Community's proposed new rules for the reform of European Economic Community structural funds.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Objective 5(b) is

"promoting the development of rural areas".

The European Commission is to determine which areas are eligible; it has already assured us that they will include the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, rural Wales, and the assisted areas of Devon and Cornwall. The criteria for the selection are in article 4 of Council regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the net cost to the United Kingdom for each of the last three years of the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Public expenditure in the United Kingdom under the Common Agricultural Policy in the last three years has been as follows:—

Year	*£ million*
1986-87	1,400
1987-88	1,610
1988-89	[1]1,470

[1] Forecast.

These figures include all expenditure under Community market support and structural aid schemes for agriculture, but exclude related expenditure such as national aid schemes, disease prevention, advice, research and development and administration.

This expenditure is funded entirely by the United Kingdom, either directly or indirectly through the Community budget. In addition, the Exchequer supports spending under the CAP elsewhere in the Community through our net contribution to the EC budget, which in the same three years is estimated at £1,079 million, £1,164 million and £950 million. Over that period CAP spending has made up over two thirds of the EC budget.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the cost of common agricultural policy intervention buying and storage during 1988 in each of the European Economic Community member states and for each commodity for which an intervention regime exists.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Provisional figures for 1988 Community expenditure on private storage (sugar, wine and grape must, butter, beef, sheepmeat and pigmeat) and on public intervention (cereals, sugar, olive oil, oilseeds, wine alcohol, tobacco, skimmed milk powder, butter and beef, are given in the table.

The purchase of stock into public intervention is funded by the member states, which are reimbursed by the Community for storage in addition, for the first time in 1988, there was significant expenditure on depreciation of newly-farmed stocks (cereals, alcohol, tobacco, butter and beef) under arrangements agreed by the European Council in February 1988.

Mecu[1]

	Belgium	*Denmark*	*Germany*	*Greece*	*Spain*	*France*	*Ireland*	*Italy*	*Luxembourg*	*Netherlands*	*Portugal*	*United Kingdom*
Cereals												
Storage financing costs	1·7	10·9	134·9	9·0	23·3	55·1	1·3	48·7	[2]. .	0·2	—	33·7
Losses on sale	12·0	60·8	744·0	−20·9	99·9	235·6	8·7	336·5	0·1	1·3	—	225·2
Sugar												
Private storage	23·5	12·6	102·7	2·5	18·1	133·5	5·8	62·9	—	40·0	0·9	27·1
Public storage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	−0·8	—	—	—	—
Olive oil												
Storage costs	—	—	—	—	43·6	—	—	24·3	—	—	1·2	—
Losses on sale	—	—	—	—	2·0	—	—	15·9	—	—	−1·0	—
Oilseeds												
Storage costs	—	—	[2]. .	—	1·8	0·9	—	—	—	—	−0·1	−0·2
Wine and grape must												
Private storage	—	—	0·5	4·3	15·5	30·1	—	35·1	—	—	—	—
Wine/alcohol												
Intervention costs	—	—	—	0·1	85·5	175·1	—	185·6	—	—	—	—
Depreciation of stocks	—	—	—	—	46·9	33·7	—	65·1	—	—	—	—

	Belgium	Denmark	Germany	Greece	Spain	France	Ireland	Italy	Luxem-bourg	Nether-lands	Portugal	United Kingdom
Tobacco												
Storage/financing costs	—	—	—	8·3	—	0·2	—	2·9	—	—	—	—
Losses on sale/depreciation of stocks	—	—	—	11·2	—	0·1	—	5·0	—	—	—	—
Skimmed milk powder												
Storage/financing costs	[2]. .	0·1	45·6	0·3	1·6	—	[2]. .	—	—	—	—	0·2
Losses on sale	[2]. .	−0·3	−54·5	1—·5	−0·7	—	−0·4	[2]. .	—	—	—	−0·8
Butter												
Private storage	8·9	0·2	11·3	—	—	12·5	5·4	0·5	·01	12·5	—	2·1
Storage/financing costs	5·8	2·2	89·3	—	6·6	39·5	48·3	4·7	0·1	68·8	—	64·4
Losses on sale/depreciation of stocks	8·9	19·2	243·4	—	29·2	171·7	34·1	−45·5	—	86·0	—	84·1
Beef												
Private storage	0·8	0·9	15·4	—	—	2·7	31·0	5·7	—	1·5	—	2·2
Storage/financing costs	3·0	11·2	66·9	—	6·6	76·0	46·9	34·0	—	14·8	—	19·6
Losses on sale/depreciation of stocks	8·4	43·9	262·6	[2]. .	14·4	298·6	206·0	108·4	[2]. .	61·1	—	89·5
Sheep/goats												
Private storage	—	—	—	—	0·8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pigmeat												
Private storage	6·8	8·9	7·0	—	2·6	2·6	0·1	7·7	—	7·1	—	0·4

[1] 1 mecu is approximately £670,000.
[2]. . less than 0·05.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. George Foulkes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the latest figures for principal discharges of liquid radioactive waste from United Kingdom nuclear establishments for 1987 and 1988 in the form of table 1 of the report on "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles", published by the directorate of fisheries research.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The 1987 figures for principal discharges of liquid radioactive waste from United Kingdom nuclear establishments were published in the form requested by my Ministry last October in a report entitled "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles, 1987". A copy of the report was placed in the Library of the House at that time. Figures for 1988 will be published later this year.

HEALTH

Mental Illness

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there are plans to introduce ethnic monitoring of admissions under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans, although the subject is kept under review by the Department.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many radiation machines were within the National Health Service; and at what locations in *(a)* 1983 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Freeman: Information in respect of 1983 is not readily available centrally, but at the end of 1988 the number of items of specified radiotherapy machines in major NHS centres in England by region were as follows:

Region	Linear Accelerators	Cobalt Units	Orthovoltage Units	Afterloading Units	Total
East Anglian	5	3	5	4	17
Mersey	5	0	3	2	10
North East Thames	10	9	14	4	37
Northern	5	3	4	5	17
North-Western	6	1	1	3	11
North-West Thames	7	10	13	3	33
Oxford	3	4	7	0	14
South-East Thames	4	11	17	6	38
South-West Thames	1	3	3	not known	7
South-Western	9	6	13	5	33
Trent	9	4	11	4	28
West Midlands	8	7	10	3	28
Wessex	8	1	8	2	19
Yorkshire	5	3	3	3	14
Special Health Authorities	9	5	6	3	23
	94	70	118	47	329

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available to him on the costs of

purchasing and maintaining radiation machines within the National Health Service either by district, region or generally for each year since 1983.

Mr. Freeman: The costs of purchase and maintenance of equipment are matters for regional and district health authorities within their overall allocation of resources. Limited information on the cost of X-ray equipment and chemicals purchased and of maintenance contracts for X-ray equipment are set out in the published annual accounts of health authorities, as available in the Library.

Cook-chill Catering

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the district health authorities and hospitals which are currently operating cook-chill catering.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that health authorities are not required to submit, on a regular basis, details of the catering systems being used in their hospitals.

Neomycin

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many claims have been made against health authorities because of deafness alleged to be due to the use of neomycin spray; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Project 2000

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how the bursaries allocated to student nurses under Project 2000 will be administered; and whether they will be administered regionally or centrally;

(2) what is the anticipated amount of the bursary for a student nurse enrolling when the Project 2000 reform of nurse education is introduced;

(3) how many bursaries he intends to make available by region under the Project 2000 nursing education reforms; and if he will list them;

(4) whether, where student nurses are enrolled under Project 2000 with 80 per cent. supernumerary status and a 20 per cent. service contribution, the bursary will cover 100 per cent. of costs.

Mr. Mellor: No decisions have yet been made on the level of bursary to be offered to students undertaking project 2000-style training but we hope to make a statement shortly. In deciding the level of bursary we will need to have regard to the level of current student nurse salaries and the existing rules for mandatory student awards.

Initially, bursaries will be administered by those district health authorities selected to introduce project 2000 courses later this year. Arrangements for the longer term have yet to be determined.

Funding for project 2000 courses will be provided against carefully costed plans, and the examination of these plans will seek to identify all the necessary additional costs arising as a result of project 2000. It is not our intention in meeting these costs to allocate specific numbers of bursaries or a region by region basis on separately to identify particular aspects of the funding. The number of student nurses will continue to depend on health authorities' future demand for staff and the ability to recruit.

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have nothing to add to the information that I gave to the hon. Member in my reply of 16 January at column *35*.

Hospital Services, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of Health (1) if he will make a statement on the future of geriatric services at Sefton general hospital, Liverpool;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of Olive Mount hospital, Liverpool.

Mr. Mellor: The planning and development of hospital services in Liverpool is a matter for the Liverpool health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the district chairman for the information he requires.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the provision of beds in the intensive care unit at Liverpool royal hospital.

Mr. Freeman: The Mersey regional health authority and Liverpool health authority are presently giving consideration to relocating and expanding the intensive care unit within the Royal Liverpool hospital.

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many A-V canal defect operations were carried out on children with Down's syndrome in each of the past five years; and in which hospitals these operations took place.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not identifiable from data collected centrally. Returns of the United Kingdom cardiac surgery register show that 137 A-V canal operations were performed in 1985. We do not have information on the proportion of these operations which involved children with Down's syndrome, or the hospitals in which such operations took place.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children suffering from A-V canal defect died in each of the past five years; and how many of these also had Down's syndrome.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in exactly the form requested. Table 1 shows the number of deaths of children aged 0-14 registered in England and Wales in 1983-87 to which endocardial cushion defects (International Classification of Diseases 9th revision 745.6), which includes A-V canal defect, was assigned as the underlying cause of death.

For 1985 and 1986 all causes of death were coded, and information on the number of certificates mentioning endocardial cushion defects is consequently available. Table 2 shows, for those deaths registered in 1985 and 1986, how many death certificates for 0-14 year olds contained a mention of ICD 745.6 (irrespective of whether or not it was assigned as the underlying cause of death), and how many of those also contained a mention of Down's syndrome (ICD 758.0). Similar information is not available for the other data years.

Table 1
Number of death registrations with endocardial cushion defect[1] assigned as underlying cause of death, ages 0–14 years England and Wales, 1983-87

Year	Deaths
1983	54
1984	43
1985	50
[2]1986	47
[2]1987	32
[2]1988	[3]18

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) ninth revision code 745.6.
[2] Deaths at ages 28 days and over. No underlying cause of death has been assigned to deaths under 28 days since 1 January 1986.
[3] Provisional, January to September registrations only.

Table 2
Number of death registrations containing a mention of endocardial cushion defects (ICD code 745.6) and the number of these also mentioning Down's syndrome (ICD code 758.0) ages 0–14 years, England and Wales 1985-86

Year	Total mentions of ICD 745.6	Number also mentioning ICD 758.0
1985	65	29
[1]1986	56	24

[1] Deaths at ages 28 days and over.

Mental Health Review Tribunals

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mental health review tribunals were held (i) in the five years preceding the enactment of the Mental Health Act 1983 and (ii) in all subsequent years for which he has information *(a)* in special hospitals and *(b)* in other mental hospitals and units.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply, 23 January 1989, c. 413]:* The information is not available in the form requested prior to 1983. However the table provides the information for the years 1983-88 and, for the earlier years, shows the total number of tribunals heard in all hospitals.

Mental health review tribunals. Cases heard

Year	Special hospitals	Other hospitals	Total
1978	n/k	n/k	696
1979	n/k	n/k	780
1980	n/k	n/k	692
1981	n/k	n/k	697
1982	n/k	n/k	876
1983	628	1,313	1,941
1984	625	1,508	2,133
1985	647	1,756	2,403
1986	668	2,161	2,829
1987	691	2,237	2,928
1988	769	2,399	3,168

Homoeopathy

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is made for homoeopathic services within the Liverpool health authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Homoeopathic services for both in-patients and out-patients are provided at Mossley Hill hospital, where 10 in-patient beds are available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much benefit fraud has cost his Department in each of the years since 1979; and how many prosecutions have resulted *(a)* in the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* in his Department's area covering Nottingham for these purposes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No reliable estimate is available of the cost of social security benefit fraud. The numbers of prosecutions undertaken by the Department for fraudulent claims to social security in *(a)* Great Britain for each year since 1979-80 and *(b)* the area covered by the Department's four local offices in Nottingham since 1981-82 are as follows. Figures for Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and those for Nottingham prior to 1981-82 are not available.

	(a) Great Britain	*(b)* Nottingham
1979-80	16,635	—
1980-81	18,801	—
1981-82	14,206	73
1982-83	11,334	166
1983-84	5,997	127
1984-85	6,702	97
1985-86	6,679	140
1986-87	6,603	132
1987-88	7,231	169

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what involvement his Department has had in the Broxtowe child sex abuse case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In this case the Department disclosed to the police, in confidence, details held about named individuals. This is in accordance with its policy that disclosure may be made to the police in any case which involves serious crime. Also, the Department provided information, including a written statement, to the police in connection with alleged associated offences in which the Department has an interest.

Mr. Viraj Mendis

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the cost of social security payments during the period that Viraj Mendis was resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 24 January at column *521*.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school-age children of employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after-school care is provided for employees' children aged five years and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At present no provision for the child care of the pre-school age children of staff is made in this Department, although preliminary discussions on such facilities have taken place.

The Department's central office at Newcastle operates a scheme of finding day care parents for employees's children. It also runs holiday play schemes for them in the Easter and summer holidays. A holiday play scheme has been organised for the forthcoming Easter holidays for the children of staff working in HQ buildings in central London. Additionally staff working in the Whitehall area can make use of the centrally organised holiday play schemes.

Child care provision is one of the areas being examined in a review of opportunities available to women employees in the Department. We hope to base any further holiday play schemes on the experience we are gaining.

The schemes are intended to be self-supporting, but the Department has provided funding to prime them.

Departmental Offices (Closure)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his Department's proposals to close its offices in London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no such proposals.

Pensions

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take urgent steps to ensure that pensions increase in real terms at the same rate as inflation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have fully honoured our pledge to protect the value of the state retirement pension against price increases and shall continue to do so.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the net cost, after taking into account savings in existing benefits, of paying a non-contributory old age pension of £41·15 to each man and woman aged 65 years or over.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Benefits

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received to date either in favour of, or broadly opposed to, his consultative document proposing the replacement of board and lodging payments and personal allowances with housing benefit and income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 23 January at columns *417-18*.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend the payment of mobility allowance to parents with children over two years of age, in line with attendance allowance payments; and if he will estimate the number of children who would be eligible for mobility allowance, if the regulations were changed to allow such payments.

Mr. Scott: We shall consider whether mobility allowance should be extended to children below the age of five when we are examining the findings of the surveys undertaken by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. We estimate that the reduction of the lower limit to two years of age would enable about 5,000 children to become eligible for the allowance.

Disabled People (Benefits)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider an extra costs allowance, for payment to disabled persons who incur extra costs as a result of their efforts to overcome their disability, in line with recommendations made in the Social Security advisory committee's report entitled "Benefits for Disabled Persons: a Strategy for Change."

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on 19 December 1988 at columns *114-15*.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will abandon the six months qualifying period for attendance allowance in respect of persons who are terminally ill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We shall look at this feature of the attendance allowance scheme when we consider the future of disability benefits in the light of the results of the OPCS disability surveys.

Benefit Offices (Staff)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the present staffing by grades at the benefit offices in Doncaster and Mexborough; what was the staffing five years ago; and if he will make a statement about the projected operational strategy of these three offices for the future and its effect on the various staff grades.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Office	*Principal*	*SEO*	*HEO*	*LOI*	*LOII*	*AA*	*Typing manager*	*Typist*	*Telephonist*	*Security officer*	*Messenger*	*Total*
Present Staffing												
Doncaster (East) ILO	1	1	7	40	78·5	22·0	0	3·0	1	1	1	155·5
Doncaster (West) ILO	1	1	9	50	94·0	24·5	1	2·5	0	2	1	186·0
Mexborough NIO	0	0	1	4	10·5	2·0	0	1·0	0	0	0	18·5
Staffing in 1984												
Doncaster (East) ILO	1	0	6	35	70	16	0	3	1	1	1	134

Office	Principal	SEO	HEO	LOI	LOII	AA	Typing manager	Typist	Telephonist	Security officer	Messenger	Total
Doncaster (West) ILO	1	1	7	43	90	27	1	4	0	2	1	177
Mexborough NIO	0	0	1	4	15	3	0	0	0	0	0	23

The regionally calculated estimates of staff savings due to operational strategy in the year April 1990 to March 1991 are as follows. At this stage they are subject to change and as yet we cannot give the grades involved:

	Number
Doncaster East ILO	23·520
Doncaster West ILO	29·170
Mexborough NIO	00·674

Abbreviations:
ILO = Integrated Local Office.
NIO = National Insurance Office.

Disabled People

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to improve the position of disabled people facing a higher cost of living as a consequence of their disability.

Mr. Scott: In the period up to July 1989 the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is publishing a series of reports on the findings of the surveys of disability in Great Britain carried out between 1985 and 1988. Two reports have already been published covering the prevalence of disability amongs adults and the financial circumstances of disabled adults in private households. Four more reports will follow. Taken together, the six reports will bring together the most comprehensive and detailed information ever collected about disabled people in this country.

I have explained that we will wait until all the results of these surveys are available before reaching any conclusion as to whether there are better ways of providing help for disabled people.

Departmental Correspondence

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if will list in the *Official Report* the number of his Department's letters (Form No. CH (A) 1702 REV) sent in each region of the United Kingdom; what is his Department's existing budget for this mailing campaign; how many such messages are planned to be sent in future; which benefits other than child benefit will receive the same attention in this way; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Forms CH(A) 1702 REV are issued centrally to recipients of child benefit. Information is not available of numbers sent by region, but a total of some 3·6 million have been issued. No specific budget is allocated to promoting automated credit transfer and the costs are met from the social security publicity budget of £12·77 million for 1988-89. The issue of similar letters to all retirement pensioners who were not already paid by automated credit transfer has been completed and the child benefit exercise is due to finish in April 1989. We have no current plans to extend the issue of these letters to other beneficiaries.

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have nothing to add to the information which I gave to the hon. Member in my reply on 16 January at column *45*.

Rating Reform

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what income is taken into account in assessing a person's right to a rebate of poll tax.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A person who expects to be liable for a personal community charge or for collective community charge contributions in Scotland may claim housing benefit in the form of community charge rebate from the appropriate authority. In assessing his entitlement to rebate, the authority will calculate his income in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Benefit (Community Charge Rebates) (Scotland) Regulations 1988. All earned and unearned income is taken into account, except where the regulations provide for all or part of it to be disregarded. The rules for the calculation of income are carried forward unchanged from the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

East Midlands

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment his Department has made of the advantages and disadvantages for trade and industry in the east midlands arising from *(a)* the establishment or failure to establish a rail freight interchange in the east midlands and *(b)* the advent of 1992 and the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Atkins: My officials have extensive contact with industry and commerce in the east midlands on all matters affecting the region's economic development, including those related to transport infrastructure, which are discussed regularly with the Department of Transport.

Supermarket Profits

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer supermarket profit levels to *(a)* the Office of Fair Trading or *(b)* the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: No. It falls to the Director General of Fair Trading to monitor commercial activities under the competition legislation for which he is responsible. He published a review of developments in competition in retailing in June 1985, and continues to keep the matter under close review. If the hon. Member has evidence to suggest that supermarket profit levels indicate that

competition in that particular market is being restricted or distorted, he should bring it to the attention of the director general.

Special Steels (Spain)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the inter-industry agreement on special steels from Spain, referred to in his answer of 27 April 1988, *Official Report*, column 171, has now ended.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am informed that, following completion of the transitional arrangements for steel on Spain's accession to the European Community, the inter-industry agreement on special steels has ended.

"Releasing Enterprise"

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the rolling programme of deregulation reviews referred to in the White Paper, "Releasing Enterprise", has been determined.

Mr. Maude: I am announcing today details of the first rolling programme of deregulation reviews to be carried out by Government Departments. This carries forward commitments undertaken in the Government's recent White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" (Cm 512) which was published in November 1988.

We regard this programme of reviews as essential to keep a check on existing requirements or regulations which, although they may have seemed reasonable at the time, have become outdated, over-burdensome or simply unnecessary.

Together with the existing mechanisms we have in place for new legislation, we hope to be able to free enterprise from unnecessary Government interference.

Each year, Departments will review at least one area of their work, with an emphasis on consultation, particularly with business, at all stages. Where possible, business expertise will be brought in to assist.

The results of this programme will be reported to Parliament once it has been completed.

The first programme of deregulation is as follows:

Enterprise and Deregulation Unit

(i) Business Licensing
Review of the administration of business licences.

(ii) Fire and building review
Review of overlap of building control and fire regulations, the way the legislation is implemented and the requirements for consistent enforcement.

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

(i) Compulsory dipping of sheep against sheep scab
This will consider the burden to farmers and possible alternatives to compulsory dipping while maintaining adequate control over the disease.

(ii) Enforcement of fruit and vegetable marketing standards
Review of the EC regulations laying down marketing standards for fruit and vegetables and their impact on United Kingdom traders.

Her Majesty's Customs and Excise

(i) VAT second-hand schemes
VAT is paid on the margin between the selling and purchase price with second-hand schemes. The review will examine ways of reducing the record-keeping requirements.

(ii) Export data capture
The review is to examine increasing direct trader input of export data in customs computers to bring it into line with import systems.

Department of Employment and the Home Office

(i) Work permit scheme
To ensure that the rules and operation of the scheme enable business to hire overseas non-EC staff with the minimum regulation required to safeguard the employment of resident labour and for immigration control.

Health and Safety Executive

(i) Factories Act section 139
To review the need for employers to post copies of health and safety regulations or notices at workplaces, with a view to amendment or repeal of section 139 of the Factories Act 1961.

Department of the Environment

(i) Use Classes Order part II
To review the Special Industrial Use Classes which are five groups of industries, eg chemicals, smelting and other metal treatment and animal by-products. Because of the processes involved these create particular environmental problems and the review will be done with a view to rationalisation of the Use Classes Order.

Department of Health

(i) NHS standard conditions of contract
To overhaul Health Authority procedures for tendering and contracting, with particular reference to extending competition and best procurement practices.

(ii) NHS supplies
To streamline the NHS approved supplier/contractor system under which at present each regional NHS Authority conducts its own separate vetting and appraisal.

Home Office

(i) Data Protection Act
Review of implementation of the Data Protection Act 1984, with particular regard to the impact on data users of the registration requirements.

(ii) Business licences
Review of the administration of the business licences for which the Home Office is responsible.

Inland Revenue

(i) Pay as you earn communications with employers
Full scrutiny-style review of all communications between the Inland Revenue and business about PAYE.

Office of the Minister for the Civil Service

(i) Forms
To identify the means of reducing the burden of Government forms on business and make recommendations.

Department of Social Security

(i) Inquiries of business
To simplify the way in which social security information is obtained from employers, and drop outdated requirements.

Department of Transport

(i) HGV and PSV operator licensing
To consider the scope for reducing the burden imposed by operator licensing on goods and passenger vehicle operators.

Department of Trade and Industry

(i) Steel scrap export licensing
(a) Ferrous Scrap: to review the need for export licences for all grades of steel and non-alloy scrap.

(b) Control of Stainless Steel and High Alloy Scrap Exports: to review the continuing need for an early 1980s agreement between DTI and the steel industry giving BSC first refusal on all supplies.

(ii) Regional selective assistance
To consider the possibility of a shortened and simplified offer letter for smaller cases and the extent to which payment and monitoring procedures can be simplified.

(iii) Insurance
To review the data collection requirements of this area with a view to eliminating those which are unnecessary while making the essential compliance, collection and use of data as cost effective as possible.

(iv) Copper scrap quotas
To prepare the case for the removal of the annual quota imposed by the EC on copper exports.

(v) Export procedures review implementation (with Customs and Excise and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)
To implement the recommendations of the enterprise and deregulation unit's export procedures review.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the areas of Yorkshire which he has submitted for consideration to the European Commission under its review of the European Economic Community's structural funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* I have recommended the Commission to select for the new objective 2 of the funds the whole of South Yorkshire; the parts of Middlesbrough and Darlington travel-to-work areas that are in north Yorkshire; and the Bradford city, Kirklees borough, Leeds city and Wakefield city metropolitan districts in West Yorkshire.

I should have liked to recommend the Whitby TTWA in North Yorkshire, but the terms of article 9 of the Council regulation (EEC) No. 2025/88 do not qualify for consideration.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parole

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Loyalist and Republican prisoners in Northern Ireland received compassionate parole during the last three years; and what was the average length of parole for each category.

Mr. Ian Stewart: During the last three years compassionate home leave was granted on 340 occasions to both determinate and indeterminate sentence prisoners. Based on their believed paramilitary affiliation, 69 were Loyalist prisoners for an average period of 11·5 hours, 136 Republican prisoners for an averge period of 12·2 hours, and 135 prisoners with no believed paramilitary affiliation for an average period of 14·6 hours. The length of a period of compassionate home leave in any individual case depends upon a number of factors, including the distance a prisoner has to travel and the mode of travel.

DNA Testing

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North on 10 January, *Official Report*, column *502*, whether mouth samples taken for the purposes of DNA testing by a swab between the lip and the gum yielded sufficient material to carry out valid DNA profiles in all cases.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 18 January 1989]:* Research work undertaken at the Northern Ireland forensic science laboratory has proved that a mouth swab taken from the area between the lip and gum can yield sufficient DNA material for profiling purposes. However, none of the mouth samples taken for DNA profiling has been analysed so far.

Anthony O'Doherty

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to allegations made at the trial of Sergeant Charles McCormick that Anthony O'Doherty had been supplied with weapons by the security forces; what inquiries have been carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* The allegations made at the trial of Sergeant Charles McCormick that Anthony O'Doherty had been supplied with weapons by the security forces were fully investigated by the police and their findings reported to the Director of Public Prosecutions who directed that there should be no prosecution.

I regret the delay in obtaining this information for the hon. Member.

Tourism

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many tourists visited Northern Ireland in each of the years 1983 to 1988 *(a)* from European countries, and *(b)* from North America.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 25 January 1989]:* The information requested for each of the years 1983 to 1987 is given in the table. Tourist numbers for 1988 are not yet available.

Tourist numbers

Thousands

	European Countries		
Year	*Including*[1]	*Excluding*[1]	*North America*
1983	796	29	52
1984	847	30	43
1985	778	28	63
1986	750	35	47
1987	860	33	57

[1] Tourists from Great Britain and Republic of Ireland.

Meat Imports

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual total of meat imports into Northern Ireland via the overland route from the Republic.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 26 January 1989]:* Her Majesty's Customs and Excise statistics sources show that in 1987 imports of meat from the Republic of Ireland into Northern Ireland totalled 108,200 tonnes.

House Searches

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many houses were searched in Northern Ireland by the Army, police or the Ulster Defence Regiment under *(a)* the Emergency Provisions Act and *(b)* the Prevention of Terrorism Act during 1988; and in how many house searches a warrant was sought or obtained.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 27 January 1989]:* Statistics are not available in respect of searches under sections 11, 13, 14 and 17 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, or under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. During the first nine months of 1988 a total of 2,899 premises in Northern Ireland were searched by the police and 2,712 by the Army under section 15 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. These figures include both occupied and unoccupied premises. Warrants are not required for such searches.

ENVIRONMENT

Southwark Urban Development Area

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has of the number of firms active in the Southwark urban development area in 1980, the number of people they employed and whether the employees lived in *(a)* Southwark and *(b)* the other dockland boroughs; and if he has comparable information for the latest available date.

Mr. Trippier: The numbers of employing establishments and employees in the Southwark part of the UDA in 1981 and 1987 were as follows:

	1981	*1987*
Employing Establishments	285	358
Employers	5,824	8,732

LDDC has no data for 1980; and no place of residence information for 1981. Data for 1987 will be available shortly and I will write to the hon. Member at that time.

Tobacco Dock

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the London Docklands Development Corporation to take steps to ensure that the shops to open in the spring at Tobacco dock employ local labour.

Mr. Trippier: No, but I understand that the operators have recruited locally and are actively encouraging shop tenants to do so.

Disabled People

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total amount of grant given by his Department to housing associations to encourage the building of disabled persons' housing units.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not held by the Department. The Housing Corporation is responsible for the allocation of its capital programme to housing associations and types of scheme, within the broad framework agreed annually by Ministers. I have therefore asked the Chairman of the Housing Corporation to respond to the hon. Member direct.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to the reply of 10 November 1988, to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, *Official Report*, column *273*, if he will make a statement on the outcome so far of his Department's consideration of the Prince of Wales advisory group on disability entitled "Living Options Lottery" and, in particular, about the action he will be taking in regard to its findings.

Mr. Trippier: The report is a useful contribution to current thinking and planning on disability issues. We continue to encourage housing providers to look at ways in which they can respond more effectively to the needs and wishes of people with disabilities.

Agricultural Dwellings

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce rules to allow local authorities to tie planning permission for erection of an agricultural dwelling to a specific farm and area of land.

Mr. Chope: We are reviewing our planning guidance on agricultural dwellings and occupancy conditions in the light of our policies for diversification of the rural economy.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have been granted exemption for provision of a gipsy site under the Caravan Sites Act 1968; and for what reasons.

Mr. Trippier: None. Section 6(2) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 which provided for exemption was repealed by section 173 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Swimming Pools (Safety)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department issues to the owners or operators of swimming pools concerning the safety of water slides, water chutes and similar apparatus.

Mr. Moynihan: The Health and Safety Commission and the Sports Council published a joint guidance booklet for owners and operators of swimming pools entitled "Safety in Swimming Pools" in 1988. My Department was consulted when the guidance was being drafted and fully endorses its contents.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 47 water treatment plants in the United Kingdom producing drinking water whose aluminium content is above European Economic Community limits; by how much each treatment plant is in excess of these limits; and if he will make a statement in respect of excess aluminium sulphate in drinking water and any connection with the brain disorder, Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Moynihan: The 43 areas where the Department has granted derogations under article 9 of the EC drinking water directive or has applied to the European Commission under article 20 for a further period of time in order to comply with the aluminium standard are as follows:

Severn-Trent Water Authority
Parts of North Warwickshire, Coventry and Nuneaton
Parts of Charnwood, Hinckley and Bosworth
Parts of Stroud District Council area
Part of Montgomery

South West Water Authority
Parishes of Seaton and Beer
Areas supplied from Tottiford treatment works
Areas supplied from Prewley treatment works
Bideford
College supply zone—Falmouth and Penrhyn
Watercombe supply zone
Higher parts of Penzance
Launceston and Callington areas
Bodmin and Wadebridge areas
Princetown
Chagford Crediton hamlets

North West Water Authority
Parts of Sefton MB
Parts of Stockport MB
Parts of Bolton MB
Parts of Tameside MB
Parts of Oldham MB
Parts of Carlisle District
Parts of Eden District
Parts of Lancaster Borough
Parts of Ribble Valley District

Yorkshire Water Authority
South East Sheffield
Central Sheffield
Parts of West Barnsley (2 supplies)
South West Sheffield
Thornton supply area (West Bradford)
Area east of Thirsk
Addingham
Parts of Dewsbury, Mirfield and Huddersfield
Part of north Bradford
Huddersfield, Holmbridge and Holmstyles area
Parts of Huddersfield
Rural area of Keighley
Reva supply area, Rombalds
Parts of Huddersfield
Rural areas west and south of Halifax (2 supplies)
Northern area of Halifax
Otley

Programmes of improvement are in hand to ensure that all supplies will comply with the aluminium standard in the directive as soon as possible.

Information as to how much each treatment plant exceeds the aluminium standard in the EC directive is not held centrally. However, in accordance with the terms of the directive the Department granted derogations (exemptions) where the aluminium is naturally occurring and applied to the Commission for delays where it is used in the treatment process up to limits which have been agreed with medical advisers.

The Department of Health's committee on medical aspects of the contamination of air, soil and water has concluded that it has not been established that a reduction in the aluminium intake of the general population would be likely to reduce the incidence of Alzheimer's disease. It considered that the associations between Alzheimer's disease and aluminium concentrations in drinking water, suggested by recent studies in Norway and the United Kingdom, were too tentative to justify changes in the use of aluminum sulphate in water treatment. Further research is important, particularly on the bioavailability of aluminium from all sources.

Rating Reform

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give his latest estimate of the level of community charge in each London borough on 1 April 1990 in relation to the current average burden of rates per adult in each London borough, assuming no significant changes in levels of expenditure between the current time and 1 April 1990.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermonsdey (Mr. Hughes) on 15 December 1988 *Official Report*, column *726*, regarding future community charge levels.

Conservation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 1 December 1988, *Official Report*, column 365, if he will make a statement on the aspects of his Department's programmes for conserving the environment which go wider than what can be achieved through further legislation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Many of the initiatives that we are taking in the environmental field do not require further legislation. They include steps to combat air pollution by cleaning up emissions from power stations and motor vehicles; implementing the programme of action arising from the second North sea conference; investing in research into greenhouse gases and their effects; and pressing both nationally and internationally for a reduction in the use of chlorofluorocarbons in order to protect the ozone layer.

Heritage Conservation

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received from English Heritage or the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments on the effects of the new agricultural policies being adopted by the Government in response to recent European Community directives, in relation to the future of archaeology in the upland and lowland regions of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State receives advice from English Heritage regularly on matters affecting ancient monuments and archaeology. English Heritage themselves maintain contact with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on all such matters. We are aware of the opportunities under EC directives to take agricultural land out of production and that these can sometimes help indirectly to safeguard archaeological sites on agricultural land. Alternative land use as such is however only one approach. There is a growing awareness of the importance of archaeology in the countryside and English Heritage are closely in touch with countryside interests. A tangible result of their efforts are the positive management agreements into which English Heritage enter with land owners for the safeguarding of archaeological sites.

We are also aware of the report published by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England and the Council for British Archaeology on the Archaeology of the Uplands in 1987. English Heritage recently published a similar document which explains some of the ways in which monuments in the countryside (including upland and lowland areas) can be preserved and maintained.

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The following special advisers have been employed in my Department since 1979:

T. Baron—Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment on housing issues. 1 October 1979 to 31 March 1980. Seconded from another employer.

Sir Robert Cooke—Special Adviser to the Secretary of State on the Palace of Westminster, the Parliamentary Estate and other Government Buildings. 1 December 1979 to 6 January 1987. Paid directly.

E. Berman—Special Adviser to the Secretary of State on inner city matters. 4 October 1982 to 4 July 1983. Paid directly.

C. G. Mockler—Special (political) Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment. 18 July 1983 to 30 April 1985. Paid directly.

A. Tyrie—Special (political) Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment. 29 April 1985 to 3 September 1985. Paid directly.

P. R. C. Davis—Special (political) Adviser to the Minister for Local Government. 1 October 1984 to 3 September 1985. Special (political) Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment. 4 September 1985 to 31 January 1986. Paid directly.

A. R. Kerpel—Special (political) Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment. 3 February 1986 to 21 May 1986. Paid directly.

D. A. Coleman—Special (political) Adviser to the Hon. William Waldegrave and Mr. John Patten. 16 September 1985 to 12 June 1987. Paid directly.

P. J. Rock—Special (political) Adviser to Mr. M. Howard and the Hon. William Waldegrave from 13 July 1987 to 25 July 1988. Special (political) Adviser to Mr. M. Howard and the Right Hon. J. Selwyn Gummer. 26 July 1988 to date. Paid directly.

Mrs. K. C. Ramsay—Special (political) Adviser to the Secretary of State for the Environment. 22 May 1986 to 17 May 1987. 15 June 1987 to date. Paid directly.

It is not the practice to give information which would reveal the salaries of special advisers as they are individually negotiated in relation to previous outside earnings and are therefore confidential.

Sporting Events (Tickets)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the sale of black market tickets at major sporting events.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand the hon. Member's concern about the sale of black market tickets. In particular, I am concerned about the damage that such ticket sales for major football matches can do to the efforts of the police and clubs to segregate rival fans effectively. However, it is not yet clear that a practicable and enforceable legal answer to this problem can be found. It way well be that what is needed is tighter control by the organisers of sporting events over the distribution of tickets and the imposition of sanctions against those found abusing those controls. Following a report from the chief trading standards officer of Liverpool, difficulties over the allocation of tickets for last year's FA cup final have been referred to the Football Association by the Office of Fair Trading. I understand the OFT are awaiting a detailed response from the FA.

Ex-GLC Housing (Somerset)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will inquire of the Housing Corporation the reasons why it recommended that ownerships of the former Greater London Council seaside and country homes in Taunton should pass from the North British housing association to the Knightstone housing association of Weston-super-Mare sites, then to the Redland housing association of Bristol.

Mr. Trippier: Any proposal by NBHA to dispose of any of the seaside and country homes would require the Housing Corporation's consent.

House Conditions (Liverpool)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homes in Liverpool are without basic amenities; and what percentage *(a)* of the total housing stock, and *(b)* the private rented sector fall into this category.

Mr. Trippier: Local authorities report estimates of the number of dwellings lacking one or more basic amenities in their annual housing investment programme returns. These do not distinguish between rented and owner-occupied dwellings in the private sector. A copy of Liverpool's 1988 return (HIP1) is in the Library.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many house improvement grants were issued in Liverpool over the past year.

Mr. Trippier: Numbers of renovation grants paid to private owners and tenants by local authority area, for the first half of 1988, appear in table 4 of "Local Housing Statistics" No. 87. A copy is available in the Library. A total of 323 grants were reported paid in the September quarter of 1988.

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations from Leicester city council indicating dissatisfaction as to the amount of central Government grants to the council.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am not aware of any recent representations relating to grants for which DOE is responsible.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he now proposes to reduce the amount of chlorofluorocarbons in aerosol propellants; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The British aerosol industry expects to phase out the non-essential use of chlorofluorocarbons as propellants on a voluntary basis by the end of 1989.

Property Services Agency (Funding)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to make any changes to the cash limit on the Property Services Agency's civil vote and also to the running cost limit for 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the cash limit for class XX, vote 19, will be increased by £71·152 million from £2,000 to £71·154 million. The increases are needed to finance the acquisition of freehold office accommodation and the internal restructuring of the agency ahead of fully commercial operation in 1993. The increase will be charged to the Reserve and therefore will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

In addition, PSA's civil running cost limit is being increased by a net £3·599 million to £143·678 million to cover expenditure on internal restructuring. This increase includes an offsetting reduction of £1,000 to meet corresponding increase in the running cost limit of the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) for the transfer of costs for recruitment under the direct entry grade 7 competition 1988.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of his Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday or after school care, is provided for employees' children aged five years and over; and what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Ridley: The experimental child care scheme first held at the Cardington residential training centre in August 1987 is being repeated this year. The Department is considering what scope there is for further provision without continuing subsidy.

New Towns

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a copy of the recent 7(1) submissions from Warrington and Runcorn development corporation affecting Appleton Cross and Grappenhall Heys available to the hon. Member for Warrington, South.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* I have not yet received section 7(1) submissions under the New Towns Act 1981 from Warrington and Runcorn development corporation relating to the areas to which the hon. Member refers.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to reject all 7(1) submissions from new towns in the last nine months of their existence.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* No. The Government's objectives for the remaining new town development corporations require section 7(1) powers under the New Towns Act 1981 to be exercised until the corporations' proposed wind-up dates.

Aluminium

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is being financed by his Department into aluminium in water and in man-made milk products; and whether any guidance on safe limits has been issued.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* My Department has not funded research specifically into aluminium in water although the water industry is carrying out research into the use of aluminium as a coagulant.

Guidance on safe limits has not been issued. However, the EC drinking water directive sets a standard of 200 micrograms of aluminium per litre in drinking water. Responsibility for research into aluminium in milk products lies with my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Water

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Southern water authority is fully meeting its obligations under European Community directives; what expenditure is required to remedy any deficiencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* In general, Southern water authority meets its obligations under the EC directives relating to water quality.

Not all the identified bathing waters comply at present with the bathing water directive and we are discussing with the authority its investment plans to bring the remainder up to the required standard.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 1 February 1989

TRANSPORT

Fennell Report

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made to implement recommendation 46 of the Fennell report that the annual inspection by the London fire brigade of underground stations and tunnels should continue and unsatisfactory features be remedied and reported on within six weeks and that copies of the reports be sent to the chief safety inspector and railway inspectorate and that arrangements be made by London Underground to publish the reports in consultation with the London fire brigade and London regional passengers committee.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that London Underground Ltd. has agreed a new procedure in response to this recommendation. The London fire and civil defence authority will send LUL a formal report of each inspection. Copies will be sent to the railways inspectorate and the chief safety inspector. LUL will respond to the LFCDA within six weeks. A copy of the report, together with LUL's response, will be passed to the London regional passengers' committee and to the House of Commons Library. This procedure will take effect from the receipt by LUL of the next LFCDA annual inspection report.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made to implement recommendation 141 in the Fennell report that London Underground shall review its proposals for the working of the underground ticketing system at stations and take advice from the railways inspectorate and the London fire brigade; and if he will take steps to ensure that for all such final proposals which are at variance with the railway inspectorate's or London fire brigade's advice a reason shall be publicly given by London Underground.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground Ltd. had taken the advice of the London fire brigade and of the railways inspectorate on this matter prior to the publication of Mr. Fennell's report. However, London Regional Transport has, at my request, appointed consulting engineers to carry out an independent study of the Underground ticketing system. The study will focus on the implications for passenger safety and will be completed by the end of April. LRT intends to discuss the results of this review with the railways inspectorate and the London fire brigade.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress his Department has made in response to recommendation 120 of the Fennell report that the law on fire certification as it relates to underground stations should be clarified.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department has made an order under the Fire Precautions Act 1971, that was laid before Parliament on 27 January, under which underground railway stations will require a fire certificate unless regulations which are to be made under section 12 of the 1971 Act apply to them.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made to implement recommendation 48 of the Fennell report that locked emergency gates shall be fitted with alarmed panic bars; and what trials have been carried out to see if they work under panic conditions following an incident which for passenger safety has to be responded to at great speed and where a large number of people are involved.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that London Underground has identified 24 exits and 11 sites at stations with lifts where it is necessary to fit alarmed panic bars. London Underground considers that a new design of gate may be necessary in order to accommodate the panic bars, and a prototype is being installed at Moorgate for evaluation in February. If the prototype is successful, London Underground will install the alarmed panic bars at the sites identified by 30 June 1989.

Exit Barriers (London Underground)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct London Underground Ltd. and London Regional Transport to make available a copy of all relevant correspondence, reports and documentation communicated between themselves and the fire authorities for London about the consequences for safety of automatic exit barriers installed at London underground stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: It is for London Regional Transport, London Underground Ltd. and the London fire and civil defence authority to consider whether to make available such exchanges.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make clear the likely sources of funding for environmental protection for communities and land potentially affected by a high-speed Channel tunnel rail link; if he will clarify the position with regard to the use of Government funds for such purposes in the light of section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The environmental protection measures which BR will need to take as part of its proposals for a new line will form part of the cost of the project which will have to be met from increased BR revenues. Government subsidy is ruled out by section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there is any contractual arrangement or other commitment between Her Majesty's Government or British Rail with the French Government or French rail authorities on the speed of trains from the Channel tunnel to London, and over other parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* There are no agreements between the British and French

Governments on the speed of Channel tunnel trains within the United Kingdom. The contractual arrangements between BR and SNCF are a matter for them, but I understand that they provide for the shares of revenues to reflect relative contributions towards the overall quality of service and hence its commercial success. BR would accordingly receive an increased share of the joint revenues from the service and pay a smaller share of the costs if the current journey time between London and the tunnel were reduced.

London Regional Transport (Director)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the date on which Dr. Ridley, former director of London Regional Transport, vacated the premises from which he carried out his official duties on behalf of London Regional Transport.

Mr. Portillo: Dr. Ridley's official duties as a member of London Regional Transport terminated on 10 November 1988, when he resigned. Any temporary use of facilities granted subsequently by LRT at its discretion to help him clear up his affairs is a matter for LRT.

Coastguard

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to recommence recruitment for professional, trained coastguards; and if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of vacancies occurring at each registered coastguard rescue centre indicating the length of time for which any vacancy has lasted.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* A recruitment campaign is currently in progress. Advertisements will appear shortly both in trade magazines and selected newspapers in order to reach suitably qualified and experienced candidates. The main thrust of this campaign is to attract candidates who are prepared to fill vacancies on the mainland of Scotland and in the Scottish islands.

Particulars of vacancies as at 1 January 1989 are as follows:

Coastguard District	*Number*	*Since*
Shetland	3	15 November 1988
		12 November 1988
		4 March 1988
Pentland	1	5 October 1988
Moray	5	Watchkeeping duties cease on 30 March. Vacancies will not be filled.
Tyne/Tees	2	20 June 1988
		26 July 1988
Yarmouth	4	11 November 1988
		15 August 1988
		18 August 1988
		19 September 1988
Thames	1	30 April 1988
Dover	3	7 May 1987
		4 April 1988
		31 July 1988
Milford Haven	1	8 February 1988
Liverpool	1	15 November 1988
Belfast	4	1 February 1988
		20 February 1988
		9 November 1987
		25 November 1988
Oban	1	5 December 1988
Stornoway	2	4 March 1988
		28 September 1988

Moray MRSC will close on 30 March 1989.

All other vacancies are planned to be filled by promotion, transfer or recruitment.

LRT (Fares)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* the overall increase in percentage of fares charged by London Regional Transport for each fare increase since January 1984, together with the respective increase in the cost of living index for the relevant preceding period.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The information requested is as follows. As a result of the increased use made of travelcards and capitalcards, the fare charged per mile travelled has remained broadly constant in real terms over the period 1984-85 to 1988-89.

	Annual fare increases Per cent.	*Annual cost of living increase (using RPI) Per cent.*
January 1985	[1]8·5	[1]7·8
January 1986	6·5	5·5
January 1987	4·0	3·9
January 1988	9·5	3·3
January 1989	12·4	[2]6·8

Note: All figures indexed from January the previous year except as noted below.

[1] Figures indexed from previous fare increase in May 1983.

[2] December 1988 prices indexed to December 1987 (January 1989 figures not yet available for comparison with January 1988).

ENVIRONMENT

Palace of Westminster (Chandeliers)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has now completed the investigations referred to in his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, 10 January, *Official Report*, column *508*.

Mr. Chope: Not yet, but I shall ensure that the advice is provided to the Select Committee as soon as it is available.

Water

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking in response to the Countryside Commission's report asking for a change in water privatisation plans to protect 300 sites it lists as being of conservation and recreational value and 15 sites warranting special protection because of their national importance which are owned by water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) on 19 January.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the measures he proposes to limit

takeovers of water companies will apply to the Coquet water board; what information he has on the present ownership and control of this undertaking; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Coquet water board will not be affected by the recently announced measures limiting takeovers of statutory water companies. It was wound up by the Newcastle and Gateshead Water (Coquet Water Board Dissolution) Order 1983, and its liabilities were taken over by the Newcastle and Gateshead water company. It now has no separate existence.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to assess whether the acquisition of a stake in the Folkestone water company in partnership with AIPF by the Southern water authority will lead to greater competition.

Mr. Moynihan: The special provisions for water mergers announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 11 January do not apply to mergers involving water companies with assets of less than £30 million. The continued independence of such companies is not essential to comparative competition, which those provisions are designed to safeguard. The acquisition of shares in smaller water companies continues to be subject to fair trading legislation, the administration of which is the responsibility of my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will indicate the increases in water charges proposed by the water authorities for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The water authorities are facing demands from the public and from Government to meet increasingly stringent quality standards for drinking water, for our rivers and for coastal waters. These improvements cost money.

The Government have therefore agreed to a 20 per cent. increase in capital expenditure in 1989-90 which will enable the authorities to continue to move towards these higher standards. I announced this to the House on 2 November, when I also expressed the expectation that increases in charges for next year should, on average, be kept to single figures.

Several of the water authorities' chairmen would have preferred even more ambitious programmes of investment next year. However, in considering the need for increases in water charges I have given full weight to the interests of the consumer and the need to avoid sharp increases in any one year. I have also had to take into account the national pressures on the construction industry and the need to avoid unreasonable demands which would lead to higher construction prices.

The discussions I have held with the water authority chairmen enable me to confirm that their proposals on charges for 1989-90 will result in an average increase of under 10 per cent., with individual authorities' average increases ranging from 7 to 13 per cent.

I am confident that the figures we have agreed will enable the water authorities to make good progress towards our targets for improved environmental standards in the coming year. They represent an appropriate balance between charges and borrowing next year, taking account of the authorities' long-term financial requirements. Once the industry is privatised, it will no longer have to compete for public funds; it will be free to raise finance on the markets.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Southern water authority has given him an undertaking that it will not use minority stakes in statutory water companies' to block either the removal of limits on dividends or the companies' conversion to plc status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* No such undertaking has been given.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account was taken by his working party on football hooliganism of the arrangements existing in Scotland, particularly those introduced as a consequence of the McElione report; what are the reasons for his non-adoption of any of these arrangements in England and Wales; or what steps he has taken to encourage their adoption.

Mr. Moynihan: The McElione report of 1977 made a number of recommendations on the conduct of football matches in Scotland in relation to the Scottish football authorities and Scottish football at that time. Many of these recommendations were taken up in Scotland and similar steps have been taken in England and Wales, including restrictions on the sale of alcohol and the segregation of rival groups of supporters.

My working party was established to review the main principles of a national membership scheme for football supporters. This is not an issue on which the McElione report made recommendations.

Football Membership Scheme

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that any charges levied for the proposed football supporters' identity cards do not depend on the holder's willingness to allow personal details to be used for marketing purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I will discuss this with the Data Protection Registrar and the Football Membership Authority at the appropriate stage.

Beaches (Pollution)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those beaches in England which failed to meet the European Community directive on bathing water quality standards in the last year for which data is available; when it is planned for each of these beaches to meet these standards; and what is the estimated cost in each case.

Mr. Moynihan: The information on the quality of English bathing waters during the 1988 bathing season is at present being collated. I expect to announce the results before the start of this year's bathing season. We are currently discussing with water authorities their plans for improving those bathing waters which do not yet meet the required standards.

Water Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to introduce legislation to make it an offence to allow polluted drinking water to come through a tap; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Gentleman to clause 51 of the Water Bill, which will make it an offence for a water undertaker to supply to any premises water that is unfit for human consumption.

Homeless People

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department's review of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 will be published.

Mr. Trippier: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) on 17 January at column *150*.

Woking Local Plan

Mr. Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his inspector's report on the Woking local plan.

Mr. Howard: Inspectors are appointed by the Secretary of State to conduct inquiries into objections to local plans. However the inspector reports direct to the local planning authority.

This particular inquiry raised a number of very complex issues and, together with necessary site visits, extended over some 17 weeks. The inspector is making every effort to complete his report as soon as possible and expects to submit it to Woking borough council for its consideration by July.

Subsequent publication of the report is then a matter for the local planning authority itself.

Exeter Airport

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 19 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *47*, he will now make an announcement in respect of the future development of Exeter airport.

Mr. Ridley: I hope to announce my decision later this month.

Urban Programme

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources will be available for local authorities in the urban programme in 1989-90; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am today announcing initial urban programme resource allocations for 1989-90, totalling over £245 million. The resources will be allocated to the 57 urban programme partnership and programme authorities. The money will be used to support projects which will encourage economic development and environmental improvements to rebuild confidence and encourage private investment in those areas.

The urban programme is one of the Government's range of programmes to help revitalise our inner cities. It complements the Department of the Environment's other urban initiatives including the urban development corporations, city grant and derelict land grant. Together these programmes will provide £674 million for inner city regeneration in 1989-90.

The urban programme allocations made today are provisional; formal allocations are made after inner area programmes have been assessed and approved. Allocations will not be confirmed until authorities have provided a satisfactory annual report on achievements through the UP in 1987-88. Additional resources sometimes become available for redistribution in the course of the year which may lead to outturn being different from these initial allocations.

I attach considerable importance to the improvement in the management of the urban programme and am grateful to authorities for their continuing commitment to and achievements in the urban programme management initiative.

The allocations to individual authorities are as follows.

£ million

Region and Authority	*Initial allocation 1989-90*
Northern	
Newcastle/Gateshead	17·061
Hartlepool	1·750
Langbaurgh	1·750
Middlesbrough	5·349
North Tyneside	3·400
South Tyneside	4·700
Stockton	1·368
Sunderland	5·019
North West	
Manchester/Salford	21·773
Blackburn	4·000
Bolton	3·625
Burnley	1·891
Oldham	3·583
Preston	2·120
Rochdale	3·545
Wigan	2·366
Merseyside	
Liverpool	19·353
Halton	1·325
Knowsley	3·768
St. Helens	1·662
Sefton	1·429
Wirral	3·253
West Midlands	
Birmingham	23·000
Coventry	4·575
Dudley	1·340
Sandwell	4·407
Walsall	1·595
Wolverhampton	4·867
The Wrekin	0·680
East Midlands	
Derby	1·480
Leicester	4·750
Nottingham	5·120
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley	1·598
Bradford	4·500
Doncaster	1·793
Hull	4·636
Kirklees	0·889
Leeds	4·315
Rotherham	1·794

Region and Authority	Initial allocation 1989-90
Sheffield	5·059
London	
Hackney	8·034
Islington	8·717
Lambeth	9·932
Brent	3·332
Greenwich	0·970
Hammersmith and Fulham	3·330
Haringey	2·650
Kensington and Chelsea	1·775
Lewisham	1·700
Newham	2·589
Southwark	2·494
Tower Hamlets	4·373
Wandsworth	3·183
South West	
Bristol	1·373
Plymouth	1·003

Redundant Farm Buildings

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether on appeal against refusal of planning permission for the conversion of redundant farm buildings, the guidance given in his Department's document PPG7 dated January 1988 will prevail when that conflicts with an earlier county structure plan.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* Planning appeals are determined on their merits, taking account of all material planning considerations. Where the provisions of a structure or local plan clearly conflict with more recently issued national guidance they will usually be accorded less weight in that process. An up-to-date development plan may justify acceptable local variations from national policies.

New Towns

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that all section 7(1) submissions from new town development corporations be sent contemporaneously to hon. Members whose constituencies are affected.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* My right hon. Friend is under a statutory obligation to consult local authorities before deciding on applications from new towns development corporations for planning consent under section 7(1) of the New Towns Act 1981. I shall ask corporations also to ensure that they have satisfactory arrangements in place for informing hon. Members of such applications, where they have expressed an interest.

Football (Arrests)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received from Football League clubs regarding arrests made in the 1987-88 and 1988-89 seasons; and if, in the light of such representations, he will amend his table of arrests and the annex to his letter of 21 December 1988.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 20 January 1989]:* I have received letters from three Football League clubs about the arrest figures for the 1987-88 season. One Football League club has written to me about the arrest figures included in the list of incidents of football hooliganism in 1988-89, annexed to my letter of 21 December 1988 to parliamentary colleagues.

Re-examination of the 1987-88 statistics has revealed that the local police made one transcription error in the figures notified to ACPO. The number of arrests at Leicester City football club should be amended from 81 to 31. The revised total of arrests at league matches in the 1987-88 season is 6,097. The correct entry for Leicester City is the table given in my reply of 19 December to a question from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), at columns *55-60*, is therefore:

Leicester City	
Matches	22
Total attendance	223,049
Total arrests	31
Average attendance per match	10,139
Average arrests per match	1·41
Arrests as a proportion of attendance (Per cent.)	0·01

A revised version of the illustrative incidents list was made available on publication of the Football Spectators Bill.

PRIME MINISTER

Taxation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to reduce total taxation on those individuals and families where it has increased since 1979 to the level prevailing in 1979.

The Prime Minister: It is our policy to reduce the burden of taxation as and when it is prudent to do so.

Negative Vetting

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will make a statement on the use of negative vetting of *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* others working directly or indirectly for the Government;

(2) if she will publish a table showing how many civil servants have been negatively vetted in each Government Department from 1979 to the current date;

(3) if she will publish a table showing the total number of civil servants as part of their duties involved in negative vetting investigations of employees and potential employees in each Department from 1979 to the current date;

(4) if she will publish a table showing the total number of negative vetting investigators employed in each Department from 1979 to the current date;

(5) if she will place in the Library official forms issued to negative vetting investigators from each Government Department;

(6) if she will describe the procedures used in negative vetting;

(7) how many civil servants in each Government Department failed negative vetting in each of the last 10 years;

(8) which civil service or other Government-appointed posts require negative vetting;

(9) what guidelines to Government Departments are issued on how negative vetting of employees and prospective employees is to be undertaken;

(10) how individual civil servants are informed that they have failed negative vetting procedures; and what rights of appeal they have.

The Prime Minister: It is not my practice to give detailed information about security vetting procedures.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General what involvement his Department has had in the Broxtowe child sex abuse case; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service conducted the prosecution of members of the Taylor family.

In cases such as this it is necessary that the jury should hear the evidence of the young children involved, both in chief examination and in any cross-examination. I welcome the successful use of a video link facility to minimise the distress which testifying inevitably causes to the victims of these abhorrent crimes.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Attorney-General what child care provision the Attorney-General's and Lord Chancellor's Department provides for pre-school age children of the Department's employees; what child care provision for school holidays or after school care is provided for employee's children aged five years and over; and what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years.

The Attorney-General: A pilot scheme for children of school age will run from 13 to 17 February 1989 and 28 March to 7 April 1989 in London. Together with other Whitehall Departments, staff in my Departments and the Lord Chancellor's Department have been circulated with an invitation to place their children with the scheme.

My Departments and the Lord Chancellor's Department are considering proposals to provide nursery facilities for children of pre-school age. It is likely that some nursery facilities will be in operation within the next two years.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

A-level Examinations

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students have taken German, French, and Spanish at A-level standard over the last three academic years; and what was the success rate in each year, showing the figures by region and in percentage and numerical terms.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows. The figures relate to the numbers of pupils attempting A-level examinations, and the proportion who passed.

Table 1

Numbers of school leavers attempting A-level examinations

Thousands

Regions	*German*			*French*			*Spanish*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
North	0·6	0·3	0·5	0·9	0·7	0·9	nil	[1]—	[1]—
Yorkshire and Humberside	0·7	0·7	0·6	1·6	1·7	1·8	0·2	0·2	0·2
North West	0·8	0·7	0·8	2·6	2·3	2·2	0·4	0·4	0·3
East Midlands	0·5	0·5	0·5	1·3	1·2	1·4	0·1	0·1	0·1
West Midlands	0·7	0·6	0·6	1·9	1·8	1·2	0·2	0·3	0·2
East Anglia	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·6	0·6	0·6	0·1	0·1	[1]—
Greater London	0·7	0·8	0·7	2·6	2·2	2·0	0·3	0·4	0·3
Other South East	1·9	1·8	1·9	5·2	4·7	4·8	0·5	0·8	0·5
South West	0·8	0·6	0·5	2·1	1·7	1·6	0·2	0·1	0·2
England[2]	6·8	6·3	6·3	18·8	16·8	16·4	2·0	2·2	1·8

[1] The numbers of pupils fall below 100.

[2] Figures for England may not match the sum of those for the constituent regions owing to rounding.

Table 2

Numbers of school leavers obtaining an A-level pass expressed as a percentage of those who attempted the examination

Percentages

Regions	*German*			*French*			*Spanish*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
North	76·9	72·5	82·1	79·9	77·3	82·5	nil	73·3	52·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	90·3	93·7	81·0	74·6	73·3	75·7	80·1	81·1	76·3
North West	74·7	84·5	77·4	73·7	73·1	79·3	70·7	84·8	96·8
East Midlands	95·3	80·5	90·4	79·1	78·0	78·0	92·5	84·0	89·4
West Midlands	91·4	87·5	82·1	77·7	77·2	70·0	80·6	87·8	84·9
East Anglia	85·7	89·8	82·5	80·0	88·1	88·1	100·0	100·0	100·0
Greater London	88·9	90·1	87·3	83·1	84·8	87·7	83·9	88·2	92·3
Other South East	88·3	92·4	88·2	84·4	80·5	85·3	82·5	85·6	91·5
South West	87·7	82·9	92·2	87·3	78·1	87·4	88·1	100·0	94·5
England	86·7	87·8	85·3	80·8	78·7	82·2	81·7	86·7	90·0

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students have taken English, physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology and computer studies at A-level standard over the last three academic

years; and what was the success rate in each year, showing all figures by standard planning region and in percentage and numerical terms.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows. The figures relate to the numbers of pupils attempting A-level examinations, and the proportion who passed.

Table 1
Numbers of school leavers attempting A-level examinations

Thousands

	English			*Physics*			*Chemistry*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Regions:									
North	2·6	2·0	2·1	2·2	2·1	2·0	2·2	2·0	2·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	3·7	3·7	3·5	3·7	3·7	3·2	3·6	3·5	3·4
North West	5·5	4·6	4·9	5·2	5·3	4·6	4·7	5·1	4·8
East Midlands	3·4	3·2	3·4	3·1	2·8	2·5	2·8	2·8	2·5
West Midlands	4·6	4·2	4·5	4·4	4·1	4·1	4·0	4·0	3·9
East Anglia	1·6	1·6	1·6	1·2	1·3	1·3	1·1	1·1	0·9
Greater London	5·8	5·2	5·3	4·7	5·3	4·5	4·8	4·8	4·0
Other South East	11·5	11·2	11·8	11·0	9·2	9·2	9·1	8·4	7·5
South West	4·2	4·1	4·0	3·6	3·4	3·1	3·3	3·2	3·0
England[1]	42·9	39·7	41·1	39·1	37·1	34·5	35·6	35·0	32·0

[1] Figures for England may not match the sum of those for the constituent regions owing to rounding.

Thousands

	Mathematics			*Biology*			*Computer science*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Regions:									
North	3·4	3·0	3·2	2·1	1·8	1·6	0·5	0·5	0·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	5·8	5·7	5·2	3·2	2·7	3·1	0·6	0·5	0·5
North West	7·7	8·0	7·3	3·5	4·1	4·0	0·7	0·8	0·5
East Midlands	5·1	4·6	4·4	2·3	2·6	2·1	0·4	0·4	0·4
West Midlands	6·0	5·6	5·9	3·2	3·3	3·2	0·5	0·6	0·4
East Anglia	2·4	2·1	2·1	1·2	1·2	1·0	0·2	0·2	0·1
Greater London	8·5	8·6	7·5	4·2	3·2	3·3	0·4	0·6	0·6
Other South East	18·0	17·6	17·6	7·8	7·2	6·9	1·3	1·4	1·2
South West	5·7	5·6	5·6	3·0	2·9	3·0	0·4	0·4	0·1
England[1]	62·5	60·8	58·7	30·4	28·9	28·2	5·0	5·3	4·3

[1] Figures for England may not match the sum of those for the constituent regions owing to rounding.

Table 2
Numbers of school leavers obtaining an A-level pass expressed as a percentage of those who attempted the examination

Percentages

	English			*Physics*			*Chemistry*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Regions:									
North	77·4	77·1	77·7	75·7	76·3	77·1	83·5	81·0	78·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	71·4	75·7	71·8	76·9	79·7	73·5	79·6	78·5	80·9
North West	77·3	78·3	79·2	78·6	77·6	72·7	82·1	81·1	79·8
East Midlands	79·8	80·7	79·4	78·8	78·1	80·4	83·5	78·5	77·5
West Midlands	75·9	81·3	77·4	76·4	75·1	75·5	80·1	76·9	76·0
East Anglia	84·2	84·2	88·3	81·6	85·6	75·5	75·9	81·7	87·4
Greater London	81·1	82·4	83·6	79·9	75·3	77·6	78·9	75·6	83·3
Other South East	83·1	81·7	84·8	81·7	79·0	81·1	80·4	78·7	85·6
South West	83·6	82·5	86·2	76·3	79·7	79·0	78·9	84·9	82·9
England	79·8	80·7	81·5	79·0	78·0	77·5	80·4	79·2	81·5

Numbers of school leavers obtaining an A-level pass expressed as a percentage of those who attempted the examination

Percentages

	Mathematics			*Biology*			*Computer science*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Regions									
North	77·2	77·7	78·1	70·3	73·3	82·3	67·2	85·2	86·3
Yorkshire and Humberside	72·9	74·6	74·6	70·1	73·0	76·2	71·1	76·7	66·5
North West	76·4	74·1	71·6	81·3	72·7	77·5	80·2	66·3	84·6
East Midlands	76·1	72·3	74·5	77·8	71·5	74·4	93·6	59·8	79·0
West Midlands	75·1	74·8	75·2	75·3	73·2	77·6	85·7	68·1	57·1
East Anglia	75·0	78·8	75·6	75·3	81·3	85·8	73·5	87·1	84·7
Greater London	75·4	76·6	74·5	79·0	76·4	76·2	87·2	66·5	73·4
Other South East	81·2	78·6	79·5	78·7	78·0	77·6	80·7	84·3	83·0
South West	75·6	81·4	74·0	78·0	72·4	76·6	79·4	75·0	83·1
England	77·1	76·8	75·9	76·9	74·8	77·5	79·7	74·8	77·3

Education (No. 2) Act 1986

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many local education authorities have implemented section 58 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: All local education authorities in England and Wales are subject to section 58, which empowers an LEA to pay travelling and subsistence allowances to governors of schools and establishments of further education, in accordance with the provisions of a scheme made by it.

I do not have any information about the number of authorities which have implemented schemes.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assistance the Government will give to local education authorities not opposed to section 58 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: The fact that an LEA may decide not to introduce a scheme for the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances does not mean that it is "opposed" to the section. It merely shows that the LEA has chosen to give priority to other areas of expenditure, which may, in the circumstances of the particular LEA, be entirely proper.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to make mandatory the powers under section 58 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Mrs. Rumbold: We believe that it should be for local education authorities, in determining their expenditure priorities, to decide whether to introduce a scheme for the payment of travelling and subsistence allowances to governors.

We hope, nevertheless, that LEAs will provide allowances where not to do so would cause genuine hardship or would discourage people from becoming governors.

Open University

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the membership of the Open university visiting committee.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have appointed Mr. Kenneth Dixon, the chairman of Rowntree plc, to be chairman-designate of the committee. He will take over as chairman on 1 January 1990.

I am most grateful to Sir Austin Bide, who has been chairman of the visiting committee since it was set up in 1982. My predecessor and I have benefited greatly from the committee's advice and from its thorough analysis of the problems and opportunities which the Open university has faced over the years. I take this opportunity to thank Sir Austin for his enormous contribution in establishing the committee so successfully.

I have also appointed Professor Michael Hart, professor of physics at Manchester university and Mr. Chris Tipple, director of education for Northumberland, to be members of the committee for three years, until December 1991.

ENERGY

British Coal (Survey)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the pits that have been involved in British Coal's market research survey carried out by Research Services of Wembley; the number of interviews carried out and the nature of the questions asked; when the results will be made public and if he will make a statement as to whether this research has been undertaken in preparation for the privatisation of the coal industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a management matter for the British Coal Corporation, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Coal Reserves

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give his Department's latest estimate of coal reserves in Great Britain.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The British Coal Corporation is responsible for making any assessments of coal reserves. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mining Industry (Scotland)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list each deep-mined colliery in Scotland, giving details of the rates paid by each colliery to its local authority;

(2) how many jobs have been lost in the Scottish mining industry since 1984; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will give the number of employees at British Coal headquarters in Edinburgh each year from 1984 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the British Coal Corporation, and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Power Industry (Vetting Policy)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the vetting of prospective employees working at British Nuclear Fuels plc and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The security procedures of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels plc towards prospective employees are similar to those employed in the Civil Service for comparable positions.

VAT

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will initiate discussions with *(a)* the chairman of British Gas and *(b)* other bodies within his Department's responsibility about the effect of the imposition of value added tax on non-domestic construction work following the decision of the European Court on 21 June 1988, including the effect on partnership schemes to redevelop redundant inner city land with the private sector.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury on 21

June 1988 at columns 957-58. Customs and Excise has consulted interested parties on how the judgment of the European Court could be best applied. Action to protect public sector construction programmes, by allowing where necessary compensating adjustments to the relevant central Government expenditure provision, has already been taken in consultation with relevant bodies.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimate of the tax yield if value added tax was imposed at 25 per cent. on those goods which were formerly taxed at this rate under purchase tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information is not readily available at the level of detail required.

Tax Revenue

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the additional revenue to the Exchequer in (i) 1989-90 and (ii) a full year if *(a)* there were a 5 per cent. increase in duties on cigarettes, tobacco and alcoholic drinks, *(b)* value added tax were levied on new construction at 15 per cent., *(c)* the taxable benefit of company cars were increased by 25 per cent. and *(d)* mortgage interest relief were limited to the standard rate of tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: *(a)* It is estimated that the net additional revenue yield from a 5 per cent. increase in the duties on cigarettes, tobacco and alcoholic drinks would be £355 million in 1989-90 and £385 million in a full year;

(b) It is estimated that, if value added tax were levied on new construction, both domestic and non-domestic, at 15 per cent., the net additional revenue yield from the private sector would be £1,280 million in 1989-90, and £1,670 million in a full year. Because of the uncertainties involved in estimating the effects of such a change, particularly on the housing market, the figures should be taken as no more than a general indicator of the additional revenue which would accrue;

(c) It is estimated that the revenue yield from a 25 per cent. increase in the scale charges for company cars would be £120 million in 1989-90 and £140 million in a full year;

(d) It would be premature to provide an estimate for 1989-90 of the additional revenue from the restriction of mortgage interest relief to the basic rate, since the yield will depend on the amount of mortgage lending and the level of interest rates as well as on the 1989-90 income tax rates and bands. The revenue yield in a full year at 1988-89 levels of lending, interest rates and tax rates would be £330 million.

Wages and Tax

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average wage *(a)* for the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the Nottingham area; and what is the total tax burden in each case for each of the years from 1979 to date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information requested for Great Britain was provided to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 10 January 1989 at columns *633-56*. Data for average earnings in Nottinghamshire are available for April each year in the new earnings survey. They are as follows, with estimates of the implied burden of income tax and NICs. No data are available which would permit any estimates of the burden of indirect taxes to be made.

April	*Average earnings (£ per week)*	*Income tax and NICs as percentage of average earnings*	
		Single person	*Married man, no children*
1978	88·50	31·1	27·2
1979	101·50	29·2	25·5
1980	122·60	30·3	26·7
1981	138·40	32·0	28·8
1982	147·80	32·6	29·2
1983	158·40	32·5	28·8
1984	164·30	32·0	27·9
1985	174·70	31·7	27·6
1986	194·40	31·3	27·5
1987	210·20	30·0	26·6
1988	227·30	28·5	25·3

Notes:

1. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence in Nottinghamshire.

2. Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the tax units have no other tax reliefs apart from the standard allowances. Earners are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

European Monetary System

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will list the factors other than the prevailing exchange rates which will be taken into account in judging when the time is right for Britain to join the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Lilley: All relevant factors will be taken into account.

GNP

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the gross national product has gone to the Exchequer since 1979; where this came from; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Information on taxes and social security contributions as a percentage of gross national product is published each year in "The United Kingdom National Accounts" (table 15.7 in the 1988 edition). The publication is available in the Library of the House.

IMF (Meetings)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many meetings he has had with the International Monetary Fund since becoming Chancellor; and if he will give the dates of such meetings and the topics discussed.

Mr. Lilley: Since becoming Chancellor, my right hon. Friend has attended 10 meetings of the International Monetary Fund—including the interim committee, development committee, and in the autumn, the joint annual meetings of the IMF and World bank—on the following occasions:

25-30 September 1983;
12-13 April 1984;

22-27 September 1984;
17-19 April 1985;
9-11 April 1986;
28 September—3 October 1986;
9-10 April 1987;
27 September—1 October 1987;
14-15 April 1988;
25-29 September 1988.

The discussions have covered a wide range of subjects summarised in the communiqués of the interim and development committees, copies of which have been deposited in the House of Commons Library.

VAT and Car Tax

Mr. Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the revenue or duty received by Her Majesty's Government in the last financial year from value added tax and car tax, as applicable on *(a)* mopeds, *(b)* small motorcycles and *(c)* cars of 1,000 cc or under.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information is not available at the level of detail required.

BP (Shares)

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the effect on his estimates of public sector debt repayment and of privatisation proceeds of the purchase by the British Petroleum Company plc of 790 million of its shares currently owned by the Kuwait Investment Office.

Mr. Lawson: At their extraordinary general meeting on 31 January 1989, the shareholders of BP approved the purchase of 790 million of BP shares from the KIO. Following the purchase, these shares will be cancelled and the KIO's holding will be reduced to 9·9 per cent. of BP's issued share capital, as recommended by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The KIO will pay the final instalment of £830 million on these shares in March rather than on the due date of 27 April 1989 and will be issued with share certificates forthwith. The Treasury has agreed to these arrangements because the powers available to BP to purchase its own shares apply only to fully-paid shares and not to partly-paid shares or shares held in the form of interim rights.

Following the KIO's payment, the public sector debt repayment in 1988-89 will be £830 million higher than otherwise. There is no other effect on the PSDR in 1988-89. BP will be liable to advance corporation tax on the purchase and it has stated that the KIO is entitled to an equivalent tax credit from the Inland Revenue. BP can offset this ACT against its future corporation tax bill, but only if its United Kingdom taxable income is high enough in the years ahead. The cost of any such offset would in any event be far less than the gains from the Government's decision in October 1987 to proceed with the sale of shares in BP at the underwritten price of 330p

The present estimate of £6·1 billion privatisation proceeds in 1988-89 will be increased to approximately £6·9 billion. There is some flexibility on the timing of privatisation receipts, and the central estimate of total proceeds remains at £5 billion for 1989-90.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the provisions of the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 will be applied to next steps executive agencies.

Mr. Major: Trading funds can already be created for agencies which meet the requirements in the Government Trading Funds Act 1973. However, some bodies including those which are directed by statute to provide a service and where the fees are fixed by regulation, are at present outside the scope of the 1973 Act. Some agencies which are at present outside its scope would be able to operate more efficiently under the more commercial regime. We therefore propose to bring forward legislation at the earliest opportunity so that trading or agency funds will be available in such cases. This change would add significantly to the range of financial regimes available to agencies and make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Government's next steps policy.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Recipient Countries

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information is available to his Department country by country on life expectancy rates in those countries that are actual or potential recipients of British overseas aid;

(2) what information is available to his Department country by country on child mortality rates in those countries that are actual or potential recipients of British overseas aid.

Mrs. Chalker: Information on life expectancy and infant mortality rates is included in the "United Nations Demographic Yearbook" for 1986, published in 1988. Information on child mortality is included in the UNICEF report on "The State of the World's Children", 1987, also published in 1988. The rates for all developing countries are given in the following table.

	Expectation of life at birth (years)		*Deaths per 1000 live births*	
	Males	*Females*	*Infants under 1 year old*	*Children under 5 years old*
Europe				
Cyprus	72·3	77·0	16·5	17
Gibraltar	71·2	78·1	9·8	—
Greece	72·2	76·4	12·3	18
Malta	70·8	76·0	13·6	—
Portugal	68·4	75·2	17·8	22
Turkey	60·0	63·3	92·1	104
Yugoslavia	67·7	73·2	27·3	31
Africa—North of the Sahara				
Algeria	58·5	61·4	88·0	117
Egypt	56·8	59·5	70·5	136
Libya	56·6	60·0	96·5	130
Morocco	56·6	60·0	96·5	130
Tunisia	60·1	61·1	85·3	110
Africa—South of the Sahara				
Angola	40·4	43·6	148·5	242
Benin	42·4	45·6	120·1	193
Botswana	52·7	59·3	76·2	99
Burkina Faso	43·7	46·8	150·3	245
Burundi	44·9	48·1	124·1	200
Cameroon	49·2	52·6	103·2	162
Cape Verde	59·0	61·0	76·5	95
Central African Republic	41·4	44·6	142·0	232
Chad	41·4	44·6	142·8	232
Comoros	48·3	51·7	88·3	135
Congo	44·9	48·1	81·1	122
Djibouti	—	—	—	—
Equatorial Guinea	42·4	45·6	137·3	223
Ethiopia	39·3	42·5	154·9	257
Gabon	47·4	50·7	111·9	178
Gambia	33·5	36·5	174·1	292
Ghana	50·3	53·8	98·3	153
Guinea	38·7	41·8	159·1	259
Guinea-Bissau	41·4	44·6	142·8	232
Ivory Coast	48·8	52·2	109·9	157
Kenya	51·2	54·7	80·2	121
Lesotho	46·3	52·3	111·1	144
Liberia	47·4	50·7	132·5	215
Madagascar	48·9	50·4	67·0	97
Malawi	38·1	41·2	130·0	275
Mali	46·9	49·7	120·9	302
Mauritania	42·4	45·6	137·3	223
Mauritius	64·4	71·2	26·3	32
Mayotte	—	—	—	—
Mozambique	44·4	46·2	155·5	252
Namibia	46·6	49·9	115·6	—
Niger	40·9	44·1	145·7	237
Nigeria	46·9	50·2	114·2	182
Reunion	65·5	74·0	13·1	—
Rwanda	45·1	47·7	132·0	214
St. Helena	—	—	29·7	—
Sao Tome and Principe	—	—	61·7	—
Senegal	41·7	44·9	142·2	231
Seychelles	66·2	73·5	17·4	—
Sierra Leone	32·5	35·5	179·5	302
Somalia	39·3	42·5	154·9	257
Sudan	46·6	49·0	117·8	187
Swaziland	46·9	50·2	129·2	182
Tanzania	49·3	52·7	114·8	183
Togo	48·8	52·2	102·3	160

	Expectation of life at birth (years)		Deaths per 1000 live births	
	Males	Females	Infants under 1 year old	Children under 5 years old
Uganda	47·4	50·7	111·9	178
Zaire	48·3	51·7	107·3	170
Zambia	49·6	53·1	88·3	135
Zimbabwe	54·0	57·6	80·2	121
America—North and Central				
Anguilla	—	—	33·9	—
Antigua	—	—	7·7	—
Bahamas	—	—	26·4	—
Barbados	67·2	72·5	13·1	16
Belize	—	—	21·5	—
Bermuda	68·8	76·3	7·1	—
Cayman Islands	—	—	10·9	—
Costa Rica	70·5	75·7	18·9	23
Cuba	72·7	76·1	13·6	19
Dominica	—	—	19·6	—
Dominican Republic	60·7	64·6	74·5	88
El Salvador	62·6	67·1	35·1	91
Grenada	—	—	15·4	—
Guadeloupe	66·4	72·4	15·3	—
Guatemala	55·1	59·4	56·0	109
Haiti	51·2	54·4	127·8	180
Honduras	53·4	56·9	81·5	116
Jamaica	70·3	75·7	10·0	25
Martinique	67·0	73·5	14·1	—
Mexico	62·1	66·0	53·0	73
Montserrat	—	—	7·7	—
Netherlands Antilles	—	—	—	—
Nicaragua	58·7	61·0	76·4	104
Panama	69·2	72·9	25·6	35
St. Kitts—Nevis	—	—	27·8	—
St. Lucia	67·3	73·1	17·6	—
St. Pierre et Miquelon	—	—	—	—
St. Vincent	—	—	26·5	—
Trinidad and Tobago	66·9	71·6	12·7	26
Turks and Caicos Islands	—	—	24·5	—
Virgin Islands (Br)	—	—	12·2	—
America—South				
Argentina	65·5	72·7	35·3	40
Bolivia	48·6	53·0	124·4	184
Brazil	60·9	66·0	70·6	91
Chile	61·3	67·6	19·5	26
Colombia	61·4	66·0	50·0	72
Ecuador	59·5	61·8	69·5	92
Falkland Islands	—	—	—	—
French Guiana	—	—	20·1	—
Guyana	65·8	70·8	36·2	41
Paraguay	62·8	67·5	45·0	64
Peru	56·8	60·5	98·6	133
Suriname	65·6	70·6	36·2	41
Uruguay	65·7	72·4	30·4	32
Venezuela	64·9	70·7	26·1	45
Asia—Middle East				
Bahrain	65·9	68·9	31·6	35
Iran	55·8	55·0	108·1	—
Iraq	61·5	63·3	77·1	101
Israel	73·1	76·6	11·4	16
Jordan	64·6	71·0	54·1	65
Kuwait	69·6	73·7	18·5	25
Lebanon	63·1	67·0	48·0	56
Oman	51·0	53·7	117·2	172
Qatar	65·4	69·8	37·8	43
Saudi Arabia	59·2	62·7	66·1	109
Syria	63·8	64·7	58·8	71
United Arab Emirates	65·4	69·8	37·8	43
Yemen	46·9	49·9	134·9	210
Yemen (Democratic)	46·9	49·9	134·9	210
Asia—South				
Afghanistan	36·6	37·3	181·6	329
Bangladesh	55·3	54·4	128·2	196
Bhutan	46·6	45·1	138·7	206
Burma	55·8	59·3	70·0	91
India	55·6	55·2	104·9	158

	Expectation of life at birth (years)		*Deaths per 1000 live births*	
	Males	*Females*	*Infants under 1 year old*	*Children under 5 years old*
Maldives	53·4	49·5	57·5	—
Nepal	50·9	48·1	138·7	206
Pakistan	59·0	59·2	94·5	174
Sri Lanka	67·8	71·7	30·5	48
Asia—Far East				
Brunei	70·1	72·7	12·0	—
China	66·7	68·9	39·3	50
Hong Kong	73·8	79·2	7·5	11
Indonesia	52·2	54·9	84·4	126
Kampuchea	42·0	44·9	159·9	216
Korea (DPR)	64·6	71·0	29·7	35
Korea (Republic)	62·7	69·1	29·7	35
Laos	48·3	51·2	122·5	170
Macao	—	—	12·6	—
Malaysia	67·6	72·7	17·0	38
Mongolia	60·0	64·1	53·0	64
Philippines	60·2	63·7	50·6	78
Singapore	68·7	74·0	9·1	12
Taiwan	—	—	—	—
Thailand	57·6	63·6	47·5	55
Timor	39·2	40·7	183·3	—
Viet Nam	56·7	61·1	75·8	98
Oceania				
Cook Islands	63·2	67·1	8·1	—
Fiji	67·0	71·0	18·5	34
Kiribati	—	—	—	—
Nauru	—	—	19·0	—
New Caledonia	71·0	76·8	16·8	—
Niue Island	—	—	—	—
Pacific Islands (United States)	—	—	23·2	—
Papua New Guinea	51·2	53·7	74·4	94
Pitcairn Island	—	—	—	—
Polynesia, French	—	—	20·5	—
Solomon Islands	—	—	—	—
Tokelau Islands	—	—	—	—
Tonga	—	—	5·0	—
Tuvala	—	—	—	—
Vanuatu	—	—	—	75
Wallis and Futuna	—	—	—	—
Western Samoa	61·0	64·3	33·0	—

Sources:

Life expectancy at birth and infant mortality are taken from the UN Demographic Yearbook for 1986, published in 1988.

Child mortality statistics are taken from a report by UNICEF called The State of the World's Children 1987, also published in 1988.

Data is the most recent that is readily available.

Data that is not available is shown by —.

Note:

The list of countries is taken from the Development Assistance Committee's list of Developing Countries.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is available to his Department for each of those countries that are actual or potential recipients of British overseas aid as to the numbers of people who would be considered to be in a state of starvation or semi-starvation by international bodies such as the World Health Organisation.

Mrs. Chalker: Few developing countries have nutritional monitoring systems. Statistics on nutritional status are therefore unreliable. The United Nations sub-committee on nutrition has used data from many sources to produce the world nutrition situation report, which provides a regional perspective on nutritional status. The World Bank also publishes national estimations of daily per capita calorie supply as a percentage of calorie requirement. This gives an indication of the proportion of people in any country who have too few calories to maintain health.

Southern Africa

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives he will propose at the coming meeting of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will be attending the annual donors meeting of the Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference in Angola on 2-3 February. An announcement will be made shortly on the contents of his statement.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Nursing Staff

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursing staff at all levels are employed in Downshire hospital, Downpatrick; how

many of these staff have been advised of their new grades under clinical grading review; and how many appeals have been received.

Mr. Needham: There are 474 nursing staff employed in Downshire hospital Downpatrick all of whom have been advised of their new grades. Informal review of grades was requested by 180 staff, of whom 14 initiated this review by using the formal grievance form.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nursing staff at all levels are employed in Downe hospital, Downpatrick; how many of these staff have been advised of their new grades under the clinical grading review; and how many appeals have been received.

Mr. Needham: There are 117 nursing staff employed in Downe hospital, Downpatrick all of whom have been advised of their new grades. Informal review of grades was requested by 38 staff, of whom 25 initiated this review by using the formal grievance form.

Student Numbers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the student numbers in the diploma in the advanced study of education in each of the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 in *(a)* Stranmillis college of education and *(b)* St. Mary's college of education, Belfast.

Mr. Needham: Before 1985-86, colleges of education offered the advanced certificate in education. From that year, it has been gradually replaced by the diploma in the advanced study of education.

The numbers of full and part-time students receiving support from the Department of Education for Northern Ireland for either course are as follows:

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Full-time students[1]					
Stranmillis					
Advanced Certificate	18	24	16	9	Nil
DASE	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	7
St. Mary's[2]					
Advanced Certificate	Nil	Nil	7	6	Nil
DASE	4	6	7	7	14
Part-time students					
Stranmillis					
New Starts DASE	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	20[1]
New Starts Advanced Certificate	Nil	Nil	25	10	Nil
Carry over Advanced Certificate	Nil	Nil	Nil	25	10
St. Mary's[2]					
New Starts DASE	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	16
New Starts Advanced Certificate	3	2	13	Nil	Nil
Carry over Advanced Certificate	3	3	Nil	13	Nil

[1] A further 58 students are undertaking modular courses which could lead either to the DASE or the Advanced Certificate.
[2] The numbers for St. Joseph's College of Education are included with St. Mary's for 1983-84 and 1984-85. The colleges amalgamated on 1 September 1985 to form St. Mary's College.

Theatre Sisters

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the hospitals in Northern Ireland where no theatre sisters' posts have been regraded under the new grading structures and the number of theatre sisters who have not received a regrading.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 27 January 1989]:* All theatre sisters' posts in Northern Ireland have been regraded under the clinical grading review.

Strip Searches

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons Armagh and Maghaberry in each year for which information is available up to and including 1988, giving the number of times each person was searched, if any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, including which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and what were the reasons for the search under each of the following headings *(a)* making a remand appearance at a trial, *(b)* attending trial, *(c)* inter-prison visit and *(d)* other reasons.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* Details of the numbers of, and reasons for, strip searches made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons. Armagh and Maghaberry were first recorded in April 1983. Information on the number of times each prisoner was searched could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The remaining information requested is as follows:

Number of Searches	*1983 (April-December)*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Total number of searches carried out	701	355	490	463	408	336
Reasons for Search						
First admission on remand/ awaiting trial	51	51	82	81	77	82
First admission on sentence/ final discharge	68	118	164	199	219	177

Number of Searches	1983 (April-December)	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Attending Remand Court	84	31	19	34	25	2
Attending Trial	50	5	8	6	1	—
Attendance Court for Appeal	11	2	1	9	4	—
Attendance Court for Bail	50	47	56	66	33	1
Pre-release home leave scheme	126	66	63	39	31	53
Compassionate home leave	—	—	8	4	2	—
Inter-prison visits	22	30	10	16	11	8
Visits to outside hospital	1	2	8	8	2	5
Pre-release programme (Lifers)	232	—	66	—	—	—
Attendance Court/Police Station (Sect. 16 Prison Act (NI) 1953)	6	—	5	1	—	—
Bail paid	—	—	—	—	—	1
Temporary release (Sect. 18 Prison Rules (NI) 1982)	—	3	—	—	—	—
General Search of Prison	—	—	—	—	1	—
Fines Paid	—	—	—	—	—	2
After a Visit	—	—	—	—	2	5
Items Discovered						
Occasions when items discovered	[1]4	—	[2]1	—	—	—
Refusals						
Number of prisoners searched after refusing to be searched	—	1	—	—	—	—

[1] Items included drugs, perfume, money and correspondence.
[2] Drugs.

THE ARTS

Georgian Theatre, Richmond, Yorks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assistance his Department will be providing to Richmond council and the Yorkshire Arts Association to keep open the Georgian theatre at Richmond, North Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The Georgian theatre at Richmond receives regular funding from Yorkshire Arts and from all three local authorities: North Yorkshire county council, Richmond shire district council and Richmond town council. I understand that the theatre management has plans to improve the level of private funding.

CIVIL SERVICE

Next Steps

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress is being made with the next steps initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The next steps initiative is making good progress. The responsible Ministers have now established the first three agencies, and another 30 (plus three in the Northern Ireland Civil Service) have been announced as candidates. These are listed. Together they cover nearly 200,000 people, or about one third of the Civil Service. I expect at least four more to be set up before the summer recess; these are likely to include the resettlement units, the employment service, the QE II conference centre and, in my own Department, the Civil Service college. The project manager is continuing his review of Departments' activities, against the Government's decision that to the greatest extent practicable the executive functions of Government should be carried out by agencies.

As the House knows, the purpose of next steps is to improve management in the Civil Service. It enables the Minister responsible for each agency to define more clearly the objectives and tasks required for the execution of policies, and the resources within which this must be done. People in agencies will be better able to tailor management structures and practices to the specific needs of their work, will have better defined jobs and objectives, and greater personal responsibility and accountability for achieving them. The aim is better value for money and better service to the public.

As the Government said in their reply to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee in November, they share the Committee's view that decentralised agencies offer scope for delegating more responsibility to managers for operational matters. The actions we have already taken since the announcement of the initiative by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister demonstrate the importance that we attach to ensuring that this should take place to the greatest extent possible, within a framework governing the agency's operations. On 10 November my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury announced, following a recommendation of the TCSC and after consultation with the Public Accounts Committee, that agency chief executives would take on significant accounting officer responsibilities. In a further development, aimed at permitting a more commercial regime in suitable cases, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has today announced that the Government will seek legislation at the earliest opportunity to amend the Government Trading Funds Act 1973 to apply also to agencies through the medium of agency funds.

The action plan to secure improved management training which the project manager has drawn up is now being implemented in Departments, and good progress is being made. This is helped by the £1 million challenge funding scheme which we announced in November and which is now coming into effect.

Executive agencies established
Vehicle Inspectorate
Companies House
Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Executive agency candidates announced
Building Research Establishment

Business Statistics Office
Civil Service College
Civil Service Occupational Health Service
Crown Suppliers Fuel Branch
Defence Non-Nuclear Research Establishments
Department of Registers of Scotland
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Directorate
Driver Testing and Training
Employment Service
Historic Buildings and Monuments Directorate, Scottish Office
Historic Royal Palaces
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce
Insolvency Service
Laboratory of the Government Chemist
Land Registry
Meteorological Office
National Physical Laboratory
National Weights and Measures Laboratory
Passport Department
Patent Office
Planning Inspectorate
QEII Conference Centre
Radiocommunications Division, DTI
Resettlement Units
Royal Parks
Social Security Operations
Training Agency
Vehicle Component Approval Division, DTp
Warren Springs Laboratory
Northern Ireland Civil Service:
Employment and Training Services, Agricultural Research Establishments, Social Security Operations

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Slaughterhouses

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the major differences between current United Kingdom and EEC standards for slaughterhouses; and what are the major differences between current United Kingdom and United States Department of Agriculture standards for slaughterhouses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: EC legislation on red meat slaughterhouse standards applies to plants in member states which engage in intra-Community trade. At present, the United Kingdom and other member states set rigorous standards for plants which supply only their national markets. Hygiene requirements and meat inspection procedures in the United States do not differ significantly from our own domestic legislation; however EC and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) rules on construction and layout are more closely specified and detailed. Flexibility in these respects is possible for domestic production where current monitoring of operations and enforcement are in the hands of local enforcement authorities. In fact one significant difference is that we depend largely on environmental health officers in domestic plants but EC and USDA rules require veterinary supervision in export plants.

EC legislation on poultry meat slaughterhouse standards applies to all licensed poultry slaughterhouses in the UK. There are no major differences between that legislation and USDA requirements.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidance he has given to local environmental health officers in their supervision of slaughterhouses; what standards he expects them to ensure in those slaughterhouses; what letters, circulars, or other representations he has made to local authorities about slaughterhouses in the last two years; and what requests he has made to local authorities for monitoring reports on slaughterhouse standards and for returns of human and financial resources applied to slaughterhouse supervision.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Environmental health officers (EHOs) are employed by local authorities which have responsibility for enforcing slaughterhouse hygiene and inspection standards required by:
The Slaughterhouses (Hygiene) Regulations 1977 as amended; The Meat Inspection Regulations 1987; and The Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1987.

Ministry veterinary officers visit all slaughterhouses to monitor standards and to give advice and guidance tailored to the circumstances of individual premises. This advice and guidance is confirmed by letter to the local authority concerned.

The resources employed are a matter for local authorities. Returns are not collected. We have the highest regard for EHOs and their professionalism.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what standards of hygiene, equipment, maintenance, personnel training, waste disposal and the comfort and handling of animals are applied to slaughterhouses; and what additional standards are required by the European Community Commission for meat exported to the European Economic Community.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The standards relating to hygiene, inspection, equipment, maintenance, waste disposal and animal welfare which must be observed in slaughterhouses are laid down in:
The Slaughterhouses Act 1974;
The Slaughterhouses (Hygiene) Regulations 1977 (as amended);
The Meat Inspection Regulations 1987;
The Authorised Officers (Meat Inspection) Regulations 1987;
The Meat (Sterilisation and Staining) Regulations 1982 (as amended);
The Slaughter of Animals (Prevention of Cruelty) Regulations 1958; and
The Slaughter of Pigs (Anaesthesia) Regulations 1958.

Training of slaughterhouse personnel is a matter for the industry and the nationwide scheme run by the Institute of Meat is recognised by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

In addition, meat for intra-Community trade must comply with the conditions of the Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1987. These implement EC directive 64/433 on intra-Community trade in fresh meat and require that meat is produced in premises approved by my Department as meeting the detailed requirements as to structure and layout which those regulations require. Supervision and certification by an official veterinary surgeon is also required. This is not an additional requirement but a different one; domestic slaughterhouses rely largely on environmental health officers whose professional status is of the highest order.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate his Department has made of the number of qualified veterinary surgeons required to operate a system of meat hygiene in abattoirs at a level comparable to standards currently in existence in Norway and Germany.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I do not accept that the presence of veterinary surgeons is essential to guarantee

satisfactory standards of hygiene in abattoirs. Our arrangements for non-exporting plants, operating under the supervision of environmental health officers, are capble of ensuring satisfactory standards.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to increase expenditure on measures that would help to limit the incidence of food poisoning.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have a series of measures to tackle the salmonella problem. Provisions will be made for the resources necessary to implement them. In addition the joint MAFF/Department of Health national food hygiene education campaign will be launched early this year.

Rats

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is investigating the causes of the increase in rats in urban and rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food does not have responsibility for rats in urban areas, but the Department maintains an extensive research programme to ensure continued efficiency of rat control in rural areas. Work is not directed at monitoring rural populations.

Tourism

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much financial assistance has been given by his Department towards tourism for each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Under the agricultural improvement scheme introduced in 1985 grants for tourism and craft facilities were available in the less-favoured areas. The farm diversification grant scheme, introduced in January 1988 extended the list of eligible activities and offered grants of 25 per cent. on capital investments both inside and outside the LFA. Over two thirds of applications under that scheme have been for tourism and recreation projects. Grant approved for craft and tourism and farm diversification projects in England has been:

	£
1986	161,293
1987	186,181
1988	2,587,902

In addition, the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service has continued to offer free general advice to individuals and to marketing groups such as the Farm Holiday Bureau.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department took to prevent distribution of animal feed contaminated with salmonella from those protein processing plants identified as being contaminated by salmonella during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* My official have routinely inspected all protein processing plants to monitor their compliance with the requirements of the Protein Processing Order 1981 and, when salmonella has been found in samples of their product, notices have been served on the plant requiring compliance with the bacteriological standard within a time limit. In all cases resampling has been carried out until a salmonella-free product has been produced. A new statutory provision to stop the supply of products from processing plants where salmonella is found, is being made today.

Mr. Lord: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the action he is taking on salmonella in eggs.

Mr. Ryder *[pursuant to the reply, 18 January 1989, c. 214]:* An order has now been made giving powers to Ministry inspectors to prevent movement of processed animal protein out of premises where salmonella contamination has been detected by testing samples of the product. The order is an amendment to the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1981.

Hormones

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of illegal use of steroid growth promoting hormones to fatten cattle have been reported to him in each of his Department's regions in 1987 and 1988; and in how many cases fines were levied.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Four cases of suspected illegal use of hormone growth promoters, all in Wales, were investigated by officers of the Ministry's legal department in 1988. In one case it was established that treatment took place before the hormone ban was introduced. In the other three cases the evidence was not conclusive enough to warrant prosecutions.

Pesticides

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the Government's future proposals with regard to the implementation of joint research programmes involving the agrochemical industry into the factors influencing contamination of land and water supplies by pesticides.

Mr. Ryder: Following the Autumn Statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer my Department announced extra funding of £2 million in 1990-91 rising to £5 million in 1991-92 for strategic and public good research in a number of areas within its responsibilities including protection of the environment. We are currently preparing programmes internally and will be taking into account the opportunity to involve industry in joint programmes where this is appropriate.

British Food and Farming Year

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on what Her Majesty's Government are doing to support the 1989 British Food and Farming Year; and how this fits in with the European Community common agricultural policy.

Mr. Ryder: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has assisted in the planning of British Food and Farming Year from the outset. It is taking part in many of

the year's special events including the Hyde Park festival in May where there will be a major exhibition relating to the Ministry's work over the last 100 years.

The year will show how much a modern and market-oriented food and farming industry has to offer, which is very much in keeping with recent developments in the common agricultural policy.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the monthly figures for measured total beta radioactivity from the discharge from Sellafield sea pipeline and Hunterston A and B as derived from the operators' returns to his directorate of fisheries research; and the figures for the authorised discharge limits in each case, for each year since 1983.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Authorised discharge limits for both Sellafield and Hunterston for the period 1983-87 are published in the Ministry's annual reports "Radioactivity in Surface and Coastal Waters of the British Isles", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Monthly records of radioactivity discharged from these sites are obtained by Departments in confidence. Annual data of discharges and of their radiological consequences are published.

DEFENCE

ROF Bishopton

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants are employed at ROF Bishopton; and what discussions have taken place with them and their trade unions as to their future employment.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are 80 civil servants based at ROF Bishopton (including part-timers and Ministry of Defence police), and informal discussions have been taking place with them and their trade unions about their future employment.

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what child care provision his Department provides for pre-school age children of civilian Ministry of Defence employees; what child care provision, for school holiday or after-school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are currently examining the feasibility of providing child care facilities for the children of MOD civilian staff in central London, Bath, and other locations throughout the United Kingdom. This examination will include the basis of the funding of such schemes. The schemes being examined include creches and school holiday play schemes. In conjunction with other Government Departments, we are supporting a school holiday play scheme in the Westminster area.

Lesser Horseshoe Bats

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost incurred by the Royal Air Force in converting an air raid shelter at its station at Caerwent, Gwent, into a home for lesser horseshoe bats; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: There was no cost incurred by the Royal Air Force as a result of this project as it was carried out by apprentices from the Army apprentices college, Beachley, to practise their trade skills during their deployment to the station on exercise. This work was wholly consistent with the established conservation policy of the Ministry of Defence.

Vetting Policy

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his policy towards the vetting of prospective employees of defence contractors;

(2) what is his policy towards the vetting of labourers on Ministry of Defence construction sites.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is a condition of contract that, before anyone is employed on an MOD contract who may gain access to classified information, the prior agreement of MOD is sought.

Economic League

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the Economic League providing speakers for training courses for military personnel.

Mr. Neubert: No directives have been issued concerning the involvement of members of the Economic League in service training courses. It is my policy to give course directors maximum freedom to select speakers on the basis of the value they are likely to contribute to the course, subject only to the usual security considerations.

Patchett-Sterling Mark 5

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Sterling model L24A1, also known as the Sterling mark 5, has been issued to or used by the Army serving in Northern Ireland, since 1971.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the L34A1 (the commercial version of which is known as the Patchett-Sterling mark 5). So far as can be ascertained from the available records, this weapon has not been issued to or used by the Army in Northern Ireland.

Captain Fred Holroyd

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *543*, if the Army Board considered references to emotional stability or only reference to a mental problem.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my hon. Friend on 20 July 1988 at columns *709-10* or to my own answer of 10 January 1989 at column *543*.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *543*, who was the assistant adjutant-general who interviewed Captain Holroyd; and where the interview occurred.

Mr. Neubert: It is not the policy to name individual officers. The records do not show where the interview occurred.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *543*, in what way Captain Fred Holroyd (retired) was informed of the findings of the special confidential report; and by whom.

Mr. Neubert: According to our records, Captain Holroyd was shown a photocopy of the special confidential report on his arrival at the depot regiment, Royal Corps of Transport. It is not our policy to name individual officers.

AIDS

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what safeguards his Department takes to ensure that no one shown by tests to be HIV-positive or to have AIDS is allowed to work in the kitchens or galleys of defence establishments of Her Majesty's ships.

Mr. Neubert: No individual in the armed forces, known to be HIV-positive or to have AIDS, is currently employed in the kitchens of defence establishments or the galleys of Her Majesty's ships. There is, however, no evidence that the human immunodeficiency virus can be transmitted through the handling of food.

Skyguard Radar

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the purchase of additional Skyguard radar systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 25 January 1989]*: There are at present no firm plans to purchase additional Skyguard radar systems. In addition, I would refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces on 25 January at column *652*. The results of these trials are still under consideration.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

KAGISO Trust

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about the raid by security police on 19 January on the offices of the KAGISO Trust, a partner in the special programme of the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: We are opposed to the harassment of non-governmental organisations engaged in peaceful opposition to apartheid. The South African Government are well aware of our concern to see the continued development of the EC positive measures programme.

Disclosure of Foreign Funding Bill (South Africa)

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to seek to dissuade the South African Government from further proceeding with the Disclosure of Foreign Funding Bill.

Mrs. Chalker: We have told the South African Government that we hope that they will drop their plans for foreign funding legislation. We continue to make clear to them the unacceptable nature of any legislation which affects the provision of aid funds to the black community. We are closely watching developments on the "Disclosure of Foreign Funding" Bill and remain in touch with groups who are likely to be affected if the Bill becomes law.

Western European Union

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes Her Majesty's Government are seeking to each article of the modified Brussels treaty on Western European Union; and why.

Mr. Waldegrave: No decision will be taken on possible changes to the modified Brussels treaty until the review of the treaty agreed by the WEU ministerial council on 14 November has been completed.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards appointing members of the European Parliament as representatives to the Western European Union assembly.

Mr. Waldegrave: We believe that the membership of the WEU assembly should be drawn from national parliaments as defence questions do not fall within the competence of the European Community. Any change in the method of appointment would require an amendment to the modified Brussels treaty.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to consult the United Kingdom delegation to the Western European Union assembly on the changes he intends to propose to the modified Brussels treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Western European Union ministerial organs intend to follow up the session organised by the French Institute des Hautes Etudes de Defense Nationale in November 1988 in order to make European security requirements better known to public opinion.

Mr. Waldegrave: The European session organised by the Institut des Hautes Etudes de Defense Nationale will be followed by similar events organised by other member states including by the United Kingdom in 1990. The WEU secretariat will provide support for these events.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposal by M. Rocard, Prime Minister of France, to set up a European higher defence studies institute in the framework of Western European Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have noted the proposal to establish a new WEU institute in Paris. We believe that the WEU secretariat in London and the WEU agency in Paris should be located together in Brussels and that, in this context, a small agency working inside the secretariat general could provide valuable research support.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how the Western European Union council intends to pursue the political impetus it declared it wished to give to arguments co-operation; what relevant initiatives Her Majesty's Government have taken in the council and with what result.

Mr. Waldegrave: The WEU council has kept the question of armaments co-operation under review with a view to intensifying such co-operation and maintaining in Europe a technologically advanced industrial base. The WEU also wishes to encourage the activities of organisations such as the IEPG which has already given a new political impetus to arms co-operation.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Western European Union council's assesment of the decision announced by the Soviet Union to make major unilateral reductions in its conventional forces in Europe and start destroying its chemical weapons in advance of the end of the Geneva disarmament conference.

Mr. Waldegrave: The recent decisions and announcements of the Soviet Union have been discussed within the WEU and are the subject of continuing analysis. But no formal collective assessment has yet been made.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government intend to intervene actively in the Western European Union council to ensure that the latter defines and makes public, in accordance with the assembly's recommendations, a joint position by Western European Union countries on specific aspects of arms limitation, giving priority to conventional and chemical disarmament; and when he expects that the Western European Union member countries will make public a collective position on this matter.

Mr. Waldegrave: The WEU council is a forum for exchanging views on security and arms control issues. The responsibility for defining and publicising joint positions on specific aspects of arms limitation rests with NATO.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the Western European Union assembly has not yet been informed in any detail either of the existence or of the essential points of the collective position adopted by the Western European Union council on the Start negotiations.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not the function of the WEU council to adopt a collective position on the Start negotiations. These negotiations are bilateral between the United States and the Soviet Union. It would not be appropriate for European members of the Alliance to adopt positions in a forum where the United States is not present.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government are considering following up the Western European Union assembly recommendation inviting Governments of member countries to keep the press and public opinion better informed about disarmament issues, including the relationship between arms reductions and defence spending.

Mr. Waldegrave: We agree that the Governments of WEU member states have a responsibility to keep their press and public opinion well informed about disarmament issues. We already attach importance to such information work and will continue to do so.

Mr. Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Govemment's policy towards the Western European Union assembly's recommendations regarding the definition of conditions for setting up a European satellite agency in the Western European Union with the initial task of verifying a future conventional arms control agreement; and if he plans to take appropriate steps in the Western European Union council.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have noted with interest the assembly's recommendations. We agree that satellite verification may be part of a verification regime for a future conventional arms control agreement. The first step will be to undertake further work to ascertain how effective satellite verification would be. The work of the WEU agency could play a useful role in this.

Berenfeld Family

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian Government about the plight of the Berenfeld family of Moscow, who first applied for an exit visa in 1977.

Mr. Waldegrave: As far as I can establish, the Berenfeld family has not previously come to our attention. But if my hon. Friend could provide details of this case I would be happy to consider making representations to the Soviet authorities about the Berenfelds.

Pakistan and Afghanistan (Mine-clearing)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the outcome of the report to the United Nations co-ordinator for Afghan aid by a team of British Army explosive experts on an international mine clearing operation in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Mr. Waldegrave: The team returned from their assessment visit to Pakistan on 17 October. Their report on the land mine problem in Afghanistan was forwarded to the United Nations co-ordinator who has indicated that he will make specific proposals for British help in training refugees in mine awareness and clearance.

Mozambique

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to increase the scale of military assistance to Mozambique.

Mrs. Chalker: No decision has been taken to alter the level of British military assistance to Mozambique. The United Kingdom currently trains Mozambican troops at Nyanga in Zimbabwe at the rate of three companies (some 360 men) per year; these troops are then dedicated to the protection of the Limpopo railway line. We have also donated a quantity of non-lethal defence equipment (Land-Rovers, communications equipment, boots, and so on) to assist in this task. A small number of Mozambican officer cadets undergo training in the United Kingdom.

WALES

Midwives

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those health authorities in Wales which anticipate a shortage of midwives over the next five years; what is the estimated shortage; and what are the measures he is proposing to overcome it.

Mr. Grist: Midwifery requirements were examined in the first round of the manpower resource planning exercise undertaken by the Health Service in Wales last year. The purpose of the exercise, initiated by the manpower steering group established by the Department in 1986, is to identify future manpower requirements and enable action to be taken to meet these requirements at the all-Wales level.

Aggregation of district health authorities' returns shows that, at the all-Wales level, shortfall in the number of qualified midwives over planned staffing levels varies from between five and 27 (whole-time equivalents) over the period to 1992. Compared to a planned staffing level in excess of 1,200, these projected shortfalls are not considered sizeable. It would not be appropriate to list individual district figures, given the tentative nature of some of the first round plans.

Based on the all-Wales figures, a report on the outcome of the first planning round has recommended that a direct entry midwifery training scheme should be considered which is currently being addressed by the Welsh National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, and that DHA cross-boundary training should be explored on an all-Wales basis. It is hoped that a diploma in midwifery based on Mid and South Glamorgan health authorities will start this year at the Welsh college of medicine, and that this will eventually lead to a degree in midwifery.

Beaches (Water Quality)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those beaches in Wales which failed to meet the European Community directive on bathing water quality standards in the last year for which data are available; when it is planned for each of these beaches to meet these standards; and what is the estimated cost in each case.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The results of the 1987 bathing water survey, the latest for which data are presently available, are held in the Library of the House. The information in respect of 1988 is at present being collated and we expect it to be available shortly.

Welsh Office officials are currently discussing with the Welsh water authority their plans for improving those waters which do not yet meet the required standards.

Bilingual Policies

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision is made in the rate support grant settlement to allow local authorities to develop bilingual policies.

Mr. Grist: Central Government support towards bilingual education comes from two main sources. Specific grants support expenditure on certain local authority schemes approved by the Secretary of State. Our intention for the rate support grant settlement for 1989-90 is that such grants should amount to £1·5 million. Further spending by local authorities on bilingual education is eligible for rate support grant, but information on expenditure supported in this way is not held centrally.

Handicapped Children (Educational Needs)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards ensuring that there is adequate provision within the Welsh and bilingual schools system in English-speaking parts of Wales to provide for the special educational needs of Welsh-speaking handicapped children.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is for local education authorities to consider the pattern of education in their areas and to determine provision for all children with special educational needs.

YTS

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people there were in Wales who had left school either at Easter 1988 or summer 1988 who had not obtained work, further education or a place on a YTS scheme by 31 December 1988; and if he will make a statement on the future of the Christmas guarantee.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on the destination of all school leavers is not available. However, the Government guarantee the offer of a YTS place to all 16 and 17-year-olds not in full-time education or employment whenever they apply; this replaces the "Christmas guarantee".

The new guarantee is effectively being met in Wales and at 12 December 1988 a total of 581 young people were on bridging allowance awaiting a suitable YTS place and 4,221 places remained available at 31 December.

Non-agricultural Land

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of acres of land in Wales which are not in actual use for agriculture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: 916,000 acres.

Pigmeat

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to formulate long-term plans to increase pigmeat production in Wales, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Pigmeat production will benefit from better marketing, and we are doing our best to encourage this.

Welsh Language Board

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any organisations have expressed any reluctance to co-operate with the Welsh Language Board because of the membership of the board of a former council member of the Economic League.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Sex Abuse (Broxtowe)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what involvement his Department has had in the Broxtowe child sex abuse case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The investigation of alleged child sexual abuse is an operational matter for the chief officer of the police force concerned.

Tote

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his plans for the privatisation of the Tote.

Mr. John Patten: No decision on the future of the Tote will be taken until Lloyds merchant bank has completed its current feasibility study on privatising it. We hope that the study will be concluded well before Easter, but the Government will then need to give full consideration to the outcome before any announcement could be made.

DSS (Fraud Investigators)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will instruct police forces not to co-operate in the passing of information to the Department of Social Security fraud investigators.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The police may need to liaise with social security fraud investigators from time to time when, for instance, evidence of social security fraud comes to light in the course of police inquiries into other matters, or when the social security fraud investigators refer a case to the police because of its gravity.

Civil Emergency Planning

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the most recent civil emergency planning questionnaire was returned to NATO's senior civil emergency planning committee; and if he will summarise the responses in the categories *(a)* governmental readiness, *(b)* food and agriculture, *(c)* industry, *(d)* manpower, *(e)* civil communications, *(f)* energy, *(g)* civil air transport, *(h)* inland surface transport, *(i)* ocean shipping and *(j)* civil defence.

Mr. John Patten: The civil emergency planning questionnaire is completed by NATO members every four years with an interim review two years afterwards. The United Kingdom returned its most recent questionnaire on 1 June 1988. The document is principally concerned with civil support for the armed forces and is classified.

Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many complaints from prisoners were *(a)* received and *(b)* investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in each year from 1980 to 1987, inclusive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The numbers of complaints from prisoners in respect of which the Parliamentary Commissioner sought a report from the Home Office between 1980 and 1987 were as follows:

	Numbers
1980	10
1981	10
1982	7
1983	3
1984	9
1985	9
1986	3
1987	4

Gipsies

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions the Public Order Act 1986 has been invoked against gipsies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available.

Police Forces (Sex Discrimination)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish an inquiry into the extent of sex discrimination in employment in police forces, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Chief officers of police are aware that the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 applies to the police and that, subject to the specific exceptions provided by section 17(2), any sex discrimination in the treatment of police officers is unlawful.

Breath Tests

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to possible changes to police powers in respect of roadside breath tests.

Mr. Hurd: The current powers to stop vehicles and to require roadside breath tests are contained in the Road Traffic Act 1972. Under section 159 a police officer may stop any vehicle at any time; and under section 7 a breath test may be required:

(a) where there is reasonable cause to suspect that the driver has alcohol in his body; or

(b) where there is reasonable cause to suspect that the driver has committed a moving traffic offence; or

(c) where there is reasonable cause to believe that the driver has been involved in an accident.

These powers rely on the use in combination of two widely separated sections of the 1972 Act. The courts have held that it is lawful for these powers to be used together. However, there may be benefit in clarifying the position by bringing together the two powers in one section. This would secure express endorsement by Parliament of the use of the powers and would make them more readily understandable to the motoring public.

The police service had, until recently, maintained that current powers were sufficient for the effective enforcement of drinking and driving legislation. This view was accepted by successive Governments. However, the associations of chief police officers of England and Wales and of Scotland reviewed their policy during 1988 and have proposed that the legislation should be changed to allow police officers to require a breath test at any time without requiring any grounds for suspicion.

The associations argue that current powers place unnecessary constraints on breath testing; and that there

should be no necessity for a police officer to establish grounds for suspicion before requiring a breath test. They suggest that an unrestricted power would allow chief constables to deploy their resources more effectively in deterring and detecting offenders by targeting their enforcement effort on particular places, at times of day or on groups of drivers. It is implicit in this argument that the powers to test would be exercised in a targeted way, and that the use of any wider discretion than at present would not involve random testing.

The associations also argue that extended breath testing powers would be an appropriate response to changes in public opinion towards drinking and driving. They suggest that the public would now consider extended powers acceptable and desirable in the interests of deterring and detecting offenders and protecting themselves as potential victims of drunken drivers.

The Government consider that a decision on possible changes to police powers should not be taken without an opportunity for full public consultation. The three options under consideration, and the main relevant arguments can be summarised as follows:

(i) *To make no change to existing police powers*

Existing powers provide the restriction that although the police can stop the motorist without cause they cannot test unless there is reasonable cause to suspect that the person has consumed alcohol or has been involved in an accident or committed a moving traffic offence. This is consistent with the principle in other areas of police intervention, such as the powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to stop and search or arrest, that the powers rest on reasonable suspicion that an offence may have been committed.

(ii) *To consolidate existing powers*

This would be achieved by bringing together in one section the two separate powers contained in section 7 and 159 of the 1972 Act to clarify current powers and to seek express parliamentary endorsement of their use in combination. It would allow better public understanding of the powers which enable the police to stop and test on the basis of clearly stated legislative provisions, while preserving the current safeguards. It would not, however, make any substantive change to current powers.

(iii) *To introduce unrestricted powers to require a breath test*

This would allow chief constables the complete discretion which they seek and would allow a police officer to stop and to require a breath test from any motorist at any time. This would in theory permit random testing, although it is likely that the powers would be exercised in a targeted way. It would provide an enhanced deterrent in the knowledge that any driver could be stopped and tested at any time. Much would depend on the sensible exercise of discretion by individual officers.

I welcome views on these three options. Anyone who wishes to comment may do so in writing to F5 division in my Department at 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT, by 30 April 1989.

Data Protection

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider seeking to amend the terms of the Data Protection Act 1987 to (i) set guidelines as to the transfer of information by registered data users to unregistered users and (ii) to enable the Data Protection Registrar to prosecute Government Departments.

Mr. Renton: No.

Mr. Albert Baker

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are being made for resettlement plans for Mr. Albert Baker, Her Majesty's prison, Long Lartin, 241254 on his release.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The terms on which a life sentence prisoner is to be released can only be settled close to the time of release. The first formal review by the local review committee and the parole board to consider whether to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for release is normally three years in advance of the expiry of the period which the prisoner can expect to serve to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence. In Mr. Baker's case this is still some time ahead and it would therefore be premature to consider the suitability of any release plan.

BBC (Vetting)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the use of vetting of potential employees of the British Broadcasting Corporation in (i) non-sensitive posts and (ii) sensitive posts;

(2) if he will make a statement on the use of vetting of current employees of the British Broadcasting Corporation in (i) non-sensitive posts and (ii) sensitive posts.

Mr. Renton: The Government believe (as have successive Governments over a long period) that it is in the national interest for the BBC to apply certain necessary security procedures. A review of these procedures was undertaken by the director-general of the BBC in 1985. This led to a clarification of the criteria for their application and ensured that the number of posts affected by them is kept to the necessary minimum. The BBC alone decides whom to appoint to any post within the corporation, and no external agency has a right of veto on the appointment or promotion of any member of staff.

Special Branch

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will define the role and purpose of special branch.

Mr. Hurd: The functions of special branches were set out in the published guidelines issued by the Home Office on 19 December 1984.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards information held by special branch being passed on to (i) commercial firms and (ii) employers' organisations.

Mr. Hurd: The published guidelines on the work of a special branch which were issued on 19 December 1984 make it clear that information held by a special branch should not be passed to commercial firms or to employers' organisations.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of accountability systems operating for special branch.

Mr. Hurd: The published guidelines on the work of a special branch which were issued on 19 December 1984

state that all members of a special branch are responsible, as is any other member of the force, to the chief officer of the force through the head of the branch and any intervening supervisory ranks in the force structure. Like other aspects of the management of police forces, these arrangements are subject to inspection under the inspection arrangements appropriate to the force in question. Any deficiencies are drawn to the attention of the chief officer of the force.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy towards links between special branch, the Economic League and the uniformed police;

(2) what is his policy towards links between special branch and (i) private security firms and (ii) private investigating firms.

Mr. Hurd: Relationships between special branches and outside organisations are governed by the principles set out in the Home Office guidelines issued on 19 December 1984.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much from the total police budget was allocated to special branch for each year from 1979 to current date.

Mr. Hurd: The allocation of resources to special branches is a matter for the chief constable of each force concerned and this information is not held centrally.

Police National Computer

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy towards the use of the police national computer by private security firms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no plans to give the private security industry access to the police national computer.

Immigrant Residents (Financial Affairs)

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the following information on the financial affairs of immigrant residents in the United Kingdom is kept on the Home Office computers *(a)* income, *(b)* social security payments and welfare benefits and *(c)* mortgage commitments; whether such information is currently being collected; if any such information is available to immigration officials at ports of entry to the United Kingdom; whether any such information will be made available in the future via the Government data network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No such information is held or is planned to be held on Home Office computers. The use of all personal information held on computers in the Home Office is controlled in accordance with the provision of the Data Protection Act 1984. Within the immigration and nationality department there are some 30 registrations of computer systems under the Act. It is open to an individual to make an application for disclosure of information held under section 21 of the Act. Details of these registrations are held by the office of the Data Protection Registrar.

Prevention of Terrorism (Advisers)

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the fees paid to advisers appointed under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Hurd: The current daily fee for advisers appointed under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 to consider representations against exclusion is £94.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is *(a)* the number of association football matches played at Wembley stadium during the 1987-88 season, *(b)* the total attendance during the season, *(c)* the total arrests in association with these matches, *(d)* the average attendance per match, *(e)* the average number of arrests per match and *(f)* the arrests as a proportion of the attendance.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 26 January 1989]*: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the information is as follows:

	Wembley stadium 1987-88
Number of association matches played	14
Total attendance	859,935
Total arrests	551
Average attendance per match	61,424
Average number of arrests per match	39
Arrests as a proportion of attendance	1:1,561
Arrests as a percentage of attendance	0·06

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have dropped out of employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: By the end of November 1988, the latest date for which information is available, 23,100 people had left the programme earlier than planned. Many of these people were transferees from previous programmes and so had received the benefit of a longer period of training and practical experience.

Mr. Robert Pearce

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when Mr. Robert Pearce, employed at Canvey Island unemployment benefit office, whose appeal for reinstatement was successfully heard on 6 September 1988, will be reinstated.

Mr. Lee: The Department has decided not to accept the recommendation of the Civil Service appeal board to reinstate Mr. Pearce and has asked the board, in accordance with the provisions of the pay and conditions of service code for civil servants, to determine an appropriate compensation payment.

Training Managers

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the training managers who have been investigated or who are under investigation by his Department.

Mr. Nicholls: No training managers in employment training are under investigation by the Training Agency. All training managers are subject to financial and operational monitoring by Training Agency officials.

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the National Council for Vocational Qualifications will define the levels of competence and training above level 4; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications has reported good progress on involving the professions in the development of levels I to IV of the national vocational qualification framework. The Government and the council therefore agree that the time is now right for the council's remit to be extended to include standards and qualifications above level IV. We have therefore asked the council to proceed with work above level IV in those sectors where all the significant professional bodies are willing to be involved on a voluntary basis. However, whilst the council will therefore now take this work forward with the relevant organisations, we have made clear that the council's first priority must continue to be the establishment of the framework up to level IV.

Tourism

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much funding under the Development of Tourism Act 1969, section 4, has been approved for each regional tourist board for each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The total assistance offered by the English tourist board under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969, for each year since 1983 in the area covered by each regional tourist board is as follows:

Section 4 Approvals
Financial Year (£000s)

RTB	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988 to January 1989*
Cumbria	692	617	304	699	507	469	939
East Anglia	141	551	790	815	785	502	796
East Midlands	458	898	432	2,241	784	759	982
Heart of England	268	609	648	457	1,224	1,049	1,138
London	—	841	466	148	166	1,030	120
Northumbria	615	252	445	621	644	1,480	642
North West	642	1,542	936	780	1,409	2,062	675
South East	79	680	1,309	1,169	1,227	1,221	659
Southern	231	2,248	756	781	1,515	922	933
Thames and Chilterns	30	290	455	509	430	880	262
West Country	951	2,760	1,934	2,464	3,519	3,125	2,217
Yorkshire & Humberside	1,501	1,045	1,569	865	1,744	1,346	1,740
Totals	5,608	12,333	10,044	11,549	13,954	14,845	11,103

Working Conditions

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* any general instructions issued by the Health and Safety Commission relating to improved conditions of health and safety, applying to both sexes, since the coming into force of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Mr. Nicholls: The list of regulations approved by Secretaries of State on the recommendation of the Health and Safety Commission and approved codes of practice issued by the Health and Safety Commission after 12 November 1975; applying to both sexes, is as follows:

Statutory Instruments

The Operations at Unfenced Machinery (Amendment) Regulations 1976.
Health and Safety Inquiries (Procedure) (Amendment) Regulations 1976.
The Health and Safety (Agriculture) (Miscellaneous Repeals) and Modifications) Regulations 1976.
The Fire Certificate (Special Premises) Regulations 1976.
The Fire Precautions Act 1971 (Modifications) Regulations 1976.
The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977.
The Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1977.
The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (Application outside Great Britain) Order 1977.
The Health and Safety (Genetic Manipulation) Regulations 1978.
The Factories (Standards of Lighting) (Revocation) Regulations 1978.
The Health and Safety (Leasing Arrangements) Regulations 1980.
The Petroleum (Consolidation) Act 1928 (Conveyance by Road Regulations Exemptions) Regulations 1980.
The Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980.
The Safety Signs Regulations 1980.
Diving Operations at Work Regulations 1981.
The Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981.
The Health and Safety (Dangerous Pathogens) Regulations 1981.
The Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981.
The Petroleum-Spirit (Plastic Containers) Regulations 1982.
The Hydrogen Cyanide (Fumigation of Buildings) (Amendment) Regulations 1982.
The Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982.
The Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982.
Health and Safety (Emissions into the Atmosphere) Regulations 1983.
The Classification and Labelling of Explosives Regulations 1983.
The Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983.

The Agriculture (Tractor Cabs) (Amendments) Regulation 1984.
The Poisonous Substances in Agriculture Regulations 1984.
The Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984.
The Freight Containers (Safety Convention) Regulations 1984.
The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984.
The Asbestos (Prohibitions) Regulations 1985.
The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985.
The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.
The Notification of New Substances (Amendment) Regulations 1986.
The Classification, Packing and Labelling of Dangerous Substances (Amendment) Regulations 1986.
The Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc.) Regulations 1986.
The Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987.
The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987.
The Asbestos (Prohibitions) (Amendment) Regulations 1988.
The Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances (Amendment) Regulations 1988.
The Health and Safety (Training for Employment) Regulations 1988.
The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards (Amendment) Regulations 1988.
The Loading and Unloading of Fishing Vessels Regulations 1988.
The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 (Coming into force 1 October 1989).
The Quarries (Explosives) Regulations 1988 (Coming into force 1 January 1990).
The Docks Regulations 1988.

Approved Codes of Practice

Safety representatives and safety committees.
Time off for the training of Safety Representatives.
Control of lead at work.
Work with asbestos insulation and asbestos coating 1981.
Health and Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981.
Classification of dangerous substances for conveyance in road tankers and tank containers.
Petroleum-Spirit (Plastic Containers) Regulations 1982. Requirements for testing and marking or labelling.
Principles of good laboratory practice. Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982.
Methods for the determination of ecotoxicity. Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982.
Methods for the determination of physico—chemical properties. Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982.
Methods for the determination of toxicity. Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982.
British Standards BS 697: 1977 "Specification for Rubber Gloves for Electrical purposes".
British Standards BS 1870 Part 1: 1979 "Specification for Safety Footwear other than all-rubber and all-plastic moulded types".
British Standard BS 5426: 1976 "Specification for Workwear".
British Standard BS 5169: 1975 "Specification for Fusion welded steel air receivers".
Operational provisions of the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981.
British Standards BS 1870 Part 2: 1976 Specification for lined Rubber Safety Boots.
British Standards BS 1870 part 3: 1981 Specification for Polyvinyl Chloride Moulded Safety Footwear.
Packaging of dangerous substances for conveyance by road. Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances regulations 1984.
Classification and labelling of substances dangerous for supply and/or conveyance by road. Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982. Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances regulations 1984.
Road Tanker Testing. Examination, testing and certification of the carrying tankers and of tank containers used for the conveyance of dangerous substances by road.
Zoos—Safety, Health and Welfare standards for Employers and Persons at Work.
The protection of persons against ionising radiation arising from any work activity.
Operational Provisions of the Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc.) Regulations 1986.
Dangerous substances in harbour areas Regulations 1987.
Standards of training in safe gas installation.
Classification and Labelling of dangerous substances for conveyance by road in tankers, tank containers and packages. Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981. Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984.
The control of asbestos at work. The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987. Work with asbestos insulation, asbestos coating and asbestos insulating board.
Part 3: Exposure to radon. The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985.
Preventing accidents to children in agriculture.
Rider Operated lift trucks—operator training.
Safety in Docks—Docks Regulations 1988 and Guidance.
Control of Carcinogenic Substances—Control of Substances Hazardous to Health.
Control of Vinyl Chloride at Work—Control of Substances Hazardous to Health.
Control of Substances Hazardous to Health in Fumigation Operations—Control of Substances Hazardous to Health.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the changes in statutes since the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 which have the effect of shortening working hours or improving working conditions for both sexes.

Mr. Nicholls: In the legislation for which my Department is responsible there have not been any changes in statutes which are known to have had the direct effect of shortening working hours. All new regulations made under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 are intended to improve working conditions.

Employment Training (Child Care Allowance)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why the ET child care allowance is not available to married women.

Mr. Nicholls: Child care payments can be made available for married women on employment training provided they are lone parents. Help with child care costs is available to all lone parents regardless of their sex or marital status.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women have taken up the child care allowance on ET.

Mr. Nicholls: Comprehensive information is not yet available. Information on the number of trainees from whom child care payments are made will be regularly collected from March and the first results will be available at the end of April 1989. Early indications suggest that over 2,000 lone parents have joined employment training and many of these people will have received help with child care costs.

Working Hours

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the restrictions on the working hours of 16 and 17-year-olds in *(a)* France and *(b)* Greece.

Mr. Nicholls: According to the International Labour Office "Conditions of Work Digest", volume 5, 2/1986, these are as follows.

In France persons under the age of 18 can work a maximum eight-hour day and 39-hour week and their hours must not exceed the normal daily and weekly hours of adult workers in the establishment. Five extra hours a week can however be allowed in certain circumstances. Young persons must also be allowed time for requirements of vocational courses and they cannot work more than four and a half hours without a break. They must have 12 consecutive hours nightly rest and they cannot be employed on statutory public holidays except on work that is continuous. Sixteen and 17-year-olds are also subject to the restrictions on hours of work applying to all workers.

In Greece nightwork is prohibited for young workers up to the age of 17 in industrial enterprises, although there are a few exceptions. There are also restrictions on hours of work applying to all workers.

Employment Protection Act

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider seeking to amend the terms of the Employment Protection Act 1975 to protect individuals who are refused employment because of information given about their political views before being formally appointed.

Mr. Nicholls: No.

Job Clubs

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest figures held by his Department *(a)* on the number of people finding jobs as a result of attending jobcentre job clubs, *(b)* on the numbers of people finding jobs as a result of attending an agency job club, *(c)* on the average number of people going through each jobcentre job club and *(d)* on the average number of people going through each agency job club.

Mr. Lee: The latest figures held by the employment service are as follows:

(a) during 1987-88, a total of 35,371 people found jobs as a result of attending a jobcentre job club. The 1988-89 figure (up to December 1988) is 29,102;

(b) during 1987-88, a total of 21,709 people found jobs as a result of attending an agency job club. The 1988-89 figure (up to December 1988) is 24,262;

(c) during 1987-88 the average number of people going through a jobcentre job club each year was 114. The latest average figure for 1988-89 is 96, and

(d) during 1987-88 the average number of people going through an agency job club each year was 67. The latest average figure for 1988-89 is 69.

Training Programmes

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the targets against which he proposes to measure quality in the monitoring of training programmes in the "Training for Employment" White Paper.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* Quality monitoring on employment training is based on three complementary approaches. First, training agents and training managers are required to achieve approved training organisation status; secondly, their performance will be measured against a range of specific indicators; and thirdly, inspections will be carried out by the training standards advisory service. The quantifiable performance indicators are currently being developed by the Training Agency and will be published once they have been agreed.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

NATO

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the posts, ranks and responsibilities of United Kingdom representatives designated to form part of the staff of the NATO central supply agency in transition to war and in war.

Mr. Newton: This information is classified.

Hearing Aid Council

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which bodies he consults when making appointments to the Hearing Aid Council.

Mr. Forth: My Department consults the Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists and the Hearing Aid Industry Association about the appointment of members representing dispensers. The following organisations are consulted about the appointment of members representing the interests of the hard of hearing or who have specialised technical knowledge of deafness or audiological technical knowledge:

The British Association of the Hard of Hearing
British Association of Teachers of the Deaf
The National Deaf Children's Society
The Royal National Institute for the Deaf
Age Concern
Help the Aged
British Association of Audiological Physicians
British Association of Otolaryngologists
Institute of Laryngology and Otology
British Association of Audiological Scientists
British Society of Audiology
Department of Health

In addition, it is open to any member of the public with genuine involvement in the dispensing of hearing aids or with the hearing impaired or who has specialised technical knowledge of deafness to make nominations. All nominations are considered on their merits.

Mail Order Catalogues

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation requiring mail order companies to take all reasonable steps to ensure that persons applying for catalogues are over 18 years of age.

Mr. Forth: No.

Trade Marks Office

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to hear from the trade marks office committee of the EEC regarding the outcome of London's bids to host the European Community trade marks office.

Mr. Forth: The European Commission produced a short list of four possible locations (including London) for

the Community trade marks office in 1987. The final choice will be made in the regulation setting up the Community trade marks system which rests with the Council of Ministers. The decision requires unanimity and it is not possible to say when it is likely to be reached.

Business Shops Pilot Scheme

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the criteria used in deciding which towns and cities participate in the Government's business shops pilot scheme.

Mr. Maude: In choosing locations, we decided on a range particularly to cover urban areas, and to give wide experience of different areas with different new business profiles. We also included locations which would enable pilot studies to be undertaken in a variety of organisations which already provide services to business, in order to build, wherever possible, on existing provision and avoid potential duplication and confusion.

The locations chosen, with the host organisation in parenthesis, are as follows:

1. Glasgow (Scottish Development Agency)
2. Merthyr Tydfil/Aberdare (MADE—Merthyr-Aberdare Development Enterprise)
3. Manchester (Small Firms Centre)
4. Newcastle (joint venture—ENTRUST and local city council)
5. Reading (Small Firms Centre)
6. Doncaster (DonBAC—Doncaster Business Advice Centre and Enterprise Agency)

Funerals

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will take steps to require funeral directors to make their price lists readily available and, in particular, to supply them to those who come into immediate contact with bereaved people so that bereaved families have ready access to comparative information;

(2) what action he is taking about the recommendation of the Office of Fair Trading that there should be made generally available maximum information on what is or might be involved in arranging funerals;

(3) what action he is taking about the recommendation of the Office of Fair Trading that the National Association of Funeral Directors should indicate, within six months from the date of the report, the specific steps it proposes to take in order to achieve greater compliance with its code of practice;

(4) if he will take steps to require all funeral directors to publicise the availability of a simple basic funeral;

(5) what action he is taking about the recommendation of the Office of Fair Trading that the National Association of Funeral Directors should redefine the specifications of the basic simple funeral, and then publicise its availability;

(6) if he will take steps to require all funeral directors to provide accounts which specify individual charges for the main services provided;

(7) what action he is taking about the recommendation of the Office of Fair Trading that the code of practice of the National Association of Funeral Directors should require funeral accounts to specify the individual charges for the main services provided;

(8) what action he is taking about the recommendation of the Office of Fair Trading that funeral directors should provide doctors, hospitals, registrars and others who come into immediate contact with bereaved people with a supply of their price lists.

Mr. Forth: The right hon. Member refers to recommendations made in the recent report by the Office of Fair Trading on funerals. The recommendations are addressed primarily to the industry and the director general will be discussing their implementation with the National Association of Funeral Directors.

I look forward to learning the outcome of these discussions in due course.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what factors the Office of Fair Trading attributes its findings that people over 65 years arranging a funeral were offered a basic funeral less often than others, received less advice and were more likely to receive no price information at all, and that widows and widowers also received less advice and were less likely to be given written estimates.

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading. I will ask him to write to the right hon. Member.

Company Records

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the particular grounds he uses to assess whether to agree to an application from a company to withhold information on any foreign subsidiaries from its public records, according to schedule 5(10) to the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Maude: The criterion against which the Secretary of State considers application for exemption from disclosure is whether the disclosure of the information would be prejudicial to exports or to overseas earnings.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many companies he has granted permission to withhold information from their public records on subsidiaries registered in South Africa or subsidiaries whose business is in South Africa in each year since the passage of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Maude: In order to protect the information for which the provisions for non-disclosure were made, and for reasons of commercial confidentiality, I do not consider it appropriate to provide a breakdown of the published statistics relating to these applications.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many companies have applied to him for permission to withhold information from their public records on any of their foreign subsidiaries on the ground that presentation of this information would be harmful to the business of the company, according to the provision of schedule 5(10) to the Companies Act 1985, and how many companies have received such permission in each of the years since the passage of the Act.

Mr. Maude: Statistics of applications made under schedule 5 to the Companies Act 1985 are published annually in the report laid before Parliament in accordance with section 729 of the Act. Copies are available in the Library.

Cash Limits

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any changes will be made to his Department's cash limit and running costs limit for 1988-89.

Mr. Newton: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the cash limit for class V, vote 3 (administration, regulation of domestic trade and industry, and consumer protection) will be increased by £2,169,000 from £189,436,000 to £191,605,000. The increase will be offset by savings in class V, vote 2 (support for industry) of £2,128,000 and class IX, vote 2 (Department of the Environment: miscellaneous administration and housing grants) of £41,000. The increase in the cash limit for vote 3 has been partly offset by a decrease of £16,000 to reflect the transfer of costs for recruitment under the direct entry grade 7 Competition 1988 to the office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) and by £106,000 which has been made available to class VII, vote 2 (Department of Employment: administration) for a special employment service initiative in Sunderland. Overall, the cash limit for class V, vote 2 will be reduced by £2,128,000 from £568,256,000 to £566,128,000. The running costs limit for the Department has been reduced by £794,000 from £287,968,000 to £287,174,000.

In addition, the cash limit on class V, vote IX has been reduced from £2,417,000 to £1,000. Downward adjustments to the estimates of stamp duty and stamp duty reserve tax payable on the sale of shares in Rolls-Royce plc mean that receipts appropriated in aid will be sufficient to cover expenditure incurred.

These changes will not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Ministerial Advisers (Salaries)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total expenditure on salaries of ministerial advisers in his Department for each completed year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* I have nothing to add to the information I gave in my reply to the hon. Member on 27 January 1989 at column *765-66*.

Electricity Consumers Council

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what remuneration is made to the chair of the Electricity Consumers Council.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 27 January 1989]:* The chairman of the Electricity Consumers Council—the national body—receives a salary of £10,742 per annum. The chairmen of the 12 area electricity consultative councils in England and Wales are paid a salary of £10,024 per annum.

HEALTH

Exhaust Fumes

Mr. Bidwell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has any figures of deaths due to inhaling exhaust fumes, other than suicides.

Mr. Freeman: The table shows the number of deaths registered in England and Wales which had an underlying cause of death assigned to the inhalation of exhaust fumes, for the latest year available.

Deaths due to inhaling exhaust fumes (excluding suicide), England and Wales 1987

Cause	*Numbers* *Male*	*Female*
Accidental poisoning by motor-vehicle exhaust gas ICD E868·2[1]	24	2
Motor-vehicle exhaust gas undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted ICD E982·0[1]	56	7

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th Revision.

Doctors

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors by grade are employed *(a)* in the National Health Service exclusively, *(b)* in the private sector exclusively and *(c)* in both sectors (i) in Nottingham regional health authority, (ii) in Trent regional health authority and (iii) in the country as a whole.

Mr. Mellor: Information is not available about the number of doctors in practice in the private sector. Information about National Health Service medical staff is set out in the table.

Table: NHS Paid Medical Staff by Grade and nature of contract at 30 September 1987: Numbers

Grade	*England* *Wholetime*	*Maximum Part-time*[1]	*Other Part-time*	*Trent Region* *Wholetime*	*Maximum Part-time*[1]	*Other Part-time*	*Nottingham District* *Wholetime*	*Maximum Part-time*[1]	*Other Part-time*
(a)	*(b)*	*(c)*	*(d)*	*(e)*	*(f)*	*(g)*	*(h)*	*(i)*	*(j)*
NHS Hospital Service									
Consultant	6,616	4,663	1,254	653	387	41	90	76	13
Associate Specialist	513	—	278	48	—	11	3	—	3
Senior Registrar[2]	2,333	—	218	211	—	20	—	—	—
Registrar	5,345	—	166	497	—	14	101	—	3
Senior House Officer	9,279	—	127	916	—	14	174	—	1
House Officer	2,770	—	11	269	—	—	45	—	—
Other Grades[3]	13	—	78	2	—	2	—	—	—
Hospital Practitioner	—	—	894	—	—	63	—	—	7
Appointment under Paragraph 94 (Clinical Assistant)	—	—	6,603	—	—	516	—	—	73
Community Health Services									
Senior Clinical Medical Officer[4]	583	—	549	50	—	43	7	—	8
Clinical Medical Officer[4]	623	—	1,088	41	—	84	1	—	3
Other Medical Officer[4]	2	—	2,688	—	—	272	—	—	31

[1] Maximum part-time contracts are available to NHS paid consultant staff only.
[2] Contracts of Senior Registrars are held only by regional health authorities and the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.
[3] Includes senior hospital medical officer.
[4] Figures for part-time staff include part-time sessional staff.

NHS Staff (Discipline)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what current procedures are in force concerning disciplinary action against National Health Service staff who pass information to hon. Members.

Mr. Mellor: This is a matter for the employing health authority.

Nurses' Pay

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the median level of earnings for nurses expressed as a proportion of average earnings in each year from 1983-84 to the most recent available date, laid out in the same form as that given in the answer to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 18 December 1987, *Official Report*, column *833*.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the median level of earnings is not available centrally. Information on the mean level of earnings up to 1987-88 is set out in the table. From this date the grades of staff nurse and ward sister became obsolete.

	All Qualified Nurses[2] £ *pa*	*NHS Employees*[1] *Staff Nurses* £ *pa*	*Ward Sister* £ *pa*	*All Employees Average Gross Earnings*[3] £ *pa*
1983-84	7,368	6,733	8,812	8,306
1984-85	7,920	7,422	9,474	8,916
1985-86	8,555	7,938	10,175	9,631
1986-87	9,440	8,981	11,208	10,371
1987-88	10,625	9,768	12,855	11,388

[1] *Source: DHSS*—Figures exclude London Weighting and London Supplements.
[2] Excludes Nursing Auxiliaries and Student/Pupils.
[3] *Source: Department of Employment*—New Earnings Survey (for April in each year). Figures relate to all full time employees on adult rates, excluding those whose pay was affected by absence.

Midwives

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those health authorities in England which anticipate a shortage of midwives over the next five years; what is the estimated shortage; and what measures he is proposing to overcome it.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect the information in the form requested centrally. There are reported difficulties in some localities, but there is no evidence that there is a national problem. The results of the 1987 regional health authority chairman's survey undertaken for the nurses pay review body showed that at March 1987 about 4·2 per cent. of midwives' posts had been vacant for at least three months compared with the average of 3·5 per cent. for all nursing and midwifery staff.

Nationally the number of midwives has increased by 11·4 per cent. since 1981. Action is being taken centrally where appropriate to improve recruitment and retention of such staff. For example, the new clinical grading structure was designed to recognise and reward the skills and expertise of, and provide improved career opportunities for, both nurses and midwives. The results of the regrading exercise show that at both staff midwife and midwifery sister level much larger numbers have gone into the higher grades than has been the case with nurses. As a result, the average increases for midwives this year is over 20 per cent. and for staff midwives it is over 25 per cent. We are also discussing with the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting ways of stimulating more interest in direct entry midwifery courses. Health authorities have also been asked to organise campaigns to attract back nurses and midwives who have left the service and to provide more opportunities for flexible working and job sharing.

Smoking

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of treatment of smoking related diseases in the National Health Service in 1987-88.

Mr. Mellor: The annual cost to the National Health Service of treating smoking-related diseases is estimated at about £500 million.

Disabled People

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received an application for funding from the International Disabled Travellers Club Ltd.

Mr. Mellor: We have no record of receiving an application for funding from this organisation, but we will follow this matter up with the organisation concerned.

Basingstoke and North Hampshire Health Authority

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what census figures have been used in determining funding for the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority for 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor: The 1985-based population projections for mid-1988 were used in determining regional health authorities' allocations for 1988-89. It is for regions to decide what data to employ in making allocations to district health authorities.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants have been employed in the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority district in each year since the formation of that health authority.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold centrally information in the form requested. The hon. Member may like to contact the chairman of the Wessex regional health authority for the information that he seeks.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement, supported by statistics, on waiting lists for out-patient appointments and surgery in the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority district and at other hospitals in the Wessex region.

Mr. Mellor: The latest figures show that, at March 1988, there were 3,300 patients on the in-patient waiting list in Basingstoke and North Hampshire district and 43,700 for Wessex region as a whole. Provisional figures, currently being validated, indicate that these waiting lists reduced in the six months to September 1988.

We do not collect information centrally about waiting times for out-patient appointments or individual hospitals.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of recruitment of paramedical and clerical staff by the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. My hon. Friend may like to contact the chairman of the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority for the information that he seeks.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the financial and managerial running of health centres in the Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The Basingstoke and North Hampshire health authority is responsible for the funding and management of health centres within its district. My hon. Friend may like to contact the chairman of the health authority for the information that he seeks.

Medical Physicists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has given to health authorities about staffing levels appropriate for medical physics, radiation physics or other supporting disciplines to radiotherapy; what steps he has taken to ensure any such advice has been acted upon; and if he will place the text of such advice in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: I have placed in the Library a copy of circular HC(78)32, paragraphs 21 to 25 of which give guidance to health authorities on factors relevant to the staffing of radiotherapy departments. Specific staffing levels are a matter for individual authorities to determine. Reference to this advice is made wherever appropriate in the course of normal communications between authorities and the Department.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many posts were designated head of radiation physics within the National Health Service in *(a)* 1983 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many medical physicists have been employed within the National Health Service in each of the last five years;

(2) how many physicists were working within the National Health Service in *(a)* 1983 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Mellor: The only relevant information which we hold centrally is for staff in post at 30 September as set out in the table; figures for 1988 are not yet available.

Year	*NHS physicists (whole time equivalent)*
1983	660
1984	700
1985	720
1986	770
1987	790

Source: Department of Health Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.
Note: All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information he has requested from health authorities or the Whitley council about the problems of recruitment of medical physicists, and on what dates;

(2) what information he has requested from health authorities or the Whitley council about the turnover of medical physicists, and on what dates.

Mr. Mellor: None. I understand that the management Side of the Scientific and Professional Staffs Council has requested information from health authorities to assist a working party which it set up to investigate recruitment and retention of physicists and other scientists.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the pay bands for each grade of medical physicist in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Mellor: The information is set out in the table. April 1987 rates are under review and increases will take effect from 1 April 1988.

Medical Physicists pay rates

Grade	*1986*		*1987*	
	Minimum £	*Maximum* £	*Minimum* £	*Maximum* £
Basic Probationer	7,452	9,360	7,825	9,828
Basic Post Probationer	7,716	9,996	8,102	10,496
Senior	10,632	13,896	11,164	14,591
Principal	13,704	18,948	14,389	19,895
Top Grade	19,080	22,836	20,034	23,978
Top Grade (with greater responsibility)	21,588	25,356	22,667	26,624

Radiotherapy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has asked the National Radiological Protection Board, or any other agency, to prepare scientific standards for the calibration of radiation machines;

(2) on what dates within the last five years his Department circulated health authorities with advice on the calibration and dose standards of radiation machines; and if he will place the texts of such advice in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: In December 1985 we issued to health authorities health circular HC(85)31 which informed them of their responsibilities as employers for ensuring compliance with the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1333). In May 1988 executive letter EL(88)P/64 was issued covering a more detailed and technical document; "Guidance Notes for the Protection of Persons against Ionising Radiations arising from Medical and Dental Use", prepared under the joint auspices of the National Radiological Protection Board, the Health and Safety Executive and the health Departments. This replaces a code of practice first published in 1957 and most recently revised in 1972. Pages 29 and 30 of the guidance notes deal specifically with calibration and maintenance. The executive letter indicated that the guidance notes provided a guide to good practice and asked managers to bring them to the attention of all relevant staff. All these documents have been placed in the Library.

In December 1988 the Institute of Physical Sciences in Medicine (IPSM) issued to its members further advice augmenting that in the guidance notes. Having consulted relevant professional bodies on the content of the IPSM advice, we shall shortly include it in consolidated guidance to health authorities on the use of ionising radiations.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultant radiotherapist posts were funded within the National Health Service; and in which hospitals these posts are or were located in *(a)* 1983 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Mellor: Information about medical staffing is collected by employing authority and not in relation to the hospital in which a doctor is working. The employing autorities for consultants are regional health authorities, district health authorities designated for teaching purposes and special health authorities for the London post-graduate teaching hospitals. The latest available informantion about consultant radiotherapists by employing authority is set out in the table.

Table: permanent paid consultants in radiotherapy: analysis by regional health authority and teaching district health authority at 30 September each year

	1983		*1986*	
	number	*WTE*	*number*	*WTE*
England	182	177·7	181	175·2
Northern RHA	9	8·0	10	8·8
Newcastle upon Tyne DHA	6	4·4	6	4·3
Yorkshire RHA	14	10·4	12	9·4
Leeds Western DHA	8	6·0	8	6·3
Leeds Eastern DHA	1	0·2	0	0·0
Trent RHA	15	14·5	17	15·4
Leicestershire DHA	3	3·0	3	3·0
Nottingham DHA	4	3·0	4	3·0
Sheffield DHA	5	4·4	6	5·4
East Anglian RHA	8	8·0	10	10·0
Cambridge DHA	4	3·0	5	3·9
North West Thames RHA	15	11·6	11	9·1
Paddington and North Kensington DHA	3	1·6	1	0·5
Riverside DHA	6	5·0	4	3·8
North East Thames RHA	26	22·9	21	19·4
Hampstead DHA	2	1·8	1	0·5
Bloomsbury DHA	6	3·5	5	3·7
City and Hackney DHA	4	3·1	3	2·8
Tower Hamlets DHA	3	2·8	3	2·9
South East Thames RHA	17	15·1	18	17·1
West Lambeth DHA	4	3·4	3	3·0
Camberwell DHA	2	2·0	2	2·0
Lewisham and North Southwark DHA	3	2·1	3	2·3
South West Thames RHA	10	6·5	9	6·5
Wandsworth DHA	4	2·1	3	2·1
Wessex RHA	9	8·6	12	9·9
Southampton and South West Hants DHA	4	4·0	4	4·0
Oxford RHA	12	9·9	12	10·7
Oxfordshire DHA	4	3·8	5	4·7
South Western RHA	16	14·8	16	14·1
Bristol and Weston DHA	7	5·7	7	5·1
West Midlands RHA	15	14·0	15	13·9
Central Birmingham DHA	5	3·9	6	4·7
Mersey RHA	8	7·1	7	6·5
Liverpool Central DHA	8	1·0	7	1·7
North Western RHA	17	15·6	17	15·6
Central Manchester DHA	0	0·0	0	0·0
South Manchester DHA	16	15·4	16	15·5
Salford DHA	0	0·0	0	0·0
Special Health Authorities (LPGTHs)				
Hospital for Sick Children	0	0·0	1	0·2
Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	0	0·0	0	0·0
Moorfields Eye Hospital	0	0·0	0	0·0
Bethlem and Maudsley	0	0·0	0	0·0
National Heart and Chest	1	0·1	1	0·1
Royal Marsden	5	3·9	5	4·0
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	7	5·4	5	3·9
Eastman Dental	0	0·0	0	0·0

Notes:

1. Regional health authority figures include all consultant staff employed within the region including the numbers for individual authorities cited.

2. For the England total, staff holding two or more appointments whether with the same or different regions are counted once only. Differences in the sum of numbers of staff for all regions are due to the duplication of staff holding appointments in more than one region. Such are included in each region. This duplication does not occur in the WTE component.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to ensure that each radiaion machines has *(a)* a calibration logbook, *(b)* a maintenance logbook and *(c)* a patient logbook; and on what dates such steps were taken.

Mr. Mellor: This is for individual health authorities to decide. Recommendations for record keeping are given in "Guidance Notes for the Protection of Persons against Ionising Radiations arising from Medical and Dental Use", which we drew to the attention of all health authorities in executive letter EL(88)P/64 in May 1988. This replaced "Code of Practice for the Protection of

Persons against Ionizing Radiations arising from Medical and Dental Use" which, originally printed in 1957, and subsequently revised in 1968 and 1972, similarly advised health authorities.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the sources of guidance for the maintenance standards of radiation machines he expects health authorities to adopt; on what dates such standards were drawn to the authorities' attention within the last five years; and if he will place the text of letters drawing attention to such standards in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: Existing departmental guidance to health authorities, bearing on the safe use and maintenance of equipment delivering radiation doses, is in the form of:

(a) Health Circular HC(85)31, issued in December 1985, which informs authorities of their responsibilities as employers for ensuring compliance with the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985.

(b) Health Equipment Information Booklet HE1 98, updated in August 1984, on management of equipment;

(c) Health Notice HN(87)22, issued in 1987, which sets out advice on decontamination procedures, where necessary for inspection or maintenance purposes;

(d) Executive Letter EL(88)P/64, issued in May 1988, covered issued of a detailed document, "Guidance Notes for the Protection of Persons Against Ionising Radiations Arising from Medical and Dental Use";

(e) Health Circular HC(88)29, issued in June 1988, which informed authorities of their responsibilities under the Ionising Radiation (Protection of Persons Undergoing Medical Examination or Treatment) Regulations 1988;

(f) Executive Letter EL(88)P/127, issued to Regional General Managers in December 1988, which reminded authorities of their responsibility to ensure that they and their staff observe their obligations to protect people against any harmful effect from ionising radiations and to ensure safe and effective operation of all their departments.

I have arranged for copies of the guidance specified to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the sources of guidance for the calibration and dose control standards of radiation medicines which he expects health authorities to implement, and the particular sections of such sources which particularly refer to calibration and dose standards; and if he will place all such guidance in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: In May 1988 executive letter EL(88)P/64 was issued to all health authorities, covering the guidance notes for the protection of persons against ionising radiations arising from medical and dental use, which replaced a code of practice first published in 1957, and most recently revised in 1972. Section 10.46 et seq of the guidance notes deal specifically with calibration and dose standards regarding radioactive substances, (which includes what you refer to as radiation medicines).

The executive letter indicated that the guidance notes provided a guide to good practice and asked managers to bring them to the attention of all relevant staff. All these documents have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he has asked for all the incidents of radiation overdosage within the National Health Service to be reported to him; and on what dates such a request was issued to regions or districts.

Mr. Mellor: In 1972 we contributed to a revision of the code of practice for the protection of persons against ionising radiations arising from medical and dental use, which was issued to all health authorities. That code called for reporting of instances in which patients had received in excess of a prescribed dose of radiation.

The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 sent to all health authorities along with health circular HC(85)31, made it mandatory for the Health and Safety Executive to be notified, by the employer, of any incident in which a person undergoing a medical exposure was exposed to ionising radiation, to an extent much greater than that intended. The guidance notes for the protection of persons against ionising radiations arising from medical and dental use published in 1988, to replace the code of practice, gave further guidance on the interpretation of the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985, and made it clear that all radiation accidents or serious defects involving equipment should be notified immediately to the Department. This document, under cover of executive letter EL(86)P/64, was also distributed to all health authorities.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultant radiotherapists are actually working in the National Health Service in each of the last five years; and what percentage of such consultants are full time within the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is set out in the table. Consultants with whole-time NHS contracts are not required to spend the whole of their professional time on NHS work. The number of consultant staff working exclusively in the NHS is not known and, therefore, the percentage given is that for consultants holding whole-time contracts.

Table: Consultants in Radiotherapy (at 30 September each year)
England — *Numbers*

Year	*All staff*[1]	*Whole-time*	*Percentage whole-time*
1983	199	115	57·8
1984	195	107	54·9
1985	199	106	53·3
1986	202	104	51·5
1987	204	100	49·0

[1] Includes permanent paid and honorary staff, but excludes locum staff.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what support he has given, or proposes to give, to the nationwide survey of the quality of radiation dosimetry being carried out by the Institute of Physical Sciences in Medicine;

(2) why he has refused financial support to the Institute of Physical Sciences in Medicine's nationwide survey of the quality of radiation dosimetry.

Mr. Mellor: In 1984 a decision was taken not to support this project from central research and development funds. In terms of its research and development merits it was not of as high priority as competing projects. However, its merits as a quality assurance aid to NHS management was full recognised and the Institute of Physical Sciences in Medicine was advised to seek support from health authorities on this basis.

A number of hospitals have subsequently participated in the survey, including the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital where, in 1988, it played a role in revealing an error in the radiotherapy department.

Any further proposals for central funding will be considered on their merits.

Broadmoor Special Hospital (Deaths)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for the last five years the number of deaths that have occurred at Broadmoor special hospital, the cause of death and the number of deaths that were investigated by a public inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Deaths of patients at Broadmoor hospital in the five years ended 31 December 1988 are listed in the table. That which occurred on 6 July 1984 was investigated by a public inquiry. But the circumstances of all deaths arising from other than natural causes are fully considered by hospital management to see whether any lessons can be learned.

Date of death	*Cause of death*
20 January 1984	Inhalation of stomach contents
10 May 1984	Stroke/heart attack
6 July 1984	Inhalation of stomach contents
2 August 1984	Pulmonary thrombo-embolism/ carcinoma of colon/acute peritonitis
23 November 1984	Pneumonia
8 March 1985	Suicide (hanging)
23 August 1985	Heart attack
29 April 1986	Heart attack
6 July 1986	Heart attack
26 July 1986	Suicide (hanging)
14 September 1986	Heart attack
11 November 1986	Peritonitis/pneumonia
20 May 1987	Heart attack
21 May 1987	Pneumonia/lung cancer
11 July 1987	Suicide (hanging)
10 September 1987	Choked on food
29 October 1987	Heart attack
28 January 1988	Heart attack
8 April 1988	Cancer of the stomach
29 April 1988	Respiratory arrest/Cardio myopathy (HIV positive)
23 August 1988	Inhalation of stomach contents/cardio-respiratory failure associated with Chlorpromazine therapy
7 October 1988	Pneumonia associated with emphysema

Audiology Technicians

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure an adequate supply of audiology technicians for health authorities in the south-east of England.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave on 29 November to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) at column *197*.

Dentists

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any additional accountancy fees arising from time taken to answer questions from the dental rates study group are to be fully reimbursed to the dentists concerned.

Mr. Freeman: General dental practitioners' practice expenses, including accountancy fees in connection with NHS work, are reimbursed indirectly through fees paid for NHS dental treatment. These fees are based on the recommendations of the dental rates study group.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether British dentists will be free after 1992 to practice within the EEC without further accreditation.

Mr. Freeman: Any United Kingdom dentist with a recognised qualification already has the right to practice within any member state of the EC under directives adoped in 1978.

Dental Reference Service

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the dental reference service in each year from 1983 to 1988; and whether he will give separate figures for salaries, travelling, pension contributions, purchase of equipment, accommodation costs, and rental of premises within that overall figure.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is set out in the table. All figures relate to the financial year and are in £000s.

Year	*Total cost*	*Estimated salaries*	*Employers superannuation*	*Travelling*
1983-84	917	690	138	89
1984-85	1,051	796	159	96
1985-86	1,229	958	192	79
1986-87	1,335	1,035	207	93
1987-88	1,455	1,121	224	110

It is not possible to provide figures for equipment, accommodation and rentals because these are subsumed in other departmental budgets and cannot easily be identified.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of weeks worked per year by all dental reference officers in each of the years between 1983 and 1988, excluding sick leave, leave, study leave and attendance at courses.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number of weeks*
1984	42·6
1985	42·1
1986	42·3
1987	42·6
1988	40·8

Information in respect of 1983 is not available.

Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to produce a register of interests for chairmen of district and regional health authorities.

Mr. Mellor: No, it is not necessary. The statutory position on this is quite clear. Under regulation 14 (1) of the NHS (Regional and District Health Authorities Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1983 a chairman or member of a health authority is required to declare any pecuniary interest, direct or otherwise, in any contract or other matter which is the subject of consideration by the health authority. He may not then take part in any consideration or discussion of the contract (or other matter) or vote in any question in respect of it.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the names of all British regional and district health authority chairmen indicating the length of time in which these persons have held office.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested for regional and district health authority chairmen in England has been placed in the Library. The appointment of health authority chairmen in Scotland is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, and in Wales and Northern Ireland, of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Meningitis

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the total number of cases of meningitis recorded in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) how many fatalities were recorded as a result of meningitis for the last year in which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Meningitis can be caused by a number of different organisms. The hon. Member may be particularly interested in meningococcal meningitis. The table shows the number of notifications received for this, plus for all forms of acute meningitis, together with the number of deaths registered with meningococcal meningitis (International Classification of Diseases 9th Revision 036.0) assigned as the underlying cause of death. Notification data for 1988 are as yet uncorrected and provisional, whilst cause of death data are available only for the first three quarters and are similarly provisional. Final data for 1987 are therefore also given.

Number of notifications of all forms of acute meningitis and meningococcal meningitis; and death registrations of meningococcal meningitis (ICD 9 036.0)
England and Wales 1987-88

	1987	*1988*
Notifications		
Acute meningitis[2]	2,542	[3]3,001
Meningococcal meningitis	1,080	[3]1,309
Deaths[1]		
Meningococcal meningitis	37	[3] [4]31

[1] Plus 28 days and over.
[2] From 1 October 1988 this became known simply as "meningitis".
[3] Provisional: to allow for corrected disease notifications/death registrations.
[4] January to September only.

Blood Transfusions

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there are any plans to seek to change the law to enable doctors to perform life-saving operations, including the use of blood transfusions where necessary, to save the lives of children whose parents refuse consent on religious grounds.

Mr. Mellor: No, there are no plans to change the law in this area. In an emergency the administration of life-saving procedures on any patient without obtaining consent is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned.

Dalkon Shields (Compensation)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will request all health regions which have not already done so to seek out those women who were prescribed Dalkon shields and inform them that it is still possible to claim compensation if they were damaged by it;

(2) what steps he intends to take to publicise the fact that the date for filing late Dalkon shield compensation claims has been extended to 31 July.

Mr. Freeman: We have no plans for Government intervention in relation to this matter of litigation in the United States courts. For the initial claims deadline, the court itself directed, and approved, publicity by the Dalkon shield manufacturers. Further extensions of the deadline have received independent media publicity. It is for individual health authorities to decide whether they wish to direct their resources to specific activity on this matter. Our longstanding advice has been that they should be as helpful as possible with regard to the release of information.

Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the name and health authority of each hospital with more than 250 beds.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Perinatal Deaths

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of perinatal deaths in *(a)* England, *(b)* the north-west and *(c)* Bolton during 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: Annual figures for 1988 for perinatal deaths are not yet available, so the table shows statistics for 1978 and 1987.

Perinatal mortality (stillbirths and deaths in the first week of life): numbers and rates per 1,000 total live and still births. Usual residents of England, north-west standard region and Bolton metropolitan county district (MCD).

Area of usual residence	*1978*	*1987*
England		
Number	8,766	5,742
Rate	15·4	8·9
North West Region		
Number	1,363	837
Rate	17·0	9·4
Bolton MCD		
Number	68	29
Rate	19·4	7·7

AIDS

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what safeguards health authorities take to ensure that no one shown by tests to be HIV positive or to have AIDS is allowed to work in National Health Service kitchens.

Mr. Mellor: I am advised that the human immunodeficiency virus is not transmitted through food. There is therefore no reason why people who are HIV positive but otherwise well should not work in National Health Service kitchens. People who are HIV positive or have AIDS who acquire other infections which could be transmitted through food would be subject to the same restrictions on food handling as any other staff with such infections.

Drug Warnings

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many drug companies have appealed to the Committee on Safety of Medicines against drug warnings which the committee wished to publish; which companies and which drugs were involved; and what were the results of the appeals.

Mr. Mellor: Under the Medicines Act 1968, companies have a right of appeal to the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) in respect of CSM's advice to the licensing authority on licensing matters. They have no right of appeal to the CSM about a decision of that committee to issue information or guidance on licensed medicinal products to doctors, dentists and pharmacists.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will seek to amend the Medicines Act so that drug companies are not able to block the publication by the Committee on Safety of Medicines of warning notices about the safety of drugs by an injunction.

Mr. Mellor: I have no plans to do so.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have died of lung cancer in the Trent health region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table; 1987 is the latest year available.

Number of death registrations with malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung (ICD 162)[1] as underlying cause of death to usual residents of Trent regional health authority, 1979-1987

Year	*Number of deaths*
1979	2,938
1980	3,047
1981	3,186
1982	3,046
1983	3,137
1984	3,203
1985	3,340
1986	3,166
1987	3,191

[1] International classification of diseases; 9th revision.

Nurses' Grading

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, further to his reply of 26 January, he will make available to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, the grading returns received from the Trent region and Nottingham district authorities.

Mr. Mellor: The grading returns specify the number of nursing and midwifery staff in each old grade that have been assimilated to each of the new clinical grades. This information is given in the tables.

The new clinical grading structure for nursing, midwifery and health visitor staff
Numbers of old clinical grades assimilated to each of the new clinical grades on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988

Previous grade	*Staff[1] (W.T.E.)*	*Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade*								
		A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G[2]*	*H*	*I*
Trent region										
Nursing Auxiliary	9,076·50	8,209·54	856·96	10·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	217·92	—	208·36	9·56	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[3]	6,379·63	—	—	2,749·84	3,129·68	499·11	1·00	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[3]	340·97	—	—	—	338·97	2·00	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[3]	371·99	—	—	4·40	223·29	142·09	2·21	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[3]	6,632·21	—	—	—	1,544·90	4,649·31	438·00	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[3]	701·90	—	—	—	115·14	577·67	9·09	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[3]	395·20	—	—	—	—	81·84	305·90	6·46	1·00	—
Nursing Sister II[3]	3,801·63	—	—	—	—	—	1,726·45	1,956·47	114·71	4·00
Midwifery Sister II[3]	873·51	—	—	—	—	—	261·20	609·81	2·50	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[3]	1,066·06	—	—	—	—	—	2·45	1,054·61	9·00	—
Nursing Sister I	57·99	—	—	—	—	—	3·37	23·82	26·80	4·00
Midwifery Sister I	19·00	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	18·00	—	—
Health Visitor	878·35	—	—	—	—	—	—	870·75	7·60	—
Senior Nurse 8	331·48	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	59·13	177·35	93·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	38·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·00	13·00	13·00
Senior Nurse 7	300·40	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	37·60	257·80
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	36·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13·00	23·93
Clinical Teacher	154·56	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	151·56	—
Fieldwork Teacher	121·65	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	0·53	120·12	—
Practical Work Teacher	157·80	—	—	—	—	—	—	3·00	154·80	—
Tutor	197·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·00	196·93
Tutor Midwife	45·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	45·16
Post basic students										
Enrolled	282·00	—	—	282·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	936·50	—	—	—	882·50	44·00	2·00	10·00	—	—

Previous grade	Staff[1] (W.T.E.)	Numbers transferred to each new clinical grade: A	B	C	D	E	F	G[2]	H	I
Deputy Sister	8·00	—	—	—	—	4·00	4·00	—	—	—
Sister II	16·00	—	—	—	—	—	15·00	1·00	—	—
Others	28·11	3·27	1·80	—	0·64	4·21	0·74	7·45	2·00	8·00
TOTALS	33,469·38	8,212·81	1,067·12	3,055·80	6,235·12	6,004·23	2,775·41	4,641·03	832·04	645·82
Nottingham DHA										
Nursing Auxiliary	1,263·58	1,147·18	114·40	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nursery Nurse	34·50	—	32·00	2·50	—	—	—	—	—	—
Enrolled Nurse[3]	799·75	—	—	131·96	652·83	14·96	—	—	—	—
Enrolled District Nurse[3]	27·30	—	—	—	26·30	1·00	—	—	—	—
Senior Enrolled Nurse[3]	103·45	—	—	1·40	83·55	18·00	0·50	—	—	—
Staff Nurse[3]	1,045·30	—	—	—	215·53	788·18	41·59	—	—	—
Staff Midwife[3]	120·82	—	—	—	23·00	97·82	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister[3]	50·13	—	—	—	—	2·00	48·13	—	—	—
Nursing Sister II[3]	590·90	—	—	—	—	—	260·86	328·04	2·00	—
Midwifery Sister II[3]	153·10	—	—	—	—	—	23·13	129·97	—	—
District Nurse (Sister II)[3]	112·04	—	—	—	—	—	—	112·04	—	—
Nursing Sister I	6·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	6·00	—	—
Midwifery Sister I	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Health Visitor	124·45	—	—	—	—	—	—	123·45	1·00	—
Senior Nurse 8	71·60	—	—	—	—	—	2·00	39·60	27·00	3·00
Senior Nurse 8 (Midwife)	7·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	7·00	—	—
Senior Nurse 7	45·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	5·00	8·00	32·00
Senior Nurse 7 (Midwife)	10·93	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9·00	1·93
Clinical Teacher	26·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26·16	—
Fieldwork Teacher	14·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14·00	—
Practical Work Teacher	24·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	24·00	—
Tutor	38·03	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	38·03
Tutor Midwife	8·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8·00
Post basic students										
Enrolled	35·00	—	—	35·00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staff Nurse	183·00	—	—	—	183·00	—	—	—	—	—
Deputy Sister	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sister II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Others	2·00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2·00
TOTALS	4,896·04	1,147·18	146·40	172·86	1,184·21	921·96	376·21	751·10	111·16	84·96

[1] Staff in post plus vacancies.
[2] Excludes some additional 'G' posts which health authorities have indicated they intend to create in future on existing two-sister wards.
[3] Excludes Post Basic Students.

Medical Equipment Management

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many different categories of National Health Service staff are employed in the maintenance of patient-connected equipment; how many people are employed in each category; and what the change has been in the distribution and usage of these various categories since the Department of Health and Social Security issued its guidance on the management of medical equipment, HEI98, in January 1982.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 25 January 1989]:* There are usually three categories of staff: physicists, technicians and, in some cases, works staff. We do not collect information centrally on the numbers of staff in these categories who are engaged in this type of maintenance work. We have no indication of any changes in usage patterns since the publication of HEI98.

Medical Physics Technicians

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many individual health authorities employ medical physics technicians, codes F807-F814.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 25 January 1989]:* At 30 September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, 148 of the 191 district health authorities had medical physics technicians in post and five of the 14 regional health authorities had medical physics technicians in post.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many individual variation orders have been issued to medical physics technicians over the last three years on a monthly basis.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 25 January 1989]:* The number of variation orders issued in respect of staff employed in the medical physics technician grades in the last three years ending 31 December 1988 is as follows:

	1986	1987	1988
January	1	—	—
February	1	1	2
March	1	1	—
April	—	1	—
May	1	—	1
June	—	1	2
July	1	—	—
August	1	—	—
September	—	—	—

	1986	1987	1988
October	—	—	—
November	—	1	2
December	—	—	—

Medicines Committees

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will review the membership of the Medicines Commission and Committee on Safety of Medicines in view of the recent revelations of close personal financial links between several members and pharmaceutical companies.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* No. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) on 13 December 1988, at columns *557-58*.

No-fault Compensation

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will initiate discussions with the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry and organisations representing doctors and patients regarding a no-fault drug damage compensation scheme.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received supporting no-fault compensation for those people damaged by prescribed drugs or those given under medical supervision.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* Only those in which the right hon. Member himself has taken part.

Drugs (Side Effects)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what current procedures are used to ensure that those prescribing drugs are aware of recent findings which may indicate possible side effects or the need for precautions in the use of drugs.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) sends its publication "Current Problems" to all doctors, dentists, and pharmacists in the United Kingdom about three times a year. This covers a wide range of current drug safety issues, and often includes advice and recommendations to prescribers. The CSM also provides occasional articles and letters for medical journals. Particularly urgent issues are notified direct to prescribers using CSM "Dear Doctor" letters.

The Department also funds the distribution to prescribers of a variety of independent publications, including the "British National Formulary", "Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin", "Adverse Drug Reactions Bulletin" and *Prescribers' Journal*, all of which provide guidance on the prescribing and use of drugs.

Prescribers can also consult product data sheets which contain detailed information about known side effects, contra-indications and other precautions.

Drug Addiction

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are being treated within the Mersey regional health authority area for drug addiction; and what treatment facilities are available.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, there were 354 admissions with a drug related main diagnosis to NHS mental illness hospitals and units in the Mersey RHA. Also, in the same year, there were 7,506 attendances at NHS drug addiction out-patient clinics.

These figures do not represent the number of people involved since an individual could be admitted to hospital or attend an out-patient clinic several times in one year. In any case, most drug misusers are treated in the community for which information is not available centrally.

There are 10 out-patient drug dependency services and two in-patient units in the region. There are also 12 syringe exchange schemes run by health authorities. These services are supported by a number of voluntary sector services including two residential centres and more than 10 providing counselling services to drug misusers and users' families.

Midwives (Regrading)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many midwives in the Mersey regional health authority area have appealed against their regrading; and when the appeals will be heard.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* We do not hold this information centrally.

Private Hospitals

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the occasions on which he has received reports of infringements of the NAHA code of conduct for private hospitals; what actions he has taken since its inception; and what further inspections were held;

(2) what sanctions are available to his Department against private hospitals failing to comply with their statutory duty to provide and maintain adequate medical, surgical and nursing equipment; how often, following inspections by the appropriate district health authority, and an adverse report, he has acted against private hospitals, in the last three-year period; and what action he proposes to take;

(3) if he will give the dates in 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 when the following private hospitals were inspected *(a)* the Wellington Humana, *(b)* the London clinic, *(c)* the BUPA hospital, Harpenden, Hertfordshire, *(d)* the Lister hospital, *(e)* the Cromwell hospital, Cromwell road and *(f)* the Portland hospital; and whether any of the reports were adverse.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* Registration and inspection of private hospitals and nursing homes is wholly delegated to district health authorities who must be satisfied that the statutory requirements are being met. We do not collect centrally details of their inspections. Authorities have power to cancel registration if the statutory requirements are not being observed. No private hospital has been added to the Department's national list of cancelled registrations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Tax-Benefit Tables

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for changing the manner of expressing the former earnings of unemployed persons on the tax/benefit tables from whole number decimal places in such a way as to make direct year by year comparisons of tax/benefit more difficult.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The tables reflect the tax, national insurance, and benefit structures in particular financial years. Nominal earnings levels in any one year cannot be compared directly with the same nominal levels in another because of changes in price levels. The first gross wage level in table II of both the 1986 and 1987 editions gives the precise upper level of former wages which is consistent with the receipt of maximum family income supplement. Higher earnings levels are then shown in £1 steps. In earlier editions, the initial level of former earnings in table II was rounded to the nearest £1. The 1988 tables revert to this presentation. These differences in convention reflect no more than the degree of rounding chosen.

Income Support

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the most recently available figure for the income support live load of each of his Department's offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Income Support Load—30 November 1988
Midlands
Manual Count

Office	*Total live load*
Birmingham (Bradford Street)	9,487
Birmingham (Edgbaston)	15,793
Birmingham (Erdington)	14,128
Birmingham (Handsworth)	17,094
Birmingham (Ladywood)	11,185
Birmingham (Northfield)	13,487
Birmingham (Perry Bar)	12,357
Birmingham (Ravenhurst)	8,577
Birmingham (South Yardley)	18,576
Birmingham (Sparkhill)	7,408
Birmingham (Washwood Heath)	13,330
Boston	7,103
Burton-on-Trent	5,414
Cannock	7,655
Chesterfield	16,462
Corby	4,304
Coventry (East)	18,336
Coventry (West)	14,762
Derby (Becket Street)	11,393
Derby (Heritage Gate)	6,148
Derby (London Road)	12,382
Dudley (North)	16,264
Dudley (South)	8,189
Grantham	5,393
Hereford	9,045
Ilkeston	6,664
Kidderminster	8,238
Leamington	9,641
Leicester (Burley's Way)	7,175
Leicester (Lower Hill Street)	10,752
Leicester (Norton Street)	13,137
Leicester (Yeoman Street)	13,936
Lichfield	9,270
Lincoln (Newland)	9,022
Lincoln (Orchard Street)	11,662
Loughborough	7,945
Mansfield	13,022
Newcastle (Staffs)	8,016
Northampton	15,786
Nottingham (Castlegate)	11,878
Nottingham (David Lane)	10,834
Nottingham (Shakespeare Street)	13,269
Nottingham (Station Street)	14,220
Nuneaton	11,070
Redditch	8,795
Rugby	4,655
Shrewsbury	12,759
Skegness	4,672
Smethwick	15,970
Stafford	5,508
Stoke-on-Trent (North)	15,365
Stoke-on-Trent (South)	9,107
Sutton-in-Ashfield	7,437
Telford	13,145
Walsall (East)	11,346
Walsall (West)	13,024
Wellingborough	10,752
West Bromwich	17,158
Wolverhampton (North)	16,337
Wolverhampton (South)	16,224
Worcester	12,902
Worksop	8,599

Income Support Load—30 November 1988
North West
Manual Count

Office	*Total live load*
Accrington	6,978
Ashton-under-Lyne	10,575
Barrow-in-Furness	7,716
Birkenhead (North)	15,931
Birkenhead (South)	9,712
Blackburn	13,624
Blackpool (North)	18,255
Blackpool (South)	8,895
Bolton	20,039
Burnley	14,245
Bury	12,999
Buxton	1,904
Carlisle	7,667
Chester	9,178
Crewe	9,411
Ellesmere Port	6,209
Farnworth	8,751
Hyde	9,772
Kendal	2,470
Lancaster	10,836
Leigh	8,595
Liverpool (Belle Vale)	9,694
Liverpool (Bootle)	12,290
Liverpool (Breckfield)	15,314
Liverpool (City)	7,880
Liverpool (Crosby)	10,054
Liverpool (Edgehill)	14,734
Liverpool (Garston)	8,635
Liverpool (Huyton)	14,832
Liverpool (Kirkby)	15,277
Liverpool (Norris Green)	7,490
Liverpool (Toxteth)	14,408
Liverpool (West Derby)	4,449
Macclesfield	3,932
Manchester (Central)	4,881
Manchester (Cheetham)	11,527
Manchester (Chorlton)	9,494
Manchester (Failsworth)	11,855
Manchester (Longsight)	11,051
Manchester (Middleton)	8,080
Manchester (Openshaw)	10,603
Manchester (Rusholme)	11,548

Office	Total live load
Manchester (Sale)	13,272
Manchester (Withenshawe)	12,016
Northwich	5,299
Oldham	15,854
Penrith	1,569
Preston (North)	12,838
Preston (South)	10,507
Rochdale	11,328
Rossendale	4,527
Salford (North)	14,951
Salford (South)	10,248
Skelmersdale	9,155
Southport	9,440
St. Helens	17,363
Stockport (North)	10,654
Stockport (South)	9,686
Wallasey	11,552
Warrington	15,857
Whitehaven	4,221
Widnes	14,015
Wigan	16,716
Wilmslow	2,967
Workington	5,504

Income Support Load—30 November 1988
North East
Manual Count

Office	Total live load
Ashington	6,703
Barnsley (East)	9,620
Barnsley (West)	7,248
Berwick-upon-Tweed	1,909
Bishop Auckland	12,418
Blyth	7,604
Bradford (East)	12,866
Bradford (South)	11,639
Bradford (West)	11,843
Bridlington	5,432
Castleford	4,991
Chester-Le-Street	6,047
Darlington	12,652
Dewsbury	12,681
Doncaster (East)	10,164
Doncaster (West)	12,951
Durham	5,749
Eston	7,599
Gateshead	20,643
Goole	4,276
Grimsby	20,588
Halifax	14,156
Harrogate	6,457
Hartlepool	11,137
Hemsworth	4,099
Hexham	2,615
Houghton-Le-Spring	4,118
Huddersfield	14,801
Hull (East)	22,414
Hull (West)	19,332
Jarrow	7,240
Keighley	8,213
Leeds (East)	15,198
Leeds (North West)	12,994
Leeds (North)	14,778
Leeds (South)	8,448
Leeds (West)	10,790
Middlesborough	20,555
Newcastle (East)	14,269
Newcastle (St. James)	14,336
Newcastle (West)	10,031
North Shields	10,183
Northallerton	4,762
Peterlee	6,215
Pontefract	5,553
Redcar	8,531
Rotherham (North)	4,858
Rotherham (South)	16,218
Scarborough	8,737
Scunthorpe	10,870
Seaham	2,813
Sheffield (North East)	18,632
Sheffield (North West)	16,069
Sheffield (South East)	11,679
Sheffield (South West)	14,516
Skipton	2,265
South Shields	12,054
Stanley	9,473
Stockton	17,528
Sunderland (North)	18,169
Sunderland (South)	14,776
Wakefield	10,077
Wallsend	7,787
Wath-On-Dearne	7,118
York	13,501

Income Support Load—30 November 1988
London South
Manual Count

Office	Total live load
Aldershot	7,633
Andover	3,482
Ashford	4,422
Basingstoke	4,704
Bognor Regis	6,352
Bracknell	6,014
Brighton	14,907
Canterbury	8,196
Chatham	8,545
Chichester	3,990
Crawley	6,414
Dover	6,084
Eastbourne	9,932
Epsom	4,175
Fareham	8,417
Folkestone	5,820
Gravesend	5,320
Guildford	7,202
Hastings	11,896
Havant	6,583
Hove	8,268
Isle of Wight	10,265
Lewes	6,183
London (Balham)	11,596
London (Battersea)	11,888
London (Bexley)	9,953
London (Bloomsbury)	4,457
London (Brixton)	9,859
London (Bromley)	6,854
London (Camberwell)	10,095
London (Chelsea)	10,272
London (City)	2,695
London (Croydon)	15,179
London (Crystal Palace)	9,872
London (Dartford)	5,293
London (Eltham)	2,448
London (Greenwich Park)	12,863
London (Hither Green)	3,623
London (Hounslow)	12,903
London (Kennington Park)	9,010
London (Kensington)	7,638
London (Kingston)	6,794
London (Lewisham)	11,488
London (Mitcham)	6,428
London (Orpington)	4,527
London (Oval)	9,952
London (Peckham)	8,467
London (Southwark)	10,696
London (Streatham)	9,620
London (Surbiton)	3,922

Office	Total live load
London (Sutton)	4,555
London (Thames South)	1,411
London (Twickenham)	4,646
London (Wandsworth)	8,309
London (Westminster)	4,356
London (Wimbledon)	6,923
London (Woolwich)	15,826
Maidstone	7,647
New Forest	6,759
Newbury	3,641
Portsmouth (North)	9,275
Portsmouth (South)	8,581
Reading	9,591
Redhill	5,969
Rochester	4,068
Sittingbourne	6,871
Slough	10,971
Southampton	19,357
Thanet	12,384
Tunbridge Wells	8,010
Winchester	4,377
Woking	7,673
Worthing	9,841

Income Support Load—30 November 1988
Scotland
Manual Count

Office	Total live load
Aberdeen (North)	9,187
Aberdeen (South)	9,388
Airdree	6,895
Arbroath	6,319
Ayr	13,738
Bathgate	12,321
Bellshill	5,948
Campbeltown	1,475
Clydebank	6,527
Coatbridge	6,414
Cowdenbeath	4,133
Cumbernauld	9,319
Dumbarton	7,586
Dumfries	7,490
Dundee (East)	11,529
Dundee (West)	10,557
Dunfermline	5,407
East Kilbride	5,301
Edinburgh (City)	10,009
Edinburgh (East)	10,363
Edinburgh (North)	9,904
Edinburgh (South)	9,928
Edinburgh (West)	10,073
Elgin	6,022
Falkirk	12,282
Fort William	2,448
Galashiels	5,852
Glasgow (Anniesland)	10,624
Glasgow (Bridgeton)	8,083
Glasgow (City)	8,748
Glasgow (Craigton)	11,715
Glasgow (Cranston Hill)	2,138
Glasgow (Laurieston)	14,436
Glasgow (Maryhill)	9,416
Glasgow (Parkhead)	11,046
Glasgow (Patrick)	7,539
Glasgow (Provan)	12,700
Glasgow (Rutherglen)	13,121
Glasgow (Southside)	12,385
Glasgow (Springburn)	13,334
Greenock	11,423
Hamilton	14,305
Inverness	11,232
Irvine	11,459
Johnstone	7,056
Kilmarnock	8454
Kirkcaldy	10,465
Lerwick	1,035
Leven	4,978
Motherwell	10,766
Oban	1,879
Paisley	15,274
Perth	7,919
Peterhead	4,209
Port Glasgow	4,708
Stirling	10,118
Stornoway	4,366
Stanraer	2,823
Wick	4,328

Income Support Load—30 November 1988
Wales/South West
Manual Count

Office	Total live load
Aberdare	5,920
Abertillery	2,791
Aberystwyth	4,149
Ammanford	2,970
Anglesey (Llangefni)	2,990
Bargoed	4,735
Barnstaple	8,450
Barry	6,613
Bath	9,538
Blackwood	3,631
Bournemouth	15,242
Bridgend	10,066
Bridgewater	6,515
Bristol (Central)	9,425
Bristol (East)	13,894
Bristol (Horfield)	5,520
Bristol (South)	12,451
Bristol (West)	6,168
Caernarfon	5,480
Caerphilly	5,587
Carmarthen	3,634
Cardiff (Central)	9,343
Cardiff (East)	12,797
Cardiff (West)	10,771
Cheltenham	8,510
Chippenham	5,102
Colwyn Bay	7,433
Cwmbran	11,331
Deeside	5,093
Devonport	10,708
Dolgellau	1,610
Ebbw Vale	6,318
Exeter	17,571
Gloucester	11,388
Haverfordwest	5,793
Holyhead	3,582
Launceston	5,026
Llanelli	7,677
Merthyr Tydfil	6,798
Morriston	7,719
Neath	5,786
Newport (Gwent)	17,171
Newton	4,406
Pembroke Dock	3,859
Penzance	7,279
Plymouth	15,512
Pontypridd	6,326
Poole	11,519
Port Talbot	5,438
Porth	4,626
Porthmadoc	2,979
Rhondda (West)	5,613
Rhyl	12,484
Salisbury	5,841
St. Austell	8,911
Stroud	6,758

Office	Total live load
Swansea	17,678
Swindon	10,589
Taunton	9,193
Torbay	19,977
Trowbridge	4,270
Truro	11,174
Weston-Super-Mare	7,520
Weymouth	7,632
Wrexham	13,148
Yeovil	6,303

Income Support Load—30 November 1988
London North
Manual Count

Office	Total live load
Aylesbury	7,145
Banbury	4,711
Basildon	16,965
Bedford	10,465
Braintree	7,602
Bury St. Edmunds	8,487
Cambridge	12,241
Chelmsford	7,311
Clacton-on-Sea	6,347
Colchester	9,876
Diss	2,726
Dunstable	4,211
Grays	8,611
Great Yarmouth	9,183
Harlow	6,528
Hemel Hempstead	4,879
Hertford	6,785
High Wycombe	7,312
Ipswich	14,921
King's Lynn	14,453
London (Acton)	12,359
London (Barking)	13,344
London (Barnet)	5,878
London (Canning Town)	4,953
London (Cricklewood)	7,297
London (Ealing)	12,869
London (Edgware)	6,746
London (Edmonton)	14,574
London (Euston)	10,416
London (Finsbury Park)	16,503
London (Hackney)	14,524
London (Harlesden)	10,450
London (Harrow)	9,476
London (Hendon)	8,589
London (Highgate)	16,339
London (Hoxton)[1]	11,130
London (Ilford)	13,522
London (Leytonstone)	9,006
London (Neasden)	11,882
London (Notting Hill)	8,884
London (Paddington)	12,131
London (Plaistow)	10,239
London (Poplar)	13,670
London (Romford)	11,037
London (Shoreditch)	9,217
London (Southall)	9,359
London (Stepney)	8,404
London (Stoke Newington)	8,468
London (Thames North)	1,503
London (Tottenham)[1]	15,067
London (Uxbridge)	6,603
London (Walthamstow)	11,641
London (Watford)	6,926
London (Wood Green)	7,513
London (Woodgrange Park)	13,701
Lowestoft	7,218
Luton	12,256
Milton Keynes	9,702
Norwich (Chantry)	12,834
Norwich (Mountergate)	13,618
Oxford	15,842
Peterborough	17,432
Southend-on-Sea	15,673
St. Albans	5,844
Stevenage	9,396

[1]Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Young People (Benefits)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the changes since 1979, and the dates when they occurred (i) in the conditions of entitlement to supplementary benefit and income support of persons aged 19 years in non-advanced education and (ii) in the circumstances in which extra-statutory payments in lieu of benefit can be made to such persons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 23 January 1989, c.415-17]:* I regret the answer was incomplete. I should add that from 11 April 1988, on the introduction of income support, extra-statutory payments were made in additional circumstances to certain 19-year-olds in full-time education. Payments were available on application to young people of age 19 who either had no parents or were estranged or separated from them, and who had been receiving supplementary benefit on that basis immediately before the introduction of income support. The payments from the transitional payments unit in Glasgow were made at the rate of supplementary benefit previously paid, and continued up to the end of the 1988 school year or age 20, in the same way as supplementary benefit would have done. These special payments relating to the transition from supplementary benefit to income support are not available to young people who reached age 19 on or after 11 April 1988.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of the total population of each standard planning region of the United Kingdom was dependent upon income support or its predecessor benefits in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information could be provided only by social security region and only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are claiming income support in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom; what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979; and what was the percentage increase over 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about supplementary benefit or income support claimants is not collected by standard planning region. Information by social security region is as follows:

Table 1
Number of claimants in receipt of Supplementary Benefit in a week in November/December: 1979 to 1981

Thousands

Social Security Region	1979	1980	1981
Northern	200	218	255
Yorkshire and Humberside	277	312	374
East Midlands and East Anglia	244	272	324
London North	260	287	346

Social Security Region	1979	1980	1981
London South	294	312	364
London West	218	235	272
South Western	210	221	255
West Midlands	274	312	389
North Western—Manchester	204	226	273
Merseyside	215	233	278
Wales	172	186	221
Scotland	286	304	371

Table 2

Number of claimants in receipt of Supplementary Benefit or Income Support in a week[1]: 1982 to 1988

Thousands

Social Security Region	1982	1983	1984	1986	1987	1988[2]
North Eastern	692	714	756	794	777	701
London North	660	669	710	774	755	644
London South	579	582	626	680	664	581
Wales and South Western	541	548	582	624	607	545
Midlands	728	732	769	821	818	715
North Western	644	664	698	739	738	670
Wales	253	260	275	291	287	259
Scotland	423	440	468	506	535	499

[1] A week in November or December up to 1984, February 1986 and in May 1987.

[2] Figures for 1988 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Note: Due to the restructuring of the Regional Organisation in 1982 it is not possible to estimate the percentage increase over 1979.

Sources for both tables: 1979-1987 Annual Statistical Inquiry.
1988 May Quarterly Statistical Inquiry.

Single Parents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the results to date of the pilot exercises being carried out by officers from his Department at Eastbourne and Leicester benefit offices on single parents' reliance on social security benefits; if he will list the benefits being claimed and by sex; what consideration in the exercise is being given to child care provision and job training; whether this exercise will be carried out at other offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Independent research exploring the motivations and perceptions of lone parents receiving benefit has been commissioned. It will look at a wide range of lone parents' circumstances including child care arrangements and job training.

A pilot of the design of the study is currently under way in Sittingbourne and Leicester. A sample of lone parents receiving income support have been selected at random and invited to participate in the study. The results from this pilot, which is scheduled for completion on 24 February, will be used to ensure that the main study is effective.

The national study will begin in April 1989 in 44 locations across the country and will include lone parents receiving income support or one-parent benefit only. The final report is due in May 1990.

Mr. Simon Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to introduce monitoring procedures for one-parent benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: One-parent benefit is paid to 670,000 claimants and estimated expenditure on it in 1988-89 is £169 million. There is at present no procedure for reviewing entitlement to the benefit. Procedures for postal review of claims exist for a number of other social security benefits such as income support and invalidity benefit. We have therefore decided that arrangements for postal review of claims to one-parent benefit should be introduced. A postal review of existing claims will be conducted, starting in February. In addition a procedure for regular postal review of new claims will be introduced and this will begin in 1990.

Funeral Costs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ease the criteria for social security payment of funeral costs in the light of the findings of the Office of Fair Trading that the estate of a deceased person or insurance payments fails to meet the full cost of the funeral in 28 per cent. of cases, and social security payments contribute in 3 per cent. of cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The introduction of social fund funeral payments in April 1987 extended help with meeting the cost of a simple funeral, which had previously been available only to people receiving supplementary benefit, to all on low incomes, whether in work or out of it. People who are in receipt of income support, family credit or housing benefit are eligible. We plan to lay regulations before the House shortly to extend eligibility for funeral payments, as from April 1989, to people in Scotland who receive a community charge rebate and, from April 1990, to those in England, Wales and Scotland who receive a community charge benefit. We believe that it is right to concentrate help in this manner and that a family who can afford to pay funeral costs which cannot be met from the deceased's estate should be expected to do so.

One-parent Families

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing expenditure on social security benefits for one-parent families in 1969, 1970, 1980 and each year thereafter, at constant 1988-89 prices and as percentages of all social security benefit expenditure for families with children in each year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Data on a consistent basis are available only for the years from 1981-82. The information requested is given for the years 1981-82 to 1988-89.

£ million, Great Britain

	Social security[1] expenditure on lone parents[2] (1988-89 prices)	*Expenditure as percentage of total social security expenditure on families with children[3]*
1981-82	1,860	28
1982-83	2,090	30
1983-84	2,300	32
1984-85	2,420	32
1985-86	2,640	35
1986-87	2,920	37
1987-88	3,110	40
1988-89	3,390	43

[1] Benefits included are: One parent benefit, supplementary benefit/income support, housing benefit, child benefit, maternity benefit and family income supplement/family credit.

[2] Excludes widows with children.

[3] Family benefits are those paid on account of family responsibilities. Benefits included in the definition are: Child benefit, one parent benefit, family income supplement/family credit, maternity benefit and supplementary benefit/income support and housing benefit paid to lone parent families.

Widows' Benefits

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will take steps to remove the anomaly whereby a widow may claim a range of benefits on the death of her husband the level of which is dependent on his contribution record, whereas a widower is not eligible for any such benefits although his wife's earnings may have contributed equally or solely to the family's income.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A draft European Community directive which aims to complete the process of implementing the principle of equal treatment for men and women in statutory and occupational social security schemes is currently under consideration. This directive, if implemented in its present form, would require the application of equal treatment to benefits for survivors.

Poverty Line

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of the adult working population he assesses as being below the poverty line; and what percentage was below the poverty line in 1984 and 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no official definition of "poverty" and no generally agreed way in which to qualify it. Nor has there ever been any suggestion or acceptance by any Government, irrespective of party, that it is possible to draw any simple poverty line.

Pensions

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he will be taking following receipt of the report from the Occupational Pensions Board on the balance of interests between employers and occupational scheme members.

Mr. Moore: I have today laid before Parliament the report by the Occupational Pensions Board on the balance of interests between employers and occupational scheme members. The report is being published today as Cm. 573, "Protecting Pensions: Safeguarding Benefits in a Changing Environment". We are considering the recommendations, and will find it valuable to know the views of interested organisations and individuals to inform that process.

I am therefore, today, launching a three-month consultation exercise to seek the general reaction to the report. Responses should be sent by 30 April to: DSS, Room 429, Friars House, 157-168 Blackfriars Road, London, SE1 8EU.

Social Fund

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce the revised allocation of social fund budgets for the offices at Rhyl and Deeside following the transfer of responsibility for Bagillt from Rhyl to Deeside.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 30 January 1989 the area of Bagillt previously served by the office at Rhyl became the responsibility of the office at Deeside. Accordingly the allocations to Rhyl and Deeside have been adjusted. The new allocations are as follows:

	Grants budget (£)	*Loans budget (£)*	*Period of allocation*
Rhyll	108,524	250,048	11 April 1988 to 31 March 1989
Deeside	54,380	128,567	[1]23 May 1988 to 31 March 1989

[1] Deeside office opened on 23 May 1988.

SCOTLAND

Metered Water

16. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the increased charges for metered water supplies.

Mr. Rifkind: I have received representations on behalf of six trade associations and four companies.

Ferries

17. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in the transferring to the private sector of the Gourock-Dunoon and Wemyss Bay-Rothesay routes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The possible transfer of the Gourock-Dunoon and Wemyss Bay-Rothesay routes to the private sector will be a matter for the new board of Caledonian MacBrayne to consider once it has been appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Constitutional Convention

18. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any request from those organising the constitutional convention for the use of the old high school buildings in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Responsibility for use of the buildings rests primarily with my learned Friend, the Lord Advocate, whose Department occupies them. I understand that no such request has been received.

Rating Reform

19. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the criteria for relief from the poll tax for disabled people.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations about the reliefs from liability to pay the full community charge that may be available for disabled people.

20. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the community charge from the police forces in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: None.

21. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what average level of community charge in Scotland he is now estimating for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

42. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the levels of poll tax declared by the regions and districts in Scotland for the year 1988-89.

Mr. Lang: The average level of community charge in Scotland in 1989-90, including community water charge will be £301, as compared with the average charge of £267, which would have been required had authorities budgeted only to increase their spending in line with inflation. It is clear that many authorities have budgeted to increase their spending by well over the rate of inflation, and I expect that their community charge payers will call them to account in due course.

23. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will seek to remove the anomaly in the community charge regulations whereby people with a severe mental impairment have been given exemption from paying the community charge whereas people with degenerative brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease will not quality for exemption.

Mr. Rifkind: The question whether people with degenerative brain disorders should be exempt from liability to pay the community charge was considered in detail during the parliamentary stages of the community charge legislation. It was recognised that considerable difficulties and potential for unfairness would be involved in assessing precisely when such a person reached a level of impairment at which an exemption would be appropriate. I remain satisfied that there are no grounds for extending the present exemptions for people who are severely mentally impaired to include those with degenerative brain disorders.

24. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest assessment of the effect of the poll tax on medically and socially disadvantaged groups.

52. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest assessment of the effect of the poll tax on medically and socially disadvantaged groups.

53. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest assessment of the effect of the poll tax on medically and socially disadvantaged groups.

Mr. Lang: The community charge rebate scheme will ensure that nobody will be required to pay more community charge than they are able to afford. It is estimated that over 1 million people in Scotland will benefit from the scheme. The calculation of people's eligibility for rebate takes account of a wide range of circumstances including their financial circumstances and whether they are disabled. In addition, the community charge provides for exemption from the community charge for certain groups of people, including those with severe mental impairment and long-stay patients in hospitals, residential care homes, nursing homes or hostels.

26. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what account he took in reaching his estimate of the 1989-90 average poll tax levy for each regional and district authority of demand for education, housing and other services that these authorities are responsible for and of the likely increase of the cost of providing such services.

Mr. Lang: Our estimates were based on local authorities' own budgeted relevant current expenditure for 1988-89, plus 6 per cent., plus allowances for the additional costs of community charge administration and school boards. Most housing costs fall on the housing revenue account and do not directly affect the levels of community charges.

27. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the use of computer tagging to assist with the community charge.

Mr. Lang: Representations that a personal identifier would be required for each individual liable for the personal community charge were made by local authority practitioners during the passage of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987. Following those representations a requirement for all such individuals to supply registration officers with their date of birth was inserted into the Act. A number of individuals and organisations made representations against the proposal. The development of computer systems is a matter for individual local authorities and my right hon. and learned Friend has made no recommendation to them on whether personal identifiers should be used and, if so, on what basis.

30. **Mr Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sanctions he takes against a regional council that is printing and distributing official forms which describe the community charge as a poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I strongly deprecate the use by a local authority of the term "poll tax" in relation to the community charge. It is misleading to do so because it implies, quite wrongly, that there is a connection between liability to pay the community charge and the right to vote. The community charges register and the electoral register are drawn up on different criteria for quite separate purposes.

31. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received recent representations from the Scottish Trades Union Congress about the community charge in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no recent representations from the Scottish Trades Union Congress on the community charge. The matter was not raised wth me by the STUC during my meeting with them on 27 January.

33. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what would be the cost of extending the exemption from the poll tax to people who are severely physically handicapped.

Mr. Lang: The Government do not intend to extend the exemptions from the community charge to include people who are physically handicapped and no assessment of the cost of such an extension has therefore been made.

37. **Mr Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will exempt from the standard community charge owners of properties certified by them to be unsuitable for habitation.

Mr. Lang: Judgments about the habitability of properties are the responsibility of the community charges registration officer. His decisions are subject to appeal in the usual way. A system whereby such judgments were left to the owners of the properties concerned would be unworkable. The standard community charge is not payable on houses subject to closing or demolition orders or which are incapable of being lived in because they are being repaired, improved or reconstructed. Caravans,

huts, sheds, bothies or other similar structures which are intended to be used for residential purposes but are not, for any reason habitable throughout the year will remain subject to rating and will not be liable for the standard charge.

38. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with Alzheimers, Scotland, about the application of the community charge.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations from sufferers of Alzheimer's disease regarding payment of the community charge. A response to the points raised in these representations has recently been issued.

44. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures he has available for the number of persons who have thus far not registered for payment of the community charge.

Mr. Lang: Responsibility for the compilation of community charges register rests with individual community charges registration officers and precise information about the levels of registration are not available. Initial indicators suggest, however, that the average level of registration throughout Scotland is around 99 per cent. of those liable to pay the community charge. This clearly demonstrates the failure of those campaigning against the community charge to make any impact.

45. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped to discuss the implications of the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

47. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what regulations he has issued for community charge registration officers concerning residential care homes.

Mr. Lang: Schedule 1A to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 1988, defines a "residential care home" and exempts someone who is solely or mainly resident in such a home from personal community charge liability.

The Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1988, which were laid before the House on 24 August 1988, determine the extent to which a residential care home will be treated as a domestic subject for the purposes of section 2 of the 1987 Act.

The Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1988, which were laid on 9 September 1988, provide for exemption from the standard community charge for persons who are exempt from the personal community charge by virtue of being solely or mainly resident in a residential care home.

49. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to meet representatives of Scottish students to discuss community charge rebates.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

50. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue advice to local authorities about how best to estimate the proportion of their theoretical maximum poll tax income which will not be collected, taking into account all known factors including deliberate evasion of the registration process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No. This is a matter for the local authorities themselves. The success of the registration process so far suggests that non-collection through evasion will not be a major problem.

56. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students in Scotland will be liable to pay the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that about 96,000 full-time students will be required to pay the 20 per cent. contribution towards the personal community charge and personal community water charge for which such students are liable.

57. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will agree to meet a deputation from the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss its views on the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend will as always consider any requests from the Scottish Trades Union Congress for a meeting. No request for a meeting about the community charge has, however, been received. I met the general council of the STUC on Friday 27 January when the issue of the community charge was not raised.

59. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider seeking to amend the community charge legislation, to exempt individuals with degenerative brain disorders from paying the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: The question whether people with degenerative brain disorders should be exempt from liability to pay the community charge was considered in detail during the parliamentary stages of the community charge legislation. It was recognised that considerable difficulties and potential for unfairness would be involved in assessing precisely when such a person reached a level of impairment at which an exemption would be appropriate. I remain satisfied that there are no grounds for extending the present exemptions for people who are severely impaired to include those with degenerative brain disorders.

60. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from the National Union of Students, Scottish area, about the impact of the community charge on Scottish students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The National Union of Students was consulted about a number of sets of regulations concerning students which have been made under the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 and its comments were taken fully into account. It has also been consulted on a draft information leaflet about the community charge which is to be made available to students, and its comments are being considered.

66. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the community charge register to be available for public inspection in Strathclyde and every other region in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: On 1 April 1989.

67. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the number of mentally handicapped people in Scotland; and how many of them are eligible for exemption from payment of the poll tax.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is not possible to give exact figures or reliable estimates of the total number of people with mental handicap in Scotland since reported prevalence rates for milder degrees of mental handicap show wide variation.

People with severe mental handicap may be eligible for exemption from liability to pay the community charge if they are severely mentally impaired within the meaning of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 as amended and meet the qualifying conditions.

The joint Scottish Home and Health Department—social work services group consultation document of 22 October 1987 on proposals for exempting people with severe mental handicap indicated that an estimated three per 1,000 of the population suffered from severe mental handicap and that the figure included those who were in-patients in mental handicap hospitals and those under 18 years of age.

69. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will introduce legislation to stop warrant sales being used against people who refuse to pay the poll tax or fines associated with the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: No. I am satisfied that existing debt collection procedures are appropriate for the collection of community charge arrears and of associated civil penalties.

70. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the total number of retirement pensioners in Scotland who will not have to pay the full amount of the poll tax; and what percentage of the total number of retirement pensioners in Scotland this figure represents.

Mr. Lang: There are approximately 1,014,000 persons aged 60 or more in Scotland. It is estimated that over 50 per cent. of these will not have to pay the full amount of the community charge.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the Scottish local authorities who have written to him supporting the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: No local authority has made written representations to my right hon. and learned Friend recently about the policy of introducing the community charge.

Farm Woodland Grant

22. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made with regard to the farm woodland grant scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There has been considerable interest in this scheme in Scotland. Since the scheme opened at the beginning of October, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has received 102 applications containing proposals for planting almost 1,200 hectares of land.

Council House Sales

25. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about progress with sales of council houses and flats under the right-to-buy legislation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Almost 92,000 council houses and flats in Scotland were sold under the right-to-buy legislation from October 1980 to end September 1988. This is clear evidence of the success of the Government's right-to-buy policy and has made a major contribution to the diversification of ownership in Scotland.

28. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in Scotland since May 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of dwellings sold by Scottish local authorities to sitting tenants in the period from April 1979 to September 1988 was 95,075.

32. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council properties have been sold to their tenants in Scotland since 1979; and what proportion of Scottish houses are now in owner-occupation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of dwellings sold by Scottish local authorities to sitting tenants in the period from April 1979 to September 1988 was 95,075. Over 44 per cent. of Scottish houses are now in owner-occupation.

Industrial Rating

29. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has met representatives of the Chemical Industry Association to discuss the proposals on industrial rating contained in its recent representations to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I met representatives of the Chemical Industries Association in Glasgow on 13 January. We had a useful discussion on the proposals for reform of the industrial rating system in Scotland put forward by that association in its recent briefing paper "Scottish Industrial Rates: The Need for Change". The association's representatives accepted that radical change was not possible before the 1990 revaluation, but I was able to assure them that we are giving serious consideration to the prescription of decapitalisation rates north and south of the border for 1990, and to moving to a common approach on the treatment of plant and machinery as soon as possible after that. I also assured the association of our commitment to achieving harmonisation, and to moving to a common non-domestic rate in all areas.

Competitive Tendering

34. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress is being made by local health authorities in Scotland with regard to competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: By the end of December, Scottish health boards had awarded 43 contracts for domestic and catering services producing estimated savings, for reinvestment in direct patient care, of nearly £15·4 million over the next three years. Further blocks of services are now being put out to tender.

Rating Valuation

35. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress being made in harmonising rating valuation practices in Scotland with England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: The task of harmonisation is a complex one, but significant progress is being made and the full extent of this will become apparent in 1990. Our commitment to fairness for business ratepayers north and south of the border is not in doubt, and we intend to see through the programme of reform on which we have embarked.

Scottish TUC

36. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I met the general council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 27 January. I drew its attention to the impressive performance of the Scottish economy in 1988, which saw major advances in manufacturing, construction and services; continuing successes in inward investment; a fall of 42,000 in seasonally-adjusted unemployment; and evidence of increased business optimism and investment intentions.

Teachers

39. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to enhance the skills and standing of the teaching profession.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is primarily for education authorities to ensure that the skills of their teaching force are sustained and extended. The Government strongly support programmes that foster professional commitment and provide means to improve qualifications and expertise. To that end, my right hon. and learned Friend established the Scottish committee for staff development in education in 1987 to promote the development of in-service training and to encourage its uptake by the profession. In that year the pay and conditions settlement which followed the teachers' dispute stipulated that five days should be set aside each year for in-service training and up to 50 hours for planned activities. The Government also fund the equivalent of 190 academic staff at colleges of education as a national resource available for the provision of in-service training and for assisting central training programmes. It is also supporting at a cost of £1 million per annum a major new initiative for the management training of headteachers.

Unemployment

40. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had recent discussions with the Confederation of British Industry about the level of unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I am in frequent touch with the Confederation of British Industry on a range of issues affecting the Scottish economy. I am sure that the CBI shares my satisfaction that seasonally-adjusted unemployment in Scotland fell by 42,000 last year and is now at its lowest level since October 1981.

Employment (Springburn)

41. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to increase employment levels in Glasgow, Springburn.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Development Agency and St. Rollox industrial development enterprise (STRIDE), the job creation enterprise set up by British Rail, are jointly commissioning consultants to identify employment, training and business development opportunities and the role of STRIDE within a wider economic initiative for Springburn. Additionally, the agency has under consideration a training and employment grants scheme aimed at the long-term unemployed and is actively pursuing with a housing development company, proposals for housing refurbishment within the Springburn area which would involve local construction jobs.

School Boards

43. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations he has received regarding school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 35 formal responses have been received to consultation on draft regulations and guidance.

58. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had with regard to the voting system for school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Twenty-two formal responses have been received to consultation on draft guidance on electoral procedure. In considering the content of the guidance to be issued, my right hon. and learned Friend will take these carefully into account, along with the views expressed during debate on the School Boards (Scotland) Bill by hon. Members from both sides of the House in favour of a single election system throughout Scotland and against any form of proportional representation.

Civil Service Dispersal

46. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what benefits have accrued to Scotland arising from recent Civil Service dispersal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Since 1979 some 2,000 civil service posts have been dispersed to Scotland, representing 35 per cent. of the total moved. Some 70 per cent. of these posts have been filled by local recruitment, providing many valuable employment opportunities, particularly for young people and school leavers. Local economies have also benefited from the creation of additional jobs in services. The momentum of dispersal is being maintained, and I particularly welcome the recent decision of the Department of Social Security to move 430 posts to Glasgow as part of its programme of relocating work out of London.

Employment Training

48. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the Government's employment training scheme is progressing in Scotland; and how many people have taken up places on the scheme.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) earlier today.

Tree Planting

51. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how far the Government's commitment to 33,000 hectares of new tree planting per annum is being met.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the year ended 31 March 1988, new planting by the Forestry Commission and by the private sector in respect of which grants were paid totalled 28,773 hectares. The figure for the current year is likely to be somewhat higher.

Woodland

54. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of land in Scotland is covered by woodland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Just under 14 per cent. of Scotland is covered by woodland.

Newbattle Abbey College

55. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what reply he has sent to the submission made to him on or around 23 December 1988 regarding the future of Newbattle Abbey college, Dalkeith.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the submission made by the board of governors of Newbattle Abbey college about continued Government funding for the college. He will respond shortly.

Flagship Schools

61. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals for the creation of flagship schools as centres of excellence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have already announced our intention to proceed with the establishment of technology academies in Scotland to provide practical examples of high standards and expectations for pupils, parents and teachers.

Skye Road Bridge

62. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed construction of a road bridge to the Isle of Skye.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on Wednesday 25 January.

Scottish Bus Group

63. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received with regard to the promotion of management-employee buy-outs in the Scottish Bus Group; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations on this subject from individual Scottish Bus Group subsidiaries and other interests. He has made it clear that he is keen to encourage management-employee buy-outs. The basis on which assistance will be given towards financial advice has already been announced to the House during the Second Reading of the Transport (Scotland) Bill on 14 December 1988 at columns 978-79.

Rate Rebates

64. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of people who currently receive a full rate rebate.

Mr. Lang: Figures for the number of people receiving the maximum rebate in 1988-89 are not available.

European Single Market

65. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress the committee looking into the implications and opportunities for Scotland of the single market in Europe is making; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The single market committee of the Scottish Economic Council has been formed and held its first meeting on 13 January 1989. The committee members cover a wide range of interests including manufacturing industry, financial services, local authorities and trade unions and many of them have direct, practical experience of conducting business in Europe on behalf of both the private and public sectors. I am confident that with such a range of expertise on which to draw, the committee is very well placed to take an overview of activity in Scotland, and will be able to bring forward practical recommendations from which Scotland as a whole will benefit.

Forests

68. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the projected output from Scottish forests over the next 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest timber production estimates are as follows:

Year commencing 1 April	*Estimated Production (000 cm)*
1989	2,435
1990	2,520
1991	2,605
1992	2,690
1993	2,775
1994	2,930
1995	3,085
1996	3,240
1997	3,395
1998	3,550
1999	3,730

Heating Costs

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average annual cost of heating a standard three-bedroom house in Scotland by electricity.

Mr. Rifkind: Estimated average annual costs for heating a standard three-bedroom, semi-detached house by electricity in central Scotland are as follows:

	Well insulated	*Some loft insulation and draught-proofing*	*Minimal insulation*
	£	£	£
Space heating only	235	360	425
Space heating and water heating	325	450	515

Notes:

1. Costs are calculated on the same basis as the last published (February 1986) Monergy Guides with tariffs updated to the levels operated by the South of Scotland Electricity Board from April 1988.
2. No standing charges or maintenance costs are included.
3. The calculations are based on all day heating (16 hours) using modern storage radiators and the figures are adjusted for outside temperatures prevailing in central Scotland.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland are in full-time employment; and what are the average annual figures for full-time employment in Scotland for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: The table gives the available information for each of the last 10 years on the number of employees in employment and the self-employed. It does not include participants on work-related Government training programmes.

Since it is not possible to obtain estimates of the number of male employees in full-time employment in Scotland for each of the 10 years, the figures for employees in employment include a small number of part-time male employees. For the years 1978, 1981 and 1984 the censuses of employment record some 0·06 million part-time employees in employment. The employee estimates may be revised when the results of the 1987 census of employment becomes available.

It is not possible to exclude those working part-time from the estimate of total self-employed in Scotland. The vast majority are likely to have been in full-time employment (in Great Britain about one sixth of the self-employed now work part time).

million

	Employees in employment in Scotland: males (full-time and part-time) plus females (full-time only) annual averages	*Self-employed in Scotland (full-time and part-time)*
		June
1978	1·75	0·15
1979	1·76	0·16
1980	1·73	0·15
1981	1·65	0·15
1982	1·59	0·16
1983	1·56	0·18
1984	1·55	0·19
1985	1·54	0·20
1986	1·51	0·20
1987	1·49	0·19
1988[1]	1·50	0·20

[1] September 1988 figures: not adjusted for seasonal variation.

Manufacturing

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the productivity growth figures in manufacturing industry in Scotland for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: Over the year to March 1988, output per head in Scottish manufacturing industry was 9·8 per cent. higher than a year earlier. This compares with an increase of 7·3 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Business (Overseas Investment)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of overseas investment attracted by Scottish businesses for each of the last three years.

Mr. Lang: There are no figures available for the total amount of overseas investment attracted by Scottish businesses. Figures for investment and jobs associated with offers of regional selective assistance projects by overseas-owned companies for the last three financial years are as follows:

	Associated investment (£m)	*Associated jobs created and safeguarded*
1985-86	646·8	4,380
1986-87	316·6	4,360
1987-88	240·2	5,820

Earnings

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current average earnings rate in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates in Scotland in April 1988 are estimated in the Department of Employment's new earning survey to have been £204·50. Scotland continues to rank highly among the GB standard regions, and was behind only the south-east and north-west in April 1988.

Single Parent

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on the application by the Scottish Council for Single Parents for renewal of funding for its training unit under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1988; and whether he will make it his policy to take into account the work already being done by this and similar organisations on the reliance of single parents on social security.

Mr. Rifkind: Decisions on the large number of applications received for funding under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 will be announced shortly. The contribution made by applicant organisations in their respective areas of social work provision is one of a number of factors taken into account in reaching a decision on funding.

Alcohol

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many alcohol-related offences were reported to children's panels in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is available only for 1987 and for three social work authorities. Referrals for drunkenness and liquor licensing offences in that year were:

	Number
Central	9
Grampian	6
Strathclyde	145

They accounted for 0·9 per cent. of offence referrals in those areas. No information is available on offences where alcohol was a contributory factor.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet representatives of the Scottish Football Association to discuss the issue of alcohol abuse involving persons under 18 years of age and to seek their assistance in banning all advertising at football grounds throughout Scotland of alcoholic drinks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The codes of practice relating to the advertising of alcohol generally have recently been strengthened, particularly in their requirements about advertising and young people. The ministerial group on alcohol misuse, which initiated the review of the codes, intends to monitor the effects of the changes.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish councils concerning alcohol abuse and the consumption of alcohol in public places.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Three district councils have written concerning the possible use of byelaws to prohibit consumption of alcohol in specified public places and one has written to express support for a Bill to control under-age drinking in public.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of Scottish churches; and whether he discussed with them the problem of alcohol abuse.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no recent discussions with representatives of Scottish churches or any request for such a discussion on the problem of alcohol abuse.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many prosecutions there were for the offence of drinking under age in Scotland in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the average fine for the offence of drinking under age in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is given in the table. Persons under 18 consuming exciseable liquor in a bar are not separately identifiable from persons under 18 purchasing such liquor.

Persons under 18 buying exciseable liquor or consuming alcohol in licensed premises

Year	*Number of persons proceeded against*	*Number of persons with a charge proved*	*Number of persons fined*	*Average amount of fine (£)*
1979	602	588	509	13·16
1980	465	450	375	15·50
1981	317	310	256	15·65
1982	173	159	130	15·71
1983	140	136	112	19·87
1984	114	103	82	23·74
1985	83	77	56	26·95
1986	120	116	77	29·31
1987	131	130	92	30·82

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children were taken into care where alcohol abuse was involved in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek to make it an offence for a person under the age of 18 years to consume alcohol in public places.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no present plans to do so, but I am consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to seek their views on those problems and on whether changes in legislation might assist in dealing with them and will take their views into account.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will support the request from a number of Scottish councils to impose a bye/law to prohibit the consumption of alcohol in designated public places; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: To date only one council has requested agreement to the making of a byelaw that would prohibit the consumption of alcohol in designated public places. In that case I have indicated that in its particular circumstances it may be possible to achieve the desired objective by the use of a management rule. As two other councils have also indicated interest in making such a byelaw, I am consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to seek their views on the need for such byelaws and on their likely effectiveness in dealing with the problems commonly associated with drinking in public. Once I have had an opportunity to study their replies I shall decide whether it may be possible to approve such byelaws as part of an experimental scheme of limited duration.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish Police Federation about the problem of alcohol abuse by persons under the age of 18 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chief constable of Strathclyde; and whether he discussed the problem of alcohol abuse involving persons under the age of 18 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the chief constable of Strathclyde police at the Lockerbie memorial service on 4 January when this topic was not discussed.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many convictions for the offence of breach of the peace where alcohol was directly or indirectly involved there were in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give details of the number of convictions of persons under the age of 18 years, for violent crime where alcohol has been directly or indirectly involved.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of representations made to him on the problem of persons under the age of 18 years consuming alcohol in public; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Only three representations have been received, one from a district council and two from community councils, specifically on the problems associated with persons under 18 years drinking alcohol in public. While the consultation paper we issued on the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1986 did not include this particular topic, some 60 respondents expressed concern about underage drinking in general. I am consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to seek their views on these problems and on whether changes in legislation might assist in dealing with them.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many retailers were convicted of selling alcohol to persons under the age of 18 years in each year since 1979;

(2) how many people were convicted of being agents in the sale of alcohol to persons under the age of 18 years in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is given in the table. Retailers are not separately identifiable, but in general, licensees are legally responsible for the actions of their agents in this matter.

Sale of drink to persons under 18

Year	*Number of persons with a charge proved*
1979	69
1980	88
1981	91
1982	65
1983	75
1984	114
1985	90
1986	106
1987	113

Children in Care

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children have been taken into care in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of children admitted into care in Scotland, excluding Strathclyde, in each year between 1979 and 1987 is given in the table.

Year ending 31 March	*Number of children admitted into care*
1979	3,306
1980	3,105
1981	3,093
1982	3,016
1983	2,758
1984	2,556
1985	2,692
1986	2,891
1987	2,664

Comparable information for Strathclyde is not available for years before 1987 when 5,390 children were admitted into care in the region.

Aluminium

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had with Scottish water authorities about pollution from aluminium contained in drinking water.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department is in frequent contact with the water authorities about the quality of drinking water supplies, to monitor compliance with EC standards. Aluminium is one of the substances concerned. The Department keeps closely in touch with research on aluminium in drinking water and provides guidance to the water authorities on the findings of such research as and when necessary.

National Farmers Union

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the National Farmers Union; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend and my noble Friend have regular meetings with union representatives to discuss issues of current concern; most recently my noble Friend met the president and other representatives on 30 January to discuss the reform of the EC beef regime.

Salmonella

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations have been made to him by groups or individuals about the effects of salmonella from eggs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As at 30 January, my right hon. and learned Friend had received three letters from hon. Members expressing concern about the implications of salmonella from eggs. In addition officials have received one letter from an individual and about 70 telephone inquiries, largely on the cooking implications.

European Commission

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the European Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend last met representatives of the European Commission on 4 October 1988 when he led a mission to Brussels organised by Scottish Financial Enterprise. The mission consisted mainly of representatives of financial sector companies but included representatives of manufacturing industry, local government and the Scottish Trades Union Congress. The purposes of the mission were to allow the participants to learn about the likely effects of the completion of the single European market on their areas of interest and to ensure that the Commission was fully aware of the distinctive characteristics and potential of the Scottish financial community.

Cold Weather

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of pensioners; and whether he discussed fuel poverty and cold weather payments for the elderly.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My noble Friend Lord Glenarthur, then Minister of State, Scottish Office, met representatives of Age Concern in 1987. I understand that fuel poverty and cold weather payments were not raised at that meeting.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of deaths recorded in Scotland each year since 1979 from cold weather-related illnesses.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is available on deaths from hypothermia. This is as follows:

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia, Scotland, 1979-88

Year	*Total*
1979	259
1980	199
1981	254
1982	196
1983	179
1984	176
1985	232
1986	209
1987	153
[1]1988	123

[1]Provisional figure.

Coal Imports

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what tonnage of imported coal is presently stocked by the South of Scotland electricity board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland electricity board that coal from different sources is not stocked separately at the power stations.

Ministers' Offices

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of expenditure on the refurbishment of his and other Ministers' offices at the Scottish Office, Edinburgh, since 1979.

Mr. Rifkind: There has been no expenditure on refurbishing my office in Edinburgh or those of my ministerial colleagues since 1979 other than that incurred in the recent removal to St. Andrew's house. Final costs of that removal are not yet available, but are likely to be in the order of £150,000.

Appointments

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the appointments within his control as Secretary of State and all appointments made by him since June 1987, with salaries and expenses.

Mr. Rifkind: The list of non-departmental public bodies to which I make appointments is contained in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies", a copy of which is available in the Library. The list includes information about the numbers of appointments and the remuneration paid to members. One major body has been set up since the publication of "Public Bodies 1988". This is Scottish Homes to which I have appointed a chairman (remuneration £27,600 per annum) and eight members (£3,775 per annum).

While a list of all appointments made since June 1987 could be provided only at disproportionate cost, a list (correct at 5 December 1988) of all the members of the bodies listed in "Public Bodies" was placed in the Library in response to a Question from the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) answered on 7 December 1988 at column *211*.

I also make appointments jointly with other Ministers. The majority of these are shown in the appropriate chapters in "Public Bodies". Other bodies in this category are:

Potato Marketing Board Wool Marketing Board	Remuneration determined by Boards
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	Chairman £4,920 per annum Members expenses only

I make appointments of two members to each of:

Board	
Scottish Milk Marketing Board Aberdeen and District Milk Marketing Board North of Scotland Milk Marketing Board	Remuneration determined by Boards

Other appointments for which I am responsible are:

Body	*Appointment*	*Remuneration*
Preliminary Review Committee for Life Sentence Prisoners	Chairman and 4 members	As for Parole Board for Scotland
Appeals Tribunal Panel under Section 64 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968	12 members	£98 per day
Advisory Group on Breast Cancer Screening	Chairman and 15 members	Expenses only
The Single Market Committee of the Scottish Economic Council	Chairman and 11 members	Expenses only
St. Andrew's Links Trust	Chairman	Expenses only

Body	Appointment	Remuneration
Post Qualification Education Board for NHS Pharmacists in Scotland	Chairman and 10 members	Expenses only
Consumer Committee for Scotland under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958	Chairman	Expenses only
Committee of Investigation for Scotland under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958	Chairman	Expenses only

Coal Industry

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he last met Mr. Albert Wheeler; and whether he discussed the future of the Scottish coal industry;

(2) when he last met representatives of the National Union of Mineworkers to discuss the Scottish coal industry.

Mr. Lang: Government responsibility for the coal industry in Great Britain, including Scotland, rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has therefore not discussed the industry with Mr. Wheeler or the National Union of Mineworkers.

Electricity

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had with Scottish voluntary consumer groups about the setting up of consumer committees responsible for the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Lang: The existing electricity consultative councils for the north and south of Scotland, which operate under the provisions of the Electricity (Scotland) Act 1979 and which have been in existence broadly in their present form since 1947, include representatives nominated by voluntary consumer groups. The councils have been consulted by the Scottish Office about the Government's proposed regulatory regime for the electricity supply industry after privatisation, including the setting up of consumer committees which will be responsible to the Director General of Electricity Supply (DGES) in Scotland.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated average additional cost to the Scottish consumer of the recent increase in electricity prices yearly until 2002.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland electricity board and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board that the estimated average additional costs to electricity consumers within their areas of the most recent increase in tariffs, which took effect on 1 April 1988, are as set out in the table.

	SSEB		*NSHEB*	
	Increase £/pa	*Average consumption* KWh/pa	*Increase* £/pa	*Average consumption* KWh/pa
Domestic tariff	10·96	3,800	13·41	4,921
Domestic white meter tariff	19·55	11,400	19·99	12,589

The effect of these increases will remain the same for each year up to 2002, assuming that the average consumptions and patterns of usage remain the same.

An Comunn Gaidhealach

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he hopes to respond to An Comunn Gaidhealach's structure plan for 1987 to 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In March 1987 my Department asked An Comunn Gaidhealach to present a financial plan setting out its policies and expenditure proposals for the period 1987 to 1991. The plan was intended to inform decisions on grant aid to An Comunn for 1988-89 and generally to help with the assessment of the Society's aims, objectives and capabilities. This is the approach followed with non-departmental public bodies and other organisations requesting financial assistance. My officials have discussed the plan with An Comunn on several occasions, and will continue to do so.

Special Branch

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much from the total police budget was allocated to the special branch for each year from 1979 to the current date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally. The allocation of expenditure on special branch activities is a matter for the chief constable of the force concerned.

New Towns

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the bodies and organisations which have responded to the consultation document "The Scottish New Towns—Maintaining the Momentum".

Mr. Lang: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

Abronhill Community Council (Cumbernauld)
Ayrshire Chamber of Industries
Broomlands and Bourtreehill Residents Association
Calderwood Community Council
Church of Scotland Department of Ministry and Mission
Coleman Ballantine Architects, Glasgow
Condorrat Community Council
Cumbernauld Development Corporation
Cumbernauld and District Trades Council
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District Council
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Enterprise Trust
Cumbernauld Theatre Trust Ltd.
Deans Community High School (Livingston)
Dedridge Community Council
Dundee and Tayside Chamber of Commerce and Industry Fife Branch
East Kilbride Chamber of Commerce
East Kilbride Christian Council

East Kilbride Citizens Advice Bureau
East Kilbride Development Corporation
East Kilbride Fabian Society
East Kilbride Residents Federation
Fraser and Partner, Business Managers, Glenrothes
Girdle Toll and Bourtreehill Community Council
Glenrothes Enterprise Trust
Glenrothes Residents Council
Housing Architects Group Irvine Development Corporation
Irvine Development Corporation
Kirkcaldy District Council
Livingston Ecumenical Parish
Livingston Voluntary Organisations Council
Murieston Residents Association (Livingston)
National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO)
Neighbourhood Care Networks (Livingston)
Scottish Churches Industrial Mission
Scottish Local Authorities with New Towns (SLANT)
Scottish National Party
Scottish Old Age Pensions Association
Scottish Society of Directors of Planning
Sealand Industries PLC Cumbernauld
Sixth Year Cumbernauld High School
The Building Societies Association
Whinnyknowe and Balgeddie Meadows Residents Association

Housing Estates (Sale)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has been notified of any approaches for buying estates owned by the Scottish Special Housing Association.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) on 10 January at columns *558-60*.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his instruction to Scottish Homes over the sale of housing estates, or their transfer outside the public sector;

(2) what is his policy towards permitting the sale of housing estates that are currently part of the Scottish Special Housing Association and consultation with tenants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes will have a central role in implementing the Government's housing policy including arrangements to diversify tenure in public sector housing to give tenants a wider choice of housing. In certain circumstances, therefore, it will be appropriate for Scottish Homes to consider proposals by other landlords for the voluntary transfer of houses in its ownership. A number of such proposals have been submitted to the Scottish Special Housing Association and I have announced that it will be for Scottish Homes to respond formally to these proposals after 1 April 1989. The Government have said that Scottish Homes will apply to any such proposals the principles underlying the statutory safeguards for proposed sales by local authorities set out in the Housing Act 1988. Scottish Homes has been invited to draw up detailed procedures which follow closely relevant aspects of the guidelines, issued in September 1988, to local authorities on the voluntary transfer of housing to private bodies together with supplementary guidance which is relevant to disposals by Scottish Homes. A copy of the supplementary guidance will be placed in the House of Commons Library as soon as possible. The procedures to be adopted by Scottish Homes will be published when they have been agreed with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 30 January 1989 that he has agreed a number of basic principles to be adopted by Scottish Homes in handling these matters after 1 April 1989. In particular proposals will in the first instance be assessed rapidly by Scottish Homes and those not rejected will be made public immediately. Scottish Homes will then consider the proposals in greater detail and, where these are judged to be practicable, tenants and other interested organisations such as local authorities will be consulted. My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed Scottish Homes' proposal that in all cases tenants' views will be ascertained by means of a postal ballot. Only where a majority of tenants replying are in favour of the proposals will Scottish Homes approve proposals and submit them for my right hon. and learned Friend's consent.

My right hon. and learned Friend will not consent to any proposals submitted by Scottish Homes unless he is satisfied that they are in the public interest and in particular that the tenants' interests are properly safeguarded, that the proposals constitute good value for money, and that the arrangements for consulting tenants were properly handled.

Rents

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the increase in average rents for *(a)* council houses and *(b)* Scottish Special Housing Association houses since 1979; and what is his estimate of likely increases from 1989 to 1992.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Between 1979-80 and 1988-89, the average annual council house rent in Scotland increased by £587·35. The increase in council house rents for future years is a matter for the local authorities concerned.

Between 1979-80 and 1988-89, the average rent for Scottish Special Housing Association houses increased by £716·80. The increase for 1989-90 in such rent will be £84·80. The increase in 1990-91 and 1991-92 will be for Scottish Homes to determine.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the numbers on council house, new town and Scottish Special Housing Association waiting lists.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Reliable and consistent information on council house waiting list figures is not available centrally. I must therefore refer the hon. Member directly to the local authorities in which he is interested.

With regard to new towns, figures supplied by the development corporations to the Industry Department for Scotland show that waiting list numbers at 31 December were as follows:

New town	*Number*
East Kilbride	[1]4,272
Glenrothes	1,017
Cumbernauld	1,188
Livingston	686
Irvine	729

New town	Number
Total	7,892

[1]Common waiting list with East Kilbride District Council.

The Scottish Special Housing Association does not maintain waiting lists for its general needs houses. When such houses become vacant the local district council is normally invited to nominate tenants. There are 4,081 names on the association's direct waiting list which covers areas where local authorities have such nomination facilities. The latest available figures show 1,628 names at present on the waiting list for economic expansion housing.

Sub-standard Houses

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homes in Scotland he estimates to be sub-standard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department does not make such estimates. Latest estimates by local authorities of the number of houses below the tolerable standard in their areas were published in SDD statistical bulletin HSU No. 3 "Housing Trends in Scotland—Quarter ended 31 March 1988".

SSHA Homes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest figure for the number of Scottish Special Housing Association homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 20 January 1989, the number of SSHA homes was 77,856.

Radiation (Rannoch)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the most up-to-date figures for the level of air and land radiation for the Rannoch area of north Tayside; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Air sampling, which is appropriate only immediately after an incident, has not been undertaken in the Rannoch area. Soil and vegetation sampling has been undertaken throughout Scotland as part of a comprehensive research programme commissioned by the Department of the Environment and the Scottish Development Department.

The measured level of caesium 137 in the upper 7·5 cm of the soil sample taken in the Rannoch area of north Tayside in 1987 was 2,200 bec/sq m, although levels in an adjoining area were as high as 20,000 bec/sq m.

Final reports on the work are in the course of preparation and when published will be placed in the Library.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the levels of support grant to each local authority in Scotland for each year since 1979, and the percentage increase or decrease above the level of inflation these represented.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Total grant paid in 1979-80
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	Per cent.
Regional Authorities		
Borders	21,581,290	−4·8
Central	44,271,194	−1·4
Dumfries and Galloway	28,377,239	−4·4
Fife	59,500,707	−1·0
Grampian	86,144,289	−3·5
Highland	51,692,321	−5·2
Lothian	134,114,764	−2·4
Strathclyde	529,306,137	−2·1
Tayside	74,104,660	−0·8
Islands Councils		
Orkney	4,866,164	−1·6
Shetland	6,138,120	−16·1
Western Isles	14,002,134	−1·0
District Councils		
Berwickshire	427,857	−8·9
Ettrick and Lauderdale	626,045	−21·6
Roxburgh	959,527	−7·4
Tweeddale	263,686	−3·3
Clackmannan	1,073,211	−11·0
Falkirk	1,782,186	−9·1
Stirling	1,702,113	18·2
Annandale and Eskdale	764,614	6·2
Nithsdale	880,531	−11·0
Stewartry	389,399	−1·2
Wigtown	547,534	−11·1
Dunfermline	2,479,811	−7·2
Kirkcaldy	3,200,956	9·0
North East Fife	1,488,534	25·5
Aberdeen City	3,911,386	5·6
Banff and Buchan	1,786,865	−1·2
Gordon	2,225,179	4·9
Kincardine and Deeside	823,516	−3·2
Moray	1,873,225	−4·9
Badenoch and Strathspey	162,288	10·1
Caithness	813,144	6·5
Inverness	864,751	−9·8
Lochaber	558,017	−17·5
Nairn	206,863	−2·5
Ross and Cromarty	1,651,312	−15·1
Skye and Lochalsh	287,836	14·4
Sutherland	549,786	−9·3
East Lothian	1,784,862	7·0
Edinburgh City	7,546,703	−6·0
Midlothian	2,296,228	−12·2
West Lothian	3,018,067	−10·3
Argyll and Bute	2,329,202	5·2
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,163,524	16·4
Clydebank	2,520,810	−6·9
Clydesdale	1,582,386	11·8
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,575,131	9·7
Cumnock and Doon Valley	1,945,759	5·3
Cunninghame	3,153,396	−5·1
Dumbarton	1,790,003	−8·3
East Kilbride	1,711,841	−9·4
Eastwood	1,229,165	−2·4
Glasgow City	34,223,429	7·3
Hamilton	4,182,077	−2·9
Inverclyde	3,323,776	−0·4
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2,702,857	6·3
Kyle and Carrick	2,673,670	−4·8
Monklands	4,958,907	−2·7
Motherwell	4,660,786	4·7
Renfrew	6,079,119	2·2
Strathkelvin	2,711,463	15·7
Angus	2,048,583	−5·7
Dundee City	4,795,408	−11·1
Perth and Kinross	2,393,657	12·5
Scotland	1,194,800,000	−2·1

Total grant paid in 1980-81
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	Per cent.
Regional Authorities		
Borders	26,226,070	3·1
Central	54,436,336	4·5
Dumfries and Galloway	33,785,126	0·6
Fife	71,656,681	2·0
Grampian	102,997,291	1·1
Highland	62,019,477	1·5
Lothian	157,675,681	−0·9
Strathclyde	653,091,151	4·9
Tayside	88,525,497	1·0
Islands Councils		
Orkney	6,378,095	12·6
Shetland	8,029,932	12·4
Western Isles	17,064,827	3·4
District Councils		
Berwickshire	465,460	−9·7
Ettrick and Lauderdale	745,418	0·6
Roxburgh	933,552	−21·2
Tweeddale	293,250	−7·2
Clackmannan	1,342,725	6·7
Falkirk	2,831,784	40·4
Stirling	2,162,477	8·6
Annandale and Eskdale	891,165	−1·9
Nithsdale	1,212,745	19·3
Stewartry	493,808	8·4
Wigtown	687,765	7·2
Dunfermline	2,834,934	−4·1
Kirkcaldy	4,015,864	7·0
North East Fife	1,666,870	−6·5
Aberdeen City	4,967,556	8·6
Banff and Buchan	2,697,572	32·5
Gordon	2,687,028	2·3
Kincardine and Deeside	994,995	2·4
Moray	1,880,060	−18·1
Badenoch and Strathspey	192,838	0·4
Caithness	840,984	−15·0
Inverness	974,077	−5·8
Lochaber	574,064	−15·6
Nairn	254,003	4·3
Ross and Cromarty	2,508,073	33·4
Skye and Lochalsh	354,360	4·7
Sutherland	601,462	−9·0
East Lothian	1,856,611	−14·4
Edinburgh City	10,504,053	20·7
Midlothian	2,854,738	5·9
West Lothian	3,382,467	−6·4
Argyll and Bute	2,694,535	−2·8
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,367,892	−0·9
Clydebank	2,791,401	−7·7
Clydesdale	1,947,175	4·6
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,951,184	5·4
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,201,494	−5·3
Cunninghame	3,418,404	−10·0
Dumbarton	2,041,079	−4·4
East Kilbride	2,285,307	15·1
Eastwood	1,438,422	−1·4
Glasgow City	41,885,822	3·9
Hamilton	4,725,774	−5·4
Inverclyde	3,739,539	−5·9
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,011,727	−7·0
Kyle and Carrick	2,934,973	−8·7
Monklands	5,419,430	−9·2
Motherwell	5,308,621	−4·5
Renfrew	7,722,134	8·6
Strathkelvin	3,221,002	0·3
Angus	2,411,806	−0·7
Dundee City	4,940,768	−15·4
Perth and Kinross	2,952,569	4·9
Scotland	1,451,000,000	3·0

Total grant paid in 1981-82
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	per cent.
Regional authorities		
Borders	28,795,588	−0·1
Central	58,378,777	−2·6
Dumfries and Galloway	37,088,029	−0·1
Fife	78,142,350	−0·8
Grampian	114,556,409	1·4
Highland	66,797,713	−2·1
Lothian	135,272,211	−24·1
Strathclyde	692,412,194	−3·8
Tayside	96,813,483	−0·5
Islands Councils		
Orkney	6,837,859	−2·6
Shetland	9,011,131	2·4
Western Isles	19,228,832	2·8
District councils		
Berwickshire	466,268	−9·7
Ettrick and Lauderdale	817,092	−0·2
Roxburgh	1,075,397	5·3
Tweeddale	305,890	−5·5
Clackmannan	1,549,886	5·6
Falkirk	3,109,452	0·0
Stirling	1,289,718	−50·2
Annandale and Eskdale	889,915	−10·0
Nithsdale	1,385,228	4·4
Stewartry	548,299	1·2
Wigtown	707,562	−7·0
Dunfermline	2,910,267	−7·2
Kirkcaldy	4,562,713	3·8
North East Fife	1,638,714	−11·5
Aberdeen City	5,357,922	−2·0
Banff and Buchan	2,674,718	−10·7
Gordon	2,107,224	−31·4
Kincardine and Deeside	1,080,686	−1·2
Moray	2,189,321	6·6
Badenoch and Strathspey	197,329	−7·5
Caithness	826,878	−11·5
Inverness	961,842	−11·1
Lochaber	618,428	−2·1
Nairn	282,506	1·4
Ross and Cromarty	1,506,544	−49·8
Skye and Lochalsh	374,547	−4·2
Sutherland	572,566	−14·7
East Lothian	1,794,561	−13·2
Edinburgh City	11,488,575	−0·5
Midlothian	2,844,899	−10·2
West Lothian	3,281,197	−12·8
Argyll and Bute	2,605,154	−13·2
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,333,251	−12·4
Clydebank	3,057,463	−0·3
Clydesdale	1,907,458	−11·9
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2,396,196	13·0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,553,808	6·2
Cunninghame	4,065,487	9·1
Dumbarton	1,980,462	−12·8
East Kilbride	2,069,188	−19·3
Eastwood	1,455,741	−8·6
Glasgow City	38,194,654	−18·7
Hamilton	5,316,156	2·6
Inverclyde	3,460,521	−17·3
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,112,042	−6·5
Kyle and Carrick	2,958,415	−9·1
Monklands	5,508,401	−8·2
Motherwell	6,055,236	4·2
Renfrew	7,643,205	−10·9
Strathkelvin	3,480,128	−1·8
Angus	2,656,151	0·3
Dundee City	4,595,431	−16·8
Perth and Kinross	3,144,732	−3·3
Scotland	1,512,300,000	−5·6

Total Grant paid in 1982-83
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	per cent.
Regional Authorities		
Borders	30,986,224	0·5
Central	61,052,396	−2·6
Dumfries and Galloway	40,508,482	2·1
Fife	80,078,245	−4·7
Grampian	115,947,587	−5·9
Highland	72,301,222	1·1
Lothian	170,026,909	18·5
Strathclyde	738,940,868	−0·4
Tayside	100,607,472	−3·2
Islands Councils		
Orkney	6,930,737	−5·8
Shetland	10,038,689	4·3
Western Isles	22,144,076	8·0
District Councils		
Berwickshire	518,427	4·0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	877,434	0·2
Roxburgh	1,299,871	13·7
Tweeddale	333,090	1·7
Clackmannan	1,382,715	−17·9
Falkirk	3,019,299	−10·0
Stirling	2,191,560	62·8
Annandale and Eskdale	974,147	2·3
Nithsdale	1,450,812	−2·4
Stewarty	623,963	6·7
Wigtown	748,236	−1·4
Dunfermline	3,063,632	−1·9
Kirkcaldy	4,078,883	−17·7
North East Fife	1,842,609	5·3
Aberdeen City	4,915,522	−15·4
Banff and Buchan	2,703,450	−6·1
Gordon	2,687,112	20·4
Kincardine and Deeside	1,257,533	9·2
Moray	1,946,822	−18·2
Badenoch and Strathspey	198,249	−6·7
Caithness	962,639	9·3
Inverness	984,029	−4·8
Lochaber	497,303	−26·7
Nairn	296,737	−2·1
Ross and Cromarty	2,259,009	42·8
Skye and Lochalsh	432,042	8·2
Sutherland	630,589	3·0
East Lothian	2,143,608	12·3
Edinburgh City	10,540,566	−15·4
Midlothian	3,077,237	1·0
West Lothian	4,142,533	19·1
Argyll and Bute	2,792,900	0·1
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,426,542	−0·1
Clydebank	3,360,487	2·8
Clydesdale	2,263,012	11·5
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2,328,945	−10·0
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,641,153	−3·7
Cunninghame	5,049,666	17·1
Dumbarton	1,914,863	−10·5
East Kilbride	2,322,585	5·1
Eastwood	1,750,212	13·1
Glasgow City	43,609,579	7·0
Hamilton	6,274,289	10·9
Inverclyde	3,728,594	0·6
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,865,296	17·1
Kyle and Carrick	3,506,698	11·4
Monklands	5,551,383	−6·4
Motherwell	5,158,225	−22·0
Renfrew	8,221,340	0·4
Strathkelvin	3,980,291	7·2
Angus	2,987,014	5·3
Dundee City	5,314,003	8·5
Perth and Kinross	3,410,356	1·3
Scotland	1,633,100,000	0·8

Total Grant Paid in 1983-84
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	per cent.
Regional Authorities		
Borders	32,807,800	1·3
Central	64,302,036	0·8
Dumfries and Galloway	43,181,615	2·0
Fife	85,677,107	2·4
Grampian	127,053,993	5·0
Highland	76,986,615	1·9
Lothian	175,503,279	−1·3
Strathclyde	770,962,609	−0·2
Tayside	106,210,640	1·0
Islands Councils		
Orkney	8,978,195	25·0
Shetland	10,018,271	−4·8
Western Isles	23,020,866	−0·6
District Councils		
Berwickshire	614,968	14·1
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,014,404	11·1
Roxburgh	1,523,459	12·6
Tweeddale	360,048	3·5
Clackmannan	1,545,711	7·2
Falkirk	3,427,455	9·0
Stirling	2,319,922	1·3
Annandale and Eskdale	1,056,964	4·9
Nithsdale	1,592,524	5·2
Stewarty	692,435	6·4
Wigtown	858,163	10·1
Dunfermline	3,422,719	7·2
Kirkcaldy	4,461,301	4·8
North East Fife	1,977,936	2·8
Aberdeen City	5,414,188	5·6
Banff and Buchan	2,426,112	−14·8
Gordon	2,265,114	−20·3
Kincardine and Deeside	1,231,828	−6·6
Moray	2,152,392	6·0
Badenoch and Strathspey	221,170	7·0
Caithness	1,043,031	3·8
Inverness	940,530	−9·0
Lochaber	585,103	13·1
Nairn	368,136	19·5
Ross and Cromarty	1,222,874	−50·4
Skye and Lochalsh	471,331	4·5
Sutherland	690,373	4·9
East Lothian	2,290,990	2·3
Edinburgh City	11,376,195	3·4
Midlothian	3,595,130	12·3
West Lothian	4,494,540	3·9
Argyll and Bute	2,991,665	2·6
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,456,337	−2·5
Clydebank	3,676,878	4·9
Clydesdale	2,361,702	−0·2
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2,453,305	0·8
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,844,565	3·1
Cunninghame	5,235,683	−0·9
Dumbarton	2,423,431	22·0
East Kilbride	2,433,455	0·2
Eastwood	1,705,181	−7·1
Glasgow City	44,577,718	−2·3
Hamilton	6,014,988	−8·7
Inverclyde	4,018,478	3·2
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	4,023,583	−0·5
Kyle and Carrick	3,693,058	0·8
Monklands	6,019,852	3·9
Motherwell	6,255,498	16·7
Renfrew	8,476,165	−1·5
Strathkelvin	4,339,181	4·5
Angus	3,294,522	5·7
Dundee City	5,804,560	4·7
Perth & Kinross	3,781,123	6·3
Scotland	1,718,250,000	0·7

Total grant paid in 1984-85
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	Per cent.
Regional authorities		
Borders	33,030,795	−4·4
Central	67,000,492	−0·9
Dumfries and Galloway	43,261,859	−4·9
Fife	78,865,242	−13·0
Grampian	126,680,881	−5·4
Highland	76,009,222	−6·3
Lothian	171,223,135	−7·5
Strathclyde	749,482,523	−7·8
Tayside	104,637,194	−6·5
Islands councils		
Orkney	7,718,539	−19·1
Shetland	10,277,310	−2·5
Western Isles	24,345,501	0·7
District councils		
Berwickshire	606,712	−6·4
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1,089,413	2·3
Roxburgh	1,477,456	−8·1
Tweeddale	343,981	−9·5
Clackmannan	1,417,921	−13·3
Falkirk	3,048,781	−16·1
Stirling	1,760,426	−29·2
Annandale and Eskdale	1,068,550	−4·8
Nithsdale	1,550,261	−7·7
Stewartry	642,658	−12·2
Wigtown	819,632	−9·5
Dunfermline	2,864,233	−21·4
Kirkcaldy	3,799,695	−19·9
North East Fife	1,798,851	−14·1
Aberdeen City	5,539,036	−2·8
Banff and Buchan	2,220,635	−13·5
Gordon	1,793,519	−25·9
Kincardine and Deeside	1,147,300	−11·9
Moray	2,094,780	−7·7
Badenoch and Strathspey	205,923	−12·0
Caithness	1,048,883	−4·5
Inverness	798,941	−20·1
Lochaber	573,541	−7·0
Nairn	330,986	−15·2
Ross and Cromarty	1,366,277	6·7
Skye and Lochalsh	499,321	0·9
Sutherland	674,821	−7·3
East Lothian	2,207,621	−8·7
Edinburgh City	6,601,217	−47·0
Midlothian	3,304,520	−13·1
West Lothian	4,542,900	−4·0
Argyll and Bute	3,159,751	0·6
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,339,245	−13·1
Clydebank	3,621,497	−6·6
Clydesdale	2,405,152	−3·2
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2,310,508	−10·9
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,864,150	−4·4
Cunninghame	4,587,496	−17·4
Dumbarton	1,955,561	−24·4
East Kilbride	2,370,373	−7·7
Eastwood	1,427,984	−21·3
Glasgow City	40,753,269	−13·6
Hamilton	4,707,984	−26·8
Inverclyde	4,134,690	−2·2
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	4,231,330	0·1
Kyle and Carrick	3,644,045	−6·4
Monklands	6,193,154	−2·2
Motherwell	6,293,516	−4·5
Renfrew	8,451,958	−5·3
Strathkelvin	4,558,260	0·0
Angus	3,049,962	−12·5
Dundee City	5,550,137	−9·4
Perth and Kinross	3,628,938	−9·1
Scotland	1,671,010,144	−7·8

Total grant paid in 1985-86
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	Per cent.
Regional Authorities:		
Borders	34,489,423	−1·0
Central	64,839,332	−8·6
Dumfries and Galloway	43,910,410	−3·9
Fife	83,524,161	0·5
Grampian	130,973,564	−2·0
Highland	79,043,951	−1·4
Lothian	176,312,247	−2·4
Strathclyde	782,704,963	−1·0
Tayside	112,401,458	2·0
Islands Councils		
Orkney	7,654,433	−6·2
Shetland	10,203,064	−6·1
Western Isles	24,773,943	−3·6
District Councils		
Berwickshire	424,954	−35·4
Ettrick and Lauderdale	701,988	−41·0
Roxburgh	1,568,133	0·7
Tweeddale	262,833	−29·0
Clackmannan	449,840	−73·7
Falkirk	1,621,947	−52·2
Stirling	847,880	−57·2
Annandale and Eskdale	675,260	−42·2
Nithsdale	810,689	−53·1
Stewartry	298,382	−59·0
Wigtown	602,513	−31·9
Dunfermline	1,335,903	−58·8
Kirkcaldy	2,457,714	−40·7
North East Fife	979,664	−50·9
Aberdeen City	3,509,641	−42·0
Banff and Buchan	734,240	−72·3
Gordon	1,374,938	−28·7
Kincardine and Deeside	650,300	−48·7
Moray	1,015,137	−56·9
Badenoch and Strathspey	97,124	−58·2
Caithness	956,213	−14·2
Inverness	488,571	−44·2
Lochaber	412,082	−33·5
Nairn	296,318	−15·9
Ross and Cromarty	1,472,244	2·4
Skye and Lochalsh	487,552	−7·8
Sutherland	658,153	−7·9
East Lothian	1,511,223	−36·9
Edinburgh City	9,566,739	39·5
Midlothian	3,087,535	−12·0
West Lothian	3,511,267	−28·1
Argyll and Bute	3,519,501	6·0
Bearsden and Milngavie	672,575	−55·2
Clydebank	3,989,938	4·8
Clydesdale	2,046,789	−20·3
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,751,656	−29·6
Cunnock and Doon Valley	2,660,359	−12·5
Cunninghame	3,975,770	−18·7
Dumbarton	1,460,636	−30·7
East Kilbride	1,534,009	−40·7
Eastwood	922,733	−40·8
Glasgow City	42,672,850	−0·7
Hamilton	3,972,492	−21·0
Inverclyde	3,175,679	−28·6
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,335,643	−26·6
Kyle and Carrick	2,381,596	−40·0
Monklands	5,746,404	−12·6
Motherwell	5,518,092	−17·7
Renfrew	7,078,671	−21·6
Strathkelvin	3,748,170	−23·2
Angus	2,041,259	−38·5
Dundee City	6,501,304	11·7
Perth and Kinross	2,053,522	−48·8
Scotland	1,704,457,574	−3·4

Total grant paid in 1986-87
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	per cent
Regional Authorities		
Borders	37,017,599	0·0
Central	68,350,121	0·0
Dumfries and Galloway	48,317,317	0·1
Fife	84,382,536	0·0
Grampian	134,867,000	0·0
Highland	82,865,866	0·0
Lothian	161,944,388	−0·1
Strathclyde	730,719,793	−0·1
Tayside	114,823,890	0·0
Islands Councils		
Orkney	7,766,186	0·0
Shetland	10,247,024	0·0
Western Isles	27,600,451	0·1
District Councils		
Berwickshire	435,636	0·0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	734,854	0·0
Roxburgh	1,513,724	−0·1
Tweeddale	280,130	0·0
Clackmannan	1,029,877	1·3
Falkirk	1,536,142	−0·1
Stirling	15,730	−1·0
Annandale and Eskdale	726,714	0·0
Nithsdale	866,759	0·0
Stewartry	412,478	0·3
Wigtown	689,017	0·1
Dunfermline	1,393,986	0·0
Kirkcaldy	2,142,998	−0·2
North East Fife	1,034,668	0·0
Aberdeen City	2,733,534	−0·3
Banff and Buchan	893,015	0·2
Gordon	1,465,746	0·0
Kincardine and Deeside	616,416	−0·1
Moray	1,039,322	0·0
Badenoch and Strathspey	109,680	0·1
Caithness	946,318	0·0
Inverness	627,653	0·3
Lochaber	342,580	−0·2
Nairn	286,250	−0·1
Ross and Cromarty	1,268,285	−0·2
Skye and Lochalsh	477,975	−0·1
Sutherland	696,494	0·0
East Lothian	1,453,969	−0·1
Edinburgh City	6,253,718	−0·4
Midlothian	2,930,051	−0·1
West Lothian	3,547,628	0·0
Argyll and Bute	3,562,556	0·0
Bearsden and Milngavie	609,988	−0·1
Clydebank	4,360,213	0·1
Clydesdale	2,225,990	0·1
Cumbernauld & Kilsyth	1,929, 063	0·1
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,789,604	0·0
Cunninghame	3,701,546	−0·1
Dumbarton	1,367,011	−0·1
East Kilbride	1,376,747	−0·1
Eastwood	900,512	−0·1
Glasgow City	38,395,971	−0·1
Hamilton	4,749,320	0·2
Inverclyde	3,591,392	0·1
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,605,741	0·0
Kyle and Carrick	2,220,405	−0·1
Monklands	5,751,250	0·0
Motherwell	5,384,127	−0·1
Renfrew	7,764,442	0·1
Strathkelvin	4,131,531	0·1
Angus	2,182,485	0·0
Dundee City	6,398,730	0·0
Perth and Kinross	2,014,517	−0·1
Scotland	1,656,416,729	−0·1

Total grant paid in 1987-88
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	Per cent.
Regional Authorities		
Borders	41,191,111	0·1
Central	78,811,014	0·1
Dumfries and Galloway	54,582,723	0·1
Fife	80,348,928	−0·1
Grampian	145,489,162	0·0
Highland	92,563,642	0·1
Lothian	177,444,487	0·0
Strathclyde	794,598,058	0·0
Tayside	123,317,720	0·0
Islands Councils		
Orkney	5,417,557	0·2
Shetland	11,055,957	0·0
Western Isles	29,916,547	0·0
District Councils		
Berwickshire	488,518	0·1
Ettrick and Lauderdale	772,411	0·0
Roxburgh	1,603,453	0·0
Tweedale	326,429	0·1
Clackmannan	798,579	−0·3
Falkirk	2,653,159	0·7
Stirling	not applicable	
Annandale and Eskdale	826,816	0·1
Nithsdale	1,181,106	0·3
Stewartry	471,499	0·1
Wigtown	734,647	0·0
Dunfermline	1,466,223	0·0
Kirkcaldy	2,453,563	0·1
North East Fife	1,052,899	0·0
Aberdeen City	2,255,020	−0·2
Banff and Buchan	1,361,246	0·5
Gordon	2,146,706	0·4
Kincardine and Deeside	820,163	0·3
Moray	1,595,557	0·5
Badenoch and Strathspey	118,125	0·0
Caithness	1,122,950	0·1
Inverness	664,472	0·0
Lochaber	381,579	0·1
Nairn	276,495	−0·1
Ross and Cromarty	1,785,770	0·4
Skye and Lochalsh	522,388	0·0
Sutherland	707,179	0·0
East Lothian	1,640,735	0·1
Edinburgh City	12,473,104	0·9
Midlothian	3,258,171	0·1
West Lothian	4,224,795	0·1
Argyll and Bute	3,763,451	0·0
Bearsden and Milngavie	548,180	−0·2
Clydebank	4,455,004	0·0
Clydesdale	2,283,229	0·0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,770,208	−0·1
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,764,015	−0·1
Cunninghame	3,243,330	−0·2
Dumbarton	1,398,845	0·0
East Kilbride	1,315,392	−0·1
Eastwood	821,019	−0·1
Glasgow City	40,893,573	0·0
Hamilton	3,791,761	−0·3
Inverclyde	3,825,136	0·0
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	2,565,977	−0·3
Kyle and Carrick	2,174,934	−0·1
Monklands	5,424,097	−0·1
Motherwell	4,192,131	−0·3
Renfrew	7,047,611	−0·1
Strathkelvin	3,419,048	−0·2
Angus	2,544,307	0·1
Dundee City	6,933,730	0·0
Perth and Kinross	2,279,068	0·1
Scotland	1,796,374,709	0·0

Total grant paid in 1988-89
Percentage increase or decrease above inflation

	£	Per cent.
Regional Authorities		
Borders	44,008,216	0·0
Central	80,900,747	0·0
Dumfries and Galloway	57,227,380	0·0
Fife	106,804,608	0·3
Grampian	158,613,663	0·0
Highland	100,978,034	0·0
Lothian	197,469,170	0·1
Strathclyde	922,286,440	0·1
Tayside	139,274,753	0·1
Islands Councils		
Orkney	10,352,576	0·0
Shetland	11,944,796	0·0
Western Isles	31,898,625	0·0
District Councils		
Berwickshire	516,632	0·0
Ettrick and Lauderdale	737,307	−0·1
Roxburgh	1,631,303	0·0
Tweeddale	330,369	−0·1
Clackmannan	1,349,697	0·6
Falkirk	2,152,252	−0·3
Stirling	972,546	n/a
Annandale and Eskdale	894,199	0·0
Nithsdale	1,170,825	−0·1
Stewartry	507,271	0·0
Wigtown	825,727	0·1
Dunfermline	1,544,632	0·0
Kirkcaldy	2,459,513	−0·1
North East Fife	1,288,262	0·2
Aberdeen City	4,347,741	0·9
Banff and Buchan	1,039,537	−0·3
Gordon	1,994,239	−0·1
Kincardine and Deeside	835,883	0·0
Moray	1,426,519	−0·2
Badenoch and Strathspey	124,930	0·0
Caithness	1,174,660	0·0
Inverness	703,531	0·0
Lochaber	395,695	0·0
Nairn	275,554	−0·1
Ross and Cromarty	1,806,696	−0·1
Skye and Lochalsh	588,505	0·1
Sutherland	750,337	0·0
East Lothian	1,471,136	−0·2
Edinburgh City	13,764,414	0·0
Midlothian	3,300,135	0·0
West Lothian	4,083,334	−0·1
Argyll and Bute	3,953,699	0·0
Bearsden and Milngavie	634,379	0·1
Clydebank	4,489,297	−0·1
Clydesdale	2,474,692	0·0
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	2,024,332	0·1
Cumnock and Doon Valley	2,899,273	0·0
Cunninghame	4,093,141	0·2
Dumbarton	1,585,685	0·1
East Kilbride	1,479,101	0·1
Eastwood	974,303	0·1
Glasgow City	47,179,249	0·1
Hamilton	3,895,161	0·0
Inverclyde	4,872,556	0·2
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	3,342,451	0·2
Kyle and Carrick	2,687,531	0·2
Monklands	5,624,429	0·0
Motherwell	4,955,961	0·1
Renfrew	7,891,327	0·1
Strathkelvin	3,653,821	0·0
Angus	2,744,773	0·0
Dundee City	7,812,200	0·1
Perth and Kinross	2,440,250	0·0
Scotland	2,037,930,000	0·1

n/a = Not available.

Notes:

1. The G.D.P. deflator has been used to calculate the inflation rate for each year.

2. There has been no adustment made for grant penalties in 1988-89 since they will be restored if authorities bring their expenditure down to guideline at outturn.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 2 February 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Veterinary Medicine (Graduates)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of women graduates in veterinary medicine in each British college in each of the past five years, showing this figure also as a percentage of the total number of graduates;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of graduates in veterinary medicine at each veterinary college in Britain in each of the past five years.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is shown in the following table. Information prior to 1986 is not readily available.

Women graduates in veterinary medicine in institutions in the United Kingdom

	1986			1987		
	Total	*Women*	*Women as a percentage of total*	*Total*	*Women*	*Women as a percentage of total*
Bristol	46	21	45·7	40	24	60·0
Cambridge	53	29	54·7	56	23	41·1
Liverpool	47	14	29·8	47	12	24·5
London	57	26	45·6	65	29	44·6
Edinburgh	51	29	56·9	51	23	45·1
Glasgow	58	29	50·0	52	27	51·9
Belfast	1	1	100·0	2	1	50·0
Total	313	149	47·6	313	139	44·4

Mr. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of British-domiciled graduates in veterinary medicine who *(a)* found employment in Britain and *(b)* found employment outwith Britain in each of the past five years.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is as follows:

Destinations of first degree graduates in veterinary medicine (United Kingdom[1])

	Home employment	*Overseas employment*	*Total employment*	*Total graduates*
1982-83	222	6	228	321
1983-84	207	4	211	319
1984-85	210	5	215	334
1985-86	229	7	236	313
1986-87	227	4	231	313

[1] Includes a small number of students at university in Northern Ireland and a small number of non-United Kingdom domiciled students.

Children (Medical Conditions)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the statutory provision made for children of normal ability whose academic progress is impeded by irregular school attendance caused by the crises of chronic medical conditions such as a sickle cell anaemia or asthma.

Mr. Butcher: It is the responsibility of local education authorities to make suitable education available for all children in their area. Such provision can be made either in schools or "otherwise than in schools"—for example, home tuition or hospital education. It is for each authority to determine what provision is appropriate for each child, after having taken account of individual circumstances, such as any particular medical condition.

Teachers' Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to introduce additional facilities for additional voluntary contributions within the teachers' superannuation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The prudential pension fund services have been appointed to provide a new additional voluntary contributions (AVC) scheme for teachers who are members of the teachers' superannuation scheme for England and Wales. They have also been appointed to provide these facilities for members of the teachers' scheme in Scotland.

The AVC scheme will offer a flexible, money-purchase alternative to the existing provision for buying-in added years. Members will be able to choose to invest their contributions in a with-profits or a unit-linked fund, or on cash deposit at building society rates of interest, or to apply them to the purchase of additional life insurance cover, or in any combination of these investments. Members will also be free to vary their contributions, and their allocation between investments, at any time.

We intend to lay regulations before Parliament shortly to give effect to the new scheme, and to seek approval for

it under section 592 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 so that teachers' contributions are allowable as a deduction from income before assessment to tax. Subject to these requirements, the scheme will come into operation on 1 April 1989, enabling members to secure tax relief on single premium payments in the 1988-89 tax year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Southern Africa Development Co-ordination Conference

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new initiatives he will propose at the coming meeting of the Southern Africa Development co-ordination conference in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker *[pursuant to her answer, 1 February 1989]:* My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has today told the annual donors meeting of the Southern African development co-ordination conference (SADCC) that commitments of British aid for SADCC projects now stand at £60 million. This follows his approval of a £15 million project to finance the second phase of the rehabilitation of the Limpopo railway linking Zimbabwe to Maputo. He has announced that Britain will contribute £500,000 to the programme co-ordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to repatriate Namibian refugees from Angola and Zambia; and that we are ready when appropriate to provide technical assistance to help reopen the Benguela railway in Angola. He has also announced an additional £250,000 to help finance UNHCR's programme for Mozambican refugees in Malawi, bringing total British aid for this purpose to £3·328 million.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the most recently available index figure for output in manufacturing industry; and what was the figure for the same month in 1973, 1979, 1983 and 1986.

Mr. Atkins: The figures are as follows:

	Manufacturing Output (1985 = 100)
November 1973	111·2
November 1979	106·6
November 1983	94·9
November 1986	104·1
November 1988	116·4

Credit

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to what efforts are being made by the credit card companies and associated banks to assist those borrowers with problems of excessive personal indebtedness.

Mr. Maude: The clearing banks through the banking information service provide information on credit and debt, through educational visits, videos and literature. Some 20 financial organisations, of which seven are banks, are providing £750,000 over a period of three years for money advice.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to the average merchant service charge paid by retailers accepting *(a)* Visa, *(b)* Access, *(c)* American Express and *(d)* Diners Club for each year since 1984.

Mr. Maude: Merchant service charges paid by retailers accepting credit cards are a matter for commercial negotiation between the retailer and card company, and information about these charges is not held by my Department.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to what range of interest rates are available to personal borrowers in the following categories: *(a)* bank credit cards, *(b)* store credit cards, *(c)* mortgages, *(d)* bank loans and *(e)* other forms of credit.

Mr. Maude: Detailed information on ranges of interest rates available to personal borrowers is not centrally available. The Consumer Credit (Total Charge for Credit) Regulations 1980 (SI 1980/51) prescribe the items to be included in and the method of calculating the annual percentage rate of charge (APR) so that consumers can compare the various rates on offer.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to what proportion of credit card applicants have been rejected by the credit card companies in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Maude: The information requested is not available. Whether to accept or reject a credit card application is a commercial decision for the card company concerned. However, a major credit card company recently announced that it rejects about one in three applications.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what information he has as to what proportion of borrowers in each of the following categories pay interest at the full annual percentage rate; and what is the average percentage paid in each category *(a)* bank credit cards, *(b)* store credit cards, *(c)* bank loans and *(d)* other forms of credit;

(2) what information he has as to the annual increases in borrowing on which interest is paid for *(a)* bank credit cards, *(b)* unsecured personal loans, *(c)* secured personal loans and *(d)* loans from retailers for each year since 1984.

Mr. Maude: Credit business statistics published by the Department (there is no earlier comparable data) show that the amounts outstanding to lenders from borrowers were:

£ million

	Bank credit cards	Retailers	Bank loans (on personal accounts)	Finance houses etc.
1986	838	95		1,452
1987	889	357	1,711	2,619
[1]1988	449	70	940	1,500

[1] First half.

However, the statistics do not distinguish the proportion of borrowers who pay interest on the credit available from those who only borrow for a free credit period.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to what weighting is given, when calculating annual percentage rates, of the effect of the free credit period which holders of bank credit cards receive from the day of their purchase to their statement date.

Mr. Maude: Items to be included in the annual percentage rate of charge and the way it is calculated are set out in the Consumer Credit (Total Charge for Credit) Regulations 1980 (SI 1980/51). Any period of interest-free credit is not taken into account in the calculation of the annual percentage rate of charge.

Energy Saving Schemes

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last five years on the development and encouragement of energy saving schemes in the public and private sector.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 26 January 1989]:* Payments made over the past six years by my Department to the private sector under schemes explicitly designed to encourage and develop energy savings are itemised in the table.

£000's

Scheme	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	Total
Energy audit scheme	20	13	0	0	0	33
Industrial energy thrift scheme	2	3	0	6	—	11
Renewable energy source scheme	24	11	0	2	0	37
Energy conservation demonstration scheme	338	194	134	16	0	682
Industrial heat recovery consultancy scheme	291	594	878	173	7	1,943
Total	675	815	1,012	197	7	2,706

The responsibility of the then Department of Industry for improving energy efficiency in United Kingdom industry was passed to the Department of Energy in 1982 on the recommendation of a Rayner review. The payments shown in the table (excepting those for the industrial heat recovery scheme) arose from contracts entered into prior to the review. The industrial heat recovery scheme closed to new applicants in 1986. The activities of the regional energy efficiency officers located in the Department's regional offices are paid for by the Department of Energy under an agency agreement. Payments made under other DTI industrial support schemes contain conservation-related components but these are not separately identifiable.

Funds devoted by the Department to savings on the costs of its own energy consumption are likely to be some £208,000 in 1988-89.

EMPLOYMENT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if in the light of the training and experience required of workers in the Channel tunnel, he will take steps to bring this and similar activities under supervision of Her Majesty's inspectors of mines and within the Mines and Quarries Regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: The decision on which inspectorate supervises a particular activity is an internal management matter for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive, and it is for them to decide on that allocation. The Channel tunnel project is a work of engineering construction and is regulated by the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and the construction regulations, which are enforced by HM factory inspectorate.

Docks (Deaths and Injuries)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the number of deaths, serious injuries and minor injuries sustained in the docks industry *(a)* in dock labour scheme ports and *(b)* in non-scheme ports, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The figures are not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

YTS

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, on 30 January, he will give such information as he has as to the level of compensation or damages received by the families concerned following fatalities on YTS schemes from: *(a)* departmental or Training Agency payments and *(b)* insurance cover of YTS managing agents and training managers.

Mr. John Cope: The Department or Training Agency does not offer compensational damages to families of

trainees fatally injured on YTS. However YTS managing agents and training managers are contractually obliged to obtain insurance to cover any claims to compensation or damages. Compensational damages paid by either insurance companies or YTS managing agents and training managers are a private matter between them and the trainees' families. The Training Agency is not informed of these settlements.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Extradition

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions since 1979 his Department has made extradition applications for terrorist offences; and how often, by whom, and for what reasons such requests have been rejected.

The Attorney-General: With respect to extradition requests to the Republic of Ireland I refer the hon. Member to answers given on 8 and 13 December 1988 by my hon. Friends the Minister of State for the Home Office, the Scottish Office and the Northern Ireland Office and to the answers I gave on 19 December 1988 to my hon. Friends the Members for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow and for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook).

Applications for extradition from other countries are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, for Scotland and for Northern Ireland.

Land Registry Offices

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Attorney-General what was the average time taken by each of the land registry offices from receipt to completion of property transfers for each of the years 1984 to 1988.

The Attorney-General: The average completion times in weeks at each office for all categories of substantive applications at the end of December for the year indicated are shown in the table.

Office	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Croydon	5	7	13	18	22
Harrow	10	10	17	21	19
Tunbridge Wells	9	10	18	15	15
Lytham	8	7	14	24	18
Nottingham	8	8	16	22	27
Gloucester	7	8	17	25	28
Stevenage	8	8	14	19	19
Durham	8	6	14	21	22
Plymouth	7	8	14	24	24
Swansea	5	7	14	19	22
Birkenhead	9	9	11	19	15
Weymouth	5	7	11	17	17
Peterborough	6	6	11	23	26
Telford	—	—	—	—	19
Coventry	—	—	—	—	25
Hull	—	—	—	—	19

The last three offices were opened as district land registries in 1988.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Attorney-General what is the current complement of staff at each of the land registry offices and what were the levels of staff for each of the years 1984 to 1988.

The Attorney-General *[holding answer 20 January 1989]* The authorised complement at each of the land registry's offices at 1 January 1989 and the total numbers of permanent staff in post on the same day in the years 1984 to 1988 are set out in the table.

	Authorised complement 1 January 1989	*Permanent Staff in Post*				
		1 January 1988	*1 January 1987*	*1 January 1986*	*1 January 1985*	*1 January 1984*
Croydon	550	458	495	472	484	477
Harrow	585	520	520	535	526	537
Tunbridge Wells	725	631	633	638	612	596
Lytham	670	573	535	533	520	526
Nottingham	890	712	686	641	644	639
Gloucester	770	687	697	662	650	651
Stevenage	695	612	622	614	548	527
Durham	770	526	463	466	475	476
Plymouth	665	568	497	457	450	468
Swansea	640	466	377	366	331	323
Birkenhead	560	406	376	359	359	357
Weymouth	620	499	445	431	375	319
Peterborough	680	547	432	411	375	338
Telford	400	153	44	—	—	—
Coventry	350	163	—	—	—	—
Hull	340	112	—	—	—	—
Leicester	130	—	—	—	—	—
Headquarters (including Computer Services Division based at Plymouth)	388	348	329	320	294	273
Land Charges Department	172	158	151	152	153	146
Total	10,600	8,139	7,302	7,057	6,796	6,653

PRIME MINISTER

Environmental Protection

Q7. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to improve co-ordination between Government Departments to promote the protection of the environment.

Q23. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to improve co-ordination between Government Departments to promote the protection of the environment.

Q87. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to improve co-ordination between Government Departments to promote the protection of the environment.

Q124. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to improve co-ordination between Government Departments to promote the protection of the environment.

The Prime Minister: I am satisfied that the present arrangements effectively promote environmental protection.

Q95. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to create a department of environmental protection; and if she will make a statement.

Q115. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to create a department of environmental protection; and if she will make a statement.

Q98. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to create a department of environmental protection; and if she will make a statement.

Q155. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to create a department of environmental protection; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We already have a Department of the Environment whose duties include environmental protection matters.

Scottish Development Agency

Q27. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister whether, following to the recently published White Paper, "Scottish Enterprise", it is the intention of Her Majesty's Government to retain the name of the Scottish Development Agency.

The Prime Minister: It seems sensible to have a new name for a new body, but we shall consider carefully all the comments received on the White Paper.

Global Environment

Q66. **Mr Fearn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to convene an international conference on global environmental issues.

Q113. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to convene an international conference on global environmental issues.

Q135. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to convene an international conference on global environmental issues.

The Prime Minister: In March my right hon Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I are convening an international conference in London to address the major global issue of saving the ozone layer. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales will attend a dinner for heads of delegations hosted by my right hon. Friend. President Moi of Kenya will give the keynote speech at the opening ceremony.

Hormone Ban

Q126. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Hyndburn to discuss the threat to steak pie and ox tongue production posed by the EEC hormone ban.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Zeus and Securipol

Mr. M. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list all Government contracts with *(a)* Zeus and *(b)* Securipol Ltd. since 1979; and if she will give the purpose of each contract.

The Prime Minister: Details of contracts placed by other Government Departments are not held centrally. Records for my office are readily available only from April 1984. No contracts have been placed with, or payment made to, Zeus or Securipol Ltd. by on behalf of my office during that period.

Monitoring (Contracts)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government has contracted out to any private company the monitoring of individuals or organisations who are concerned about or object to the sub-sea disposal of nuclear waste; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The recent consultation exercise undertaken by UK Nirex Ltd. on the options for a deep disposal facility for radioactive waste has enabled individuals or organisations to make their views known. I know of no monitoring of those concerned about or objecting to the sub-sea disposal option.

Engagements

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Cran: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Key: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 2 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Brussels Treaty

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to present to the House the amendment to the treaty of Brussels of 1948, providing for the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The accession of Spain and Portugal to the Western European Union does not require an amendment to the treaty of Brussels which was modified in 1954. However, the protocol of accession of Spain and Portugal to the organisation will be laid before the House shortly.

HEALTH

Listeria

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what foods have been found to be contaminated with listeria following diagnosis of a medical condition which has resulted from the consumption of such foods.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Two cases of listeriosis in the United Kingdom have been associated with the consumption of soft cheese, one with cooked chicken and one with vegetable rennet.

Resources

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate for each English regional health authority the percentage resource difference from its resource allocation working party target in 1989-90 on the basis of the resource allocations presently outlined.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The allocations for 1989-90 which I announced on 21 December 1988 allow every regional health authority to benefit from the additional resources available. These allocations were even handed and not based on the old RAWP method. As the White Paper published on 31 January makes clear, the Government now intend to move on from RAWP to a simpler and fairer system. Distances from target on the old basis are therefore no longer relevant and will no longer be produced by my Department.

Haemoglobinopathy Services

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many replies are still outstanding to his Department's questionnaire on haemoglobinopathy services from the district health authorities canvassed.

Mr. Freeman: Four replies to the questionnaire on screening and counselling for sickle cell and thalassaemic diseases are still outstanding.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Caerphilly, 16 January, *Official Report*, columns *36-37*, what is *(a)* the number of batches of the blood product factor 8 which have been discarded due to viral hepatitis B infection, *(b)* the dates on which such batches were discarded and *(c)* the percentage of overall production which the discarded batches represent.

Mr. Freeman: I am advised that since 1982 when the Central Blood Laboratories Authority was established, batches of factor 8 were discarded for this reason in 1983, 1984 and 1988. A total of 10 batches representing approximately 1 per cent. of batches produced were involved.

Listeriosis (Plymouth)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients with listeriosis were treated in Plymouth hospitals during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not hold this information centrally. However, the information we have obtained from South Western regional health authority is as follows:

Number of patients with listeriosis treated in Plymouth hospitals

Financial Year	
1986-87	information not available
1987-88	none
1988-89	not yet available

Cook-chill Meals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield, *Official Report*, 23 January, column *411*, he will indicate the sources of the evidence presented to his Department's expert group which suggested that the cook-chill meals produced would be safe and microbiologically sound.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The expert group which recently reviewed the existing guidelines considered published and unpublished papers on the microbiological safety of the system, including papers on low temperature pathogens.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wakefield, *Official Report*, 23 January, column *411*, there was any evaluation of cook-chill catering in relation to possible dangers from listeria and other psychrotrophs undertaken by the Department of Health and Social Security between 1970 and 1980.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The expert group which produced the cook-chill catering guidelines between 1977 and 1980 did not evaluate possible dangers from listeria and other psychrotrophs. At that time there was, and there remains, no evidence to indicate that the recommendations in the guidelines would lead to problems from listeria monocytogenes or other pathogenic psychrotrophs.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has prepared draft regulations to cover cook-chill food at retailing outlets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 23 January 1989 at columns *410-11* and 27 January at column *801*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Nursing Staff

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, how many nursing staff at all levels are employed in the Mourne hospital, Kilkeel; how many of these staff have been advised of their new grades under the clinical grading review; and how many appeals have been received.

Mr. Needham: There are 37 nursing staff employed in the Mourne hospital, Kilkeel all of whom have been advised of their new grades. Twenty-six asked to have their grading reviewed under the informal review procedure and eight nursing staff who remained dissatisfied have invoked the formal grievance procedure.

Empty Properties

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the most recent figure for empty local authority housing; how many of these properties have been vacant for periods over six, 12 and 24 months, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Provision of public sector housing in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am informed by its chief executive that at 31 December 1988 the information requested is:

	Number
Total number of vacant properties	2,525
Vacant 6-12 months	335
Vacant over 12 months	1,072
Vacant over 24 months	n/a

The figures include properties which are not available for letting—properties awaiting demolition, those used for decanting purposes and those awaiting improvement or repairs.

Alcohol-related Illness

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in the Greater Belfast area are estimated to be suffering from alcohol-related illnesses; and what has been the trend during the past ten years.

Mr. Needham: The information is not available.

Bathing Water

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all those beaches in Northern Ireland which failed to meet the European directive on bathing water quality standards in the last year for which data is available; when it is planned for each of these beaches to meet these standards; and what is the estimated cost in each case.

Mr. Needham; Information on the quality of Northern Ireland's bathing water during the 1988 bathing season is at present being collated. I expect the results to be announced before the start of this year's bathing season. We have recently improved the sewage treatment facilities at Ballycastle, Co Antrim, at a cost of almost £1 million and are currently providing sewage treatment facilities at Newcastle, Co Down, at an estimated cost of £5 million. Further improvements will be considered if the 1988 results show that they are necessary.

Elderly People (Residential Care)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of continuing care residential places are provided for the elderly *(a)* by local authorities, *(b)* by voluntary organisations and *(c)* by the private sector in each health board for (i) the year 1987 and (ii) the year 1988.

Mr. Needham: The information is not held centrally in exactly the form requested. At 31 December 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the percentage of all available places for the elderly (including a small number of places designated for rehabilitation or respite care) in each of the health and social services board was as follows:

Type	*Eastern per cent.*	*Northern per cent.*	*Southern per cent.*	*Western per cent.*	*NI average*
Statutory[1]	55·6	70·5	73·9	74·5	64·1
Voluntary	28·9	11·1	16·0	24·0	22·4
Private	15·5	18·4	10·2	1·5	13·6

[1] In Northern Ireland local authorities have no responsibility for statutory residential homes: these are provided by the four health and social services boards.

Milk Quotas

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to allocate milk quotas to those producers who had temporarily entered into Community schemes for the cessation of milk production at the time when the original milk quotas were established; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* The Council of Agriculture Ministers has agreed measures to comply with the ruling of the European Court in the Mulder case. When the necessary Community legislation has been published, steps will be taken to implement the arrangements in the United Kingdom.

WALES

Hospitals (Locum Services)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much each health authority spent in 1988 on the fees paid to medical employment agencies for providing locum services for their hospitals; and what was the highest, lowest and average hourly rate paid by each health authority.

Mr. Grist: Details of the hourly rates paid by Welsh health authorities for locum services are not collected centrally. The health authorities' annual accounts do not disaggregate expenditure on locum services within hospitals from overall expenditure on such services. During 1987-88 the total expenditure on medical locum services by each District Health Authority in Wales was as follows:

	£000
Clwyd	198·8
East Dyfed	221·4
Gwent	0·7
Gwynedd	348·5
Mid Glamorgan	569·3
Pembrokeshire	392·7
Powys	4·5
South Glamorgan	1·9
West Glamorgan	221·6
Wales	1,959·4

Source: Health Authorities Annual Accounts.

Building (Ceredigion)

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he can make an estimate of the acreage of land available with planning consent for building homes in Ceredigion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being taken in the current year to build nursery factories in Ceredigion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Development Board for Rural Wales' factory construction programme for 1988-89 includes plans for the construction of four 1,500 sq. ft. units in Cardigan and six 750 sq. ft. units in Aberystwyth. The board has offered grant assistance to Ceredigion district council to provide a workshop of 1,500 sq. ft. in Cardigan.

Elderly People (Residential Care)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of continuing care residential places are provided for the elderly *(a)* by local authorities, *(b)* by voluntary organisations and *(c)* by the private sector in each health authority for (i) the year 1987 and (ii) the year 1988.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is shown in the table:

Percentage of total residential places in homes for the elderly[1]

	Local authority homes		*Voluntary homes*		*Private homes*	
	1987	*1988*	*1987*	*1988*	*1987*	*1988*
Clwyd	27·5	26·0	4·6	4·2	67·9	69·8
Dyfed	67·1	63·6	2·6	2·5	30·3	33·9
Gwent	74·5	67·3	—	—	25·5	32·7
Gwynedd	49·3	44·1	4·3	5·4	46·4	50·5
Mid Glamorgan	76·5	69·1	5·5	5·0	18·0	25·9
Powys	65·5	64·5	10·7	10·6	23·8	24·9
South Glamorgan	40·0	36·5	14·2	13·6	45·8	49·9
West Glamorgan	73·0	69·0	6·5	7·1	20·4	23·9

[1] As at 31 March.

Welsh Language Board

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to make a statement on the work of the Welsh Language Board.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend will respond to the Welsh Language Board's findings as they emerge.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the extent to which Mr. Edward Rea's membership of the Welsh Language Board is compatible with his current membership of and recent position as council member of the Economic League; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

Sewage Treatment Works

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the Welsh Water Authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letters to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied.

Mr. Grist: The Authority has not advised any intention to seek consent variations in respect of works of this size.

THE ARTS

Museum and Gallery Attendances

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister for the Arts, pursuant to his written answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 24 January, *Official Report*, column *486*, which figures of museum and gallery attendances during 1988 in his answer were actual and which were estimated.

Mr. Luce: The term "estimated" allows for a margin of error at those institutions where the number of visitors is counted manually. In such cases figures are usually regarded as being accurate to within 5 per cent.

Libraries

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister for the Arts why his Department failed to include the Library Association in the organisations consulted about the European Community's proposed programme on "A European Space for the Book" which includes specific recommendations relating to libraries.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* No European Community proposals for "A European Space for the Book" have yet been put forward for discussion, although some preliminary ideas are in circulation, including those of the current Presidency of the Community. The Library Association will be among those organisations consulted if proposals are put forward with a library component.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his estimates of future rates of inflation for *(a)* the next five and *(b)* the next 10 years; and what assumptions were made in their calculation.

Mr. Lilley: The Treasury does not publish such forecasts.

Personal Borrowing

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to what levels of personal borrowing are attributable to *(a)* bank credit cards, *(b)* store credit cards, *(c)* mortgages, *(d)* bank loans and *(e)* other forms of credit.

Mr. Lilley: The table is adapted from figures in table 9.3 of the January edition of *Financial Statistics*.

Outstanding Stock of Personal Sector Borrowing, September 1988

	£ billion	Percentage of total
Total	286	100
of which:		
Bank credit cards	6	2
Non-bank credit, including store credit cards	7	3
Mortgages	215	75
Other bank loans[1]	57	20
Other credit (with insurance companies)	1	—

[1] Includes some borrowing by unincorporated businesses.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to what percentage of bank credit card holders on average repay in full each month, for each year since 1984.

Mr. Lilley: Data are not collected centrally in the form requested.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his practice when answering questions by reference to previous written answers which have been published in the *Official Report* to attach the answer so referred to.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No; to copy extracts from the *Official Report* for hon. Members would be an inappropriate use of resources.

Community Charge Tribunals

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with whom he consulted before imposing a pay settlement, without negotiations, on staff of the new community charge tribunals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply. The Department has not imposed a settlement. An offer increasing the pay of local valuation panel staff has been tabled, which the Society of Clerks and NALGO are considering.

ENVIRONMENT

Whitehall Car Services

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure continued security of the Whitehall parcel delivery and self-drive car service subsequent on its contracting out.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will take whatever steps are necessary.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to implement his Department's proposals to enable the site licensing authority to take into account the previous performance of an applicant for a waste disposal site licence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Legislation will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a full list of the waste disposal authorities in England, indicating those that have not yet completed their waste disposal plans and deposited them with his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following is a list of waste disposal authorities in England grouped according to the current status of their disposal plans:

England
January 1989
1. Completed plans
Bedfordshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Cheshire
Cleveland
Derbyshire
Devon
Dorset
Durham
Gloucestershire
Hereford and Worcester
Hertfordshire[1]
Humberside

Kent
Norfolk[1]
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Somerset
Staffordshire
Surrey
West Sussex
Wiltshire
Warwickshire
Total plans: 23
Total authorities: 23

2. Plans prepared in draft and copied to the Department
Avon
Cumbria
East Sussex
Isle of Wight
Lancashire[1]
Merseyside WDA
North Yorkshire
Suffolk[1]
Tyne and Wear WDJC[2]
(Gateshead MDC
Newcastle upon Tyne MDC
North Tyneside MDC
South Tyneside MDC
Sunderland MDC)
Total plans: 9
Total authorities: 13

3. Uncompleted plans
a. County Councils
Berkshire
Cornwall
Essex
Hampshire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire

b. London Authorities
East London WA
North London WA
West London WA
Western Riverside WA
City of London
City of Westminster
LB of Tower Hamlets

South East London WDJC[2]
(LB of Greenwich
LB of Lewisham
LB of Southwark)
LB of Bexley

South London WDJC[2]
(LB of Bromley
LB of Croydon
LB of Kingston upon Thames
LB of Merton
LB of Sutton)

c. Other Authorities
Greater Manchester WDA
Wigan MDC

West Yorkshire WMJC[2]
(Bradford MDC
Calderdale MDC
Kirklees MDC
Leeds MDC
Wakefield MDC)

Barnsley MDC
Doncaster MDC
Rotherham MDC
Sheffield MDC

West Midlands JC[2]
(Birmingham MDC
Coventry MDC
Dudley MDC
Sandwell MDC
Solihull MDC
Walsall MDC
Wolverhampton MDC)

Total Plans: 27
Total Authorities: 43

ABBREVIATIONS
LB London Borough
RB Royal Borough (London Borough)
MDC Metropolitan District Councils
WA Waste Authority
WDJC Waste Disposal Joint Committee

[1] Submitted to the Department for determination under section 2(5) of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.
[2] In these metropolitan areas the joint committee is required to produce a plan covering its constituent authorities (these are shown in parentheses).

Disclosure of Information

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidance he issues on the circumstances in which information used for the maintenance of the community charge registers may be disclosed to *(a)* other Departments of Government, *(b)* the police and *(c)* public utilities;

(2) what guidance he issues on the use of the personal data collected by the community charge officer for community charge purposes as a general information resource for the charging authority to use for other purposes; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: We have made no provision for personal data to be disclosed for the purposes or to the organisations mentioned by the hon. Member. Guidance has been issued to registration officers on the disclosure of information in practice notes entitled "The Community Charges Register" and "Data Protection and the Community Charge". Copies of both practice notes are available in the Library.

Housing Defects

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department is able to offer to tenants of precast reinforced concrete houses designated under the Housing Defects Act 1984 whose local authorities are unable to afford to repair, or who are unable to secure a mortgage to cover buying or selling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Tenants of properties designated under the housing defects legislation have the right to buy their homes. They will be eligible for discount in the normal way and have a right to a mortgage from their local authority. If the property is unrepaired we advise tenants to get a survey, to establish the structural condition of the property including how soon works might be needed; and to satisfy themselves that the valuation properly reflects this. If tenants are unhappy with the authority's valuation they can seek an independent one from the district valuer.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to exempt from the 1988

Budget changes on tax relief for home improvement those living in precast reinforced concrete houses designated under the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. Trippier: Changes to the tax system are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of houses seriously defective, or defective, as defined by statute, in each local housing authority and standard region.

Mr. Trippier: Information on the numbers and distribution, by local authority and region, of properties designated under the housing defects legislation is available in the House Library. This is based on survey material obtained in 1983 and updated in 1986 and again in 1988.

Housing Repossessions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 25 January to the hon. Member for Leeds, West, he will give the number of properties repossessed by mortgagors for each six month period from January 1982 to June 1988.

Mr. Trippier: This information is published in table 17 of the BSA bulletin Nos. 49 and 56 copies of which are in the Library.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to make a statement on any changes to the home improvement grant entitlement regime.

Mr. Trippier: The Local Government and Housing Bill, published today, contains provisions introducing a new system of home improvement grants to replace those in part XV of the Housing Act 1985. Entitlement for grant will depend on an applicant's financial resources.

Improvement Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of home improvement grants made in each year from 1983 to 1988; and what is his estimate for 1988-89 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* for each local housing authority and *(c)* by standard region;

(2) what was the expenditure in current and standard prices on home improvement grants in each year since 1983 and estimated for 1988-89 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* for each local housing authority and *(c)* by standard region.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested has been laid in the House of Commons Library. The figures, including the advance estimates for 1988-89, are those provided by local authorities on their HIP2 returns.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will hold a public inquiry on section 7(1) submissions from Warrington and Runcorn development corporation affecting Appleton Cross and Graffenhall Hays.

Mr. Trippier: I have yet to receive these submissions. Local inquiries into submissions under section 7(1) of the New Towns Act 1987 are exceptional, but are held when necessary.

Land (Hounslow)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Housing Corporation will purchase the freehold of the land in Hounslow on which the Beaver estate is situated and of which the United Kingdom Housing Trust is the leaseholder.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation, but I understand that it is not its intention to purchase the freehold.

Housing Associations

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the policy of his Department concerning the ability of established housing associations to manage property for temporary letting to homeless people; and whether the Government will facilitate the transfer of council housing to such associations;

(2) if he will explain the policy of his Department concerning cheaper alternatives to bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless households in housing association property.

Mr. Trippier: Housing associations can help provide temporary accommodation for homeless people through lettings both of their own stock and of short life property leased from local authorities. These leasing arrangements work well and I am not aware that any special action is required to facilitate associations' access to council housing.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the reasons for the delay of 347 days before his Department replied to the request of 27 November 1987 by the London borough of Ealing to enter into agreements with Shepherd's Bush housing association and others to manage properties for temporary letting to homeless people, under section 10 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986; and if he will give a date for a reply to this request.

Mr. Trippier: My Department has written to, or telephoned, officers of the London borough of Ealing on eight occasions since the council's application was received in November 1987. We hope that, when they have replied to the latest letter of 29 December 1988, it will be possible to make a final decision.

Superannuation Fund (Norfolk)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to grant the Norfolk local authorities' superannuation fund a sanction under section 19(1) of the Local Government Act 1982 in the even that the legality of the adjustment of contributions, as proposed at the superannuation committee of 26 July 1988, were challenged.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Water Industry

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy that the Director General of Water Services designate will play a role in fixing the cost of water to the consumer;

(2) whom he will be meeting to discuss the value of K, prior to flotation of the water industry.

Mr. Howard: The setting of the initial charges limit applying to water undertakings on their appointment is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In order to promote consistency of procedures on matters such as consultation with those that the director general is likely to follow in subsequent reviews of the charges limit, he will hold discussions with the director general designate when his/her appointment has been made.

Water Authorities (Sewage Treatment Works)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list for the Southern water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(2) if he will list for Wessex water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(3) if he will list for the Severn-Trent water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(4) if he will list for the Northumbria water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(5) if he will list for the Anglian water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(6) if he will list for the South West water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(7) if he will list for the North West water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(8) if he will list for the Thames water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied;

(9) if he will list for the Yorkshire water authority the number of sewage treatment works serving populations of less than 1,000 which are eligible to apply for consent variation, following his letter to the chairman of 21 November 1988, and the number which have applied.

Mr. Howard: The information is not held centrally. No applications from water authorities for variations in the consent conditions for small works serving populations of less than 1,000 have yet been received by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Yorkshire Water Authority

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the locations of the 63 sewage treatment works in the Yorkshire water authority area which exceeded their discharge consents in 1987.

Mr. Howard: Seventy-four sewage treatment works in the Yorkshire water authority area exceeded their discharge consents in 1987. Copies of the returns submitted by Yorkshire water authority were placed in the Libraries of both Houses in June last year. The works are identified by name.

Rating Reform

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further developments have taken place since his announcement in December 1988 of the proposed maximum rate limits for rate capped authorities in 1989-90.

Mr. Ridley: Of the seven rate-capped authorities, Tower Hamlets has accepted the proposed rate limit within the statutory period.

The remaining six authorities have not accepted the proposed limits. I have carefully considered all the representations made by these authorities, including their proposals to agree a different limit with me, and all other relevant information and representations.

In the case of Camden, I am now seeking from the council further information in relation to certain factual matters it has raised during its representations.

For the remaining five authorities I am now proposing:

(a) in the case of three of these authorities—Greenwich, Lewisham and Thamesdown—no increase in the proposed rate limit;

(b) in the case of Hackney and Southwark a higher limit, on which I am seeking agreement as follows:
Hackney 113p (10.83p above the proposed limit)
Southwark 97p (3·55p above the proposed limit)

Where I am unable to reach agreement with an authority on a different limit from the one I proposed in December, I am required under the Rates Act to prescribe the maximum by order.

Local Authority Business (Conduct)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the Government have reviewed the proposals on the conduct of local authority business set out in the White Paper Cm 433.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have considered very carefully the many views that have been expressed since the publication of Cm 433. On a number of points they are convinced that the legislation should be adapted to take account of these points. The Local Government and Housing Bill, presented yesterday, is accordingly drafted to give effect to these changes.

The points where the Bill differs from the proposals in the White Paper are as follows:

a. The White Paper proposed that restrictions on public political activity should apply to chief executives of local authorities, chief officers and their deputies, and to the holders of posts which each local authority would be under a duty to designate on the basis of statutory criteria.

The Government have decided that the restrictions on public political activity should also apply, in the first instance, to all local authority staff to whom the Widdicombe committee recommended that they should apply, that is, staff in the grade of principal officer and above.

Such staff would, however, be able to apply to an independent adjudicator for exemption from the restrictions, which would be given if their posts were, in the adjudicator's opinion, ones which could properly be so exempted. The adjudicator would be appointed by the Secretary of State after consultations with representatives of local government.

b. The White Paper proposed that local authorities should be required to designate an officer with duties to advise on the management of the authority's service, and an officer to advise on questions of legality and propriety—the "monitoring officer". It was to be left to the authority whether the chief executive, if there was one, should hold either or both of these posts, except that the chief finance officer could not also be the monitoring officer.

The Government are now persuaded that each local authority should be required to designate one officer as head of their paid service, and that that officer should have the duties to advise on management questions. It would still be left to each authority whether those duties should be combined with those of the monitoring officer or the chief finance officer; the combination of the two latter offices would still not be permitted.

c. The White Paper proposed that there should be a ban on the appointment of advisers to political groups on councils. The Government have decided, in the light of the representations that they have received, that local authorities should be permitted to appoint a very limited number of assitants to political groups, to help councillors in those groups with their duties as councillors. A council will not be required to make such appointments, but where they decide to do so, each of the three largest political groups will be able to make one such appointment, provided that the group contains at least one tenth of the membership of the council. The terms of such appointment will broadly parallel the terms of appointment of special advisers in central Government: they will not be able to discharge functions on behalf of the council; they will not be permitted to manage other council staff; they will not be permitted to be paid at a rate of more than £13,500 a year; and they will be subject to the main restrictions on public political activity. Political groups will decide on their own choices, and will be expressly permitted to take the political views of candidates into account.

d. As an additional safeguard on the appointment of senior local authority officers, the Government have decided that the monitoring officer should be required to report to the authority, in every case in which an appointment is made by the full council, a committee or a subcommittee, either that, in his opinion, the appointment can be made consistently with enactments and standing orders and without taking into account any matter which could not properly be taken into account, or the reasons why he cannot so certify.

Local Authority Capital Finance

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what responses he received to his consultation paper on local authority capital finance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The consultation paper "Capital Expenditure and Finance" was published on 7 July 1988. Four hundred and fifty two responses were received by my right hon. Friend and a further 17 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. My right hon. Friends are grateful to all those who set out their views.

The consultation paper proposed, in light of the accountability that will be brought about by the community charge, a switch from controlling capital expenditure as such to controlling the use of credit to pay for it. That proposal appears to have generally been welcomed and the majority of the responses related to individual features of the new system as outlined in the consultation paper, and in particular the method of equal instalments of principal by which it was proposed that provision should be made from revenue accounts to meet existing and future credit liabilities.

Part IV of the Local Government and Housing Bill provides for a new local authority capital finance system broadly on the lines set out in the consultation paper. But, in light of the comments made by respondents, the Bill specifies that revenue account provision for credit liabilities should normally be made by the reducing balance method, though it will be possible for other methods to be specified in regulations.

Under the Bill, local authorities would be able to finance capital expenditure:

a. by credit up to the level specified in credit approvals to be issued by Government departments;

b. without restriction from the usable balance of their capital receipts after part has been set aside to reduce their indebtedness; and

c. without restriction from revenue contributions.

To assist them with their planning, a letter setting out details of part IV is being sent to the local authorities to which it will apply. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

"Local Authorities' Interests in Companies"

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached as a result of the consultative paper "Local Authorities' Interests in Companies" issued in June 1988.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Wales have considered the responses received to the consultation paper and have decided to make a number of amendments to the proposals which are set out in the document which I have today placed in the Library of the House.

The amendments are:

(i) the addition of mutual companies, combined heat and power companies and waste disposal companies to the categories of companies in which local authorities are permitted to have a minority interest;

(ii) the exemption of bodies funded by grants under section 56(9)) of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 which are deducted from the aggregate amount available for block grant; other exemptions will be considered case by case where companies are, in effect, dependent on central Government grant, since their activities can then be monitored in other ways.

(iii) the relaxation of the proposed rule that companies controlled by local authorities at arm's length should not have any local authority members or officers on the board of the company.

(iv) the spouses of officers of a local authority will no longer be a category of persons whose involvement in a company would establish a link with a local authority.

Rating Reform

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a typical ward sister would pay *(a)* in rates, *(b)* in community charge and *(c)* in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroom flat in Walthamstow.

Mr. Gummer: A ward sister earning £15,000, living in a flat in Walthamstow worth £55,000 with a rateable value of £300, would pay a rates bill of £634, a community charge of £269, disregarding the transitional safety net, and £665 under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer to the hon.

Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), *Official Report*, 12 January 1989, column 742, updating table F5 of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714), he will publish a table *(a)* showing for each band of equivalent net income what percentage of all households fall into that band, and what percentage of adults live in households falling in that band, *(b)* on the same basis as Table F5 in the Green Paper, but with the bands of equivalent net income adjusted so that 10 percentage of households fall into each band, and showing what proportion of those households whose net community charge is projected to be higher than their net rates, fall into each income band.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply, 30 January 1989]:* Table A shows the percentage of households, the percentage of adults, and the percentage of households whose illustrative net community charge for 1988-89 would have been higher than net rates, in each band of net household income. Table B shows the same information in bands of equivalent net household income. Figures on a decile basis are not available.

Distribution of household income and community charges in 1988-89

£ per week

	Under 75	*75-100*	*100-150*	*150-200*	*200-250*	*250-300*	*300-350*	*350-400*	*400-500*	*500+*
Table A					Net Income Range					
Pecentage of households in each range	17	11	18	16	13	9	6	4	4	3
Percentage of adults in each range	10	9	16	16	15	11	8	5	6	4
Percentage of households with higher net community charge than net rates falling into each range	10	10	18	19	15	10	7	4	4	2
Table B					Equivalent Net Income Range					
Percentage of households in each range	7	19	29	18	12	7	4	2	2	1
Percentage of adults in each range	6	17	29	20	13	7	4	2	2	1
Percentage of households with higher net community charge than net rates falling into each range	8	17	32	21	12	5	3	1	1	0

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table showing the number of gainers and losers and the amount of gain or loss, broken down by family type and net equivalent income bands, from the introduction of the community charge;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the number of *(a)* couples with children and *(b)* one-parent families who gain or lose from the introduction of the community charge and how much they gain or lose, broken down into net equivalent income bands.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply, 23 January 1989]:* The information requested for household and tax unit types is given in the tables below in ranges of equivalent net income and actual net income. The figures have been calculated in the same manner as those I placed in the Library on 15 December exemplifying the distributional impact of the community charge.

The figures show that 83 per cent. of single pensioner households and 75 per cent. of other single adult households would gain from the introduction of the community charge. Similarly 79 per cent. of lone parent families and 57 per cent. of couples with children would gain.

Impact of the full community charge with no safety nets (England: 1988-89 prices)
Thousands of gainers and losers and average gain-loss by household type and range of actual net income

	Actual net income range (£pw)				
Household types	*Under 75*	*75-100*	*150-250*	*250+*	*All*
Single pensioner					
Number of gainers (000's)	1,740	590	110	[1]—	2,485
Average gain (£pw)	1·01	3·87	6·88	[1]—	2·10
Number of losers (000's)	385	100	[1]—	[1]—	490
Average loss (£pw)	0·42	1·37	[1]—	[1]—	0·63
Other single adult					
Number of gainers (000's)	585	1,020	570	170	2,350
Average gain (£pw)	0·95	2·71	4·55	6·09	2·96
Number of losers (000's)	275	365	130	[1]—	795
Average loss (£pw)	0·87	1·86	2·03	[1]—	1·58
Two adults					
Number of gainers (000's)	70	1,565	1,885	2,180	5,700

Household types	Actual net income range (£pw) Under 75	75-100	150-250	250+	All
Average gain (£pw)	1·19	1·62	2·67	5·00	3·26
Number of losers (000's)	165	1,730	2,090	865	4,855
Average loss (£pw)	1·03	1·65	2·85	3·02	2·39
Three or more adults					
Number of gainers (000's)	—	100	150	365	615
Average gain (£pw)	—	2·11	1·97	4·43	3·45
Number of losers (000's)	—	55	540	1,235	1,825
Average loss (£pw)	—	1·94	3·89	6·39	5·52

Impact of the full community charge with no safety nets (England: 1988-89 prices)
Thousands of gainers and losers and average gain/loss by household type and range of equivalent net income

Household types	Equivalent net income range (£pw) Under 75	75-150	150-250	250+	All
Single pensioner					
Number of gainers (000's)	205	1,880	265	140	2,485
Average gain (£pw)	0·85	1·41	5·01	7·70	2·10
Number of losers (000's)	80	360	[1]—	[1]—	490
Average loss (£pw)	0·29	0·56	[1]—	[1]—	0·63
Other single adult					
Number of gainers (000's)	185	970	620	575	2,350
Average gain (£pw)	0·83	1·70	3·83	4·82	2·96
Number of losers (000's)	85	305	265	135	795
Average loss (£pw)	0·61	1·03	2·22	2·18	1·58
Two adults					
Number of gainers (000's)	225	2,220	1,930	1,320	5,700
Average gain (£pw)	1·49	1·89	3·47	5·54	3·26
Number of losers (000's)	415	2,440	1,505	495	4,855
Average loss (£pw)	0·84	2·10	3·04	3·16	2·39
Three or more adults					
Number of gainers (000's)	65	220	205	125	615
Average gain (£pw)	2·18	2·13	3·55	6·31	3·45
Number of losers (000's)	[1]—	775	845	165	1,825
Average loss (£pw)	[1]—	4·68	6·28	6·43	5·52

Impact of the full community charge with no safety nets (England: 1988-89 prices)
Thousands of gainers and losers and average gain/loss for families with children in ranges of actual net income

Tax unit type	Actual net income range (£pw) Under 75	75-150	150-250	250+	All
(a) Couples with children					
Number of gainers (000's)	[1]—	430	1,115	1,310	2,855
Average gain (£pw)	[1]—	1·62	2·63	5·22	3·67
Number of losers (000's)	[1]—	620	1,160	380	2,175
Average loss (£pw)	[1]—	1·58	2·83	2·86	2·47
(b) One parent families					
Number of gainers (000's)	85	435	105	[1]—	655
Average gain (£pw)	1·97	1·81	4·97	[1]—	2·61
Number of losers (000's)	80	75	[1]—	[1]—	170
Average loss (£pw)	0·78	1·57	[1]—	[1]—	1·35

Impact of the full community charge with no safety nets (England: 1988-89 prices)
Thousands of gainers and losers and average gain-loss for families with children in ranges of equivalent net income.

Tax unit type	Equivalent net income range (£pw) Under 75	75-150	150-250	250+	All
(a) *Couples with children*					
Number of gainers (000's)	110	1,070	1,190	490	2,855
Average gain (£pw)	1·44	2·24	3·90	6·70	3·67
Numbers of losers (000's)	255	1,235	600	85	2,175
Average loss (£pw)	0·76	2·57	2·91	3·12	2·47
(b) *One parent families*					
Number of gainers (000's)	85	460	85	[1]—	655
Average gain (£pw)	1·59	2·04	5·16	[1]—	2·61
Number of losers (000's)	60	90	[1]—	[1]—	170
Average loss (£pw)	0·56	1·28	[1]—	[1]—	1·35

[1]No reliable estimates available.

Oil Spillages

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to prevent future oil spillages in the English channel to protect the south coast from pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

Under the international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships 1973, and its protocol, no oil or oily mixtures may be discarded within prescribed distances from land; and ships are required to be so designed, equipped and operated that when a discharge is permitted the oil content has to be kept to the minimum specified. We have taken a number of positive measures to enforce the convention. Ships in the United Kingdom port are inspected to check that their pollution prevention equipment and operational practices are satisfactory. Reception facilities are made available to receive oil residues retained on board. At sea, as from April last year surveillance aircraft have been employed by the United Kingdom to undertake regular patrols over the shipping lanes around the United Kingdom to detect and deter ships discharging oil in contravention of the convention.

TRANSPORT

Vehicles (Accidents)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will advise how many pedestrians were involved in accidents caused by reversing vehicles during 1988, 1987, 1986, 1985, 1984 and 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department does not collect causes of accidents. These are often disputed, or unclear, at the time of the accident.

The following table shows the total number of pedestrians injured, and the numbers injured by a vehicle reversing, for the years 1983 to 1987.

Pedestrian casualties, and those injured by reversing vehicles: Great Britain 1983-1987

Year	*Total pedestrian casualties*	*Total involving reversing vehicle*
1983	61,674	1,928
1984	63,474	1,937
1985	61,390	2,005
1986	60,875	2,100
1987	57,453	2,152

The full figures for 1988 are not yet available. However, among the accidents reported to date, there were 41,905 pedestrian casualties, of which 1,616 occurred while a vehicle was reversing.

Because of the obvious risks, the highway code contains clear advice to drivers to be especially careful when reversing, and not to reverse vehicles for longer than is necessary.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to remove from the United Kingdom register fishing vessels that do not comply with part II of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988.

Mr. Portillo: The Merchant Shipping (Registration of Fishing Vessels) regulations which came into force on 1 December 1988 set a four-month transitional period before closure of the old fishing vessel registers. In order for their vessels to be accepted for the new register owners are required to confirm ownership particulars and submit a signed declaration of British character. These are then checked against the criteria in section 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 before new certificates of registry are issued.

Vehicle Licence Holders

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle licence holders in the United Kingdom have had their licences revoked or have had a non-renewal on health grounds for each of the years from 1985-1988;

(2) what is the total number of heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle licence holders operating within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures for Great Britain are as follows:

	April to March			
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
PSV licences revoked on medical grounds	502	734	865	880
HGV licences revoked on medical and other grounds	2,281	2,772	3,066	3,249

No separate figures are available for revocations of HGV licences on medical grounds.

The figures for Northern Ireland are as follows:

	January—December				
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
PSV licences revoked on medical grounds	50	56	65	73	80

	April—March			
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
HGV licences revoked on medical grounds	4	6	10	15

Figures are not held for the number of vocational licence holders operating within the United Kingdom. The number of heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle drivers' licences issued annually are as follows:

	April—March			
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Great Britain				
HGV licence issues				
Provisional licences	57,041	60,632	69,401	75,931
	First full licences	25,036	27,426	28,823
33,209				
Renewals	258,735	263,043	261,918	271,882
PSV licences	12,360	13,612	57,218	65,883

	April—March			
	1984-85	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Northern Ireland				
HGV licence issues				
Provisional licences	2,139	1,917	2,053	2,463
First full licences and renewals	6,769	8,084	8,358	7,352

	January—December				
	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
PSV licences	2,010	3,513	1,665	1,055	2,381

Foreign Aircraft (Compensation)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number and geographical location of cases where United Kingdom citizens who have been killed in the United Kingdom by foreign aircraft have failed to obtain any compensation from the foreign owner, operator or pilot in the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information is not collected by the Department.

Road Accidents (Derbyshire)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents have taken place in the county of Derbyshire in every year since 1979; and what are the figures for the number of *(a)* fatal and *(b)* serious injuries for each year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures requested are shown below. They show personal injury accidents and the casualties resulting from those accidents.

Accidents and casualties in Derbyshire: 1979 to 1987

	Accidents	*Casualties*	
		Fatal	*Serious*
1979	4,079	111	1,423
1980	4,152	92	1,397
1981	4,075	115	1,362
1982	4,138	119	1,278
1983	3,743	113	1,092
1984	3,453	109	1,025
1985	3,306	78	817
1986	3,334	97	902
1987	3,331	82	846

Vehicle Speeds (Motorways)

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the proportion of cars exceeding the 70 mph speed limit on motorways continues to fall as it did between 1983 and 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not yet possible to determine whether car speeds on motorways have fallen since the last of the periodic national speed surveys in 1987. The 1983 and 1987 surveys were conducted using video technology at 54 sites on two days in the months of July and August. In future, vehicle speeds will be collected continuously at about 200 sites using automatic vehicle detectors. At present, data are available from ten of these sites. As only one is on a motorway, proper comparisons cannot be made with the earlier surveys.

Automatic Weighbridges

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *465*, which are the main ferry ports to be equipped with automatic weighbridges; when each will come into use; and whether their use will be compulsory for all commercial vehicles entering the United Kingdom through these ports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: During the next three months we intend to install automatic weighing equipment on a trial basis in the ports of Dover, Newhaven, Ramsgate, Poole and Felixstowe. Subject to the outcome of the trial, we will consider further installations in other ports. Under existing legislation there is no provision to make the use of the equipment compulsory but it will be capable of weighing all commercial vehicles using the ports.

Road Haulage

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to deregulate road haulage throughout the European Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The EC Council agreed in June last year to abolish all quantitative controls on road haulage within the Community from the end of 1992. The conditions under which non resident operators may carry out road haulage wholly within another member state are under discussion. We are also still discussing the qualitative criteria for access to the profession of road haulage.

Domestic haulage in the United Kingdom itself was effectively deregulated in 1968.

Road and Footpath Surfaces

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to implement the recommendations of the Horne Report relating to the reinstatement of road and footpath surfaces following works done by statutory undertakings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. I refer my hon. Friend to the fuller answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) on 19 January, column *292*.

Dial-a-Ride

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many trips were provided by London dial-a-ride in 1988; what proportion of registered disabled used this service each week; how many new buses were provided; how many drivers are currently employed; and what constraints were placed upon the service.

Mr. Portillo: London dial-a-ride services are run by local voluntary management committees and funded by grant which is allocated by London Regional Transport. Membership, staffing, use of other resources, and operating procedures are matters for them and LRT. Government grant for dial-a-ride services in *1987-88* totals £6·27 million which is a 50 per cent. increase on the 1985-86 figure.

Manchester Airport (Accident)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to publish the report on the Manchester airport disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect the report to be published on 13 March.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to initiate any hearings in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and other locations in South Wales on the proposals to raise Severn bridge tolls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inquiry will be held at Thornbury, near Bristol. If the inspector is satisfied that there are objectors who cannot get to Thornbury, and providing a suitable venue can be found, the hearing may continue in south Wales for a limited period.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the value of the opening tolls on the Severn bridge in current prices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1966 the tolls charged for all types of vehicle crossing the Severn bridge was 2/6d (12½p). The equivalent, at current prices, is 90p.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what levels the debt at the Severn bridge will reach if *(a)* there is no increase in tolls or *(b)* the current proposal to increase tolls to £1 for cars and £2 for lorries is implemented.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: If tolls are not increased, our forecasts show that debt would rise indefinitely, so that at the end of the toll period in 2006 it would have reached almost £400 million.

If the proposed tolls are introduced debt will reach a peak of £127 million in 1991, declining thereafter so that tolls would cease by 2006.

The latest figure for the Severn bridge debt is £85·5 million.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will place in the Library copies of his Department's statement of case for increasing the tolls on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am placing copies in the Library today.

Coastguard

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the total amount of overtime worked at each Scottish coastguard rescue centre in 1988, indicating the total cost of such payment.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his reply, 30 January 1989]:* The total number of overtime hours worked at each Scottish coastguard rescue station in 1988 was:

Station	*Hours*
Aberdeen	3,776
Forth	4,871
Shetland	4,267
Pentland	5,127
Moray	6,600
Clyde	6,626
Oban	5,435
Stornoway	4,966

Overtime costs are not recorded by individual station and consequently are not readily available.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North, 16 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *751*, what is the assumption on expected caseload for each of the social security benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to table 15·6, page 7, of Cm 615 "The Government Expenditure Plans 1988-90 to 1991-92".

Single Payments (Tooting)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount has been paid out in single payments through his Department's office covering Tooting, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amounts paid in single payments by the Department's local offices covering Tooting are shown in the table.

Amounts of single payments made by DSS local offices in the Tooting area during the period 1985-88

	Year[1]		
Office[3]	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88*[2] £
Balham	779,197	904,068	551,139
Wandsworth	350,332	428,375	201,331

[1] The periods are from April to April each year.
[2] The figures for 1987-88 are provisional and subject to amendment.
[3] Tooting is covered partially by the two local offices shown.

National Insurance Credits

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people had national insurance credits withdrawn in 1987-88 in the United Kingdom, the North West region and Warrington area, respectively; and for how long these credits were withdrawn on average.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is as follows:

Unemployment benefit: Decisions of adjudication officers on contribution credits
Number of fresh or renewable claims disallowed 1987-88[1]

	Number
Great Britain	42,274
North West Region	4,399

[1] Year ending 30 June 1988.

Information shows the number of persons disallowed contribution credits because they were disallowed

unemployment benefit. Statistics on disallowance of sickness benefit credits are not available. No statistics are available for Warrington, nor for the average length of time the credits were withdrawn.

Invalidity Pensions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people had their entitlement to invalidity pensions withdrawn during 1988; how many of these have lodged appeals; and, of those, how many have been *(a)* successful, *(b)* unsuccessful and *(c)* how many are still awaiting determination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested on the number of cases where entitlement has been withdrawn is not readily available. The latest administrative statistics on social security appeal tribunals relate to appeals heard in the quarter ending 31 March 1988 and they are given in the table provided.

Social Security Appeal Statistics—quarter ending 31 March 1988
Invalidity Benefit.

	Number
Number of appeals lodged	1,527
Total number heard and decided	1,241
Number heard in claimant's favour	529
Number outstanding at end of quarter	[1]2,365

[1] Includes appeals outstanding from previous quarter.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of married women whose contributions to the national insurance fund would have entitled them to a pension less than the Category B married woman's pension in each of the last five years; and for each year what was the total amount paid in national insurance contributions by this group.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that these figures are not available.

Hostel Charges

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has reached any conclusions on the "Help with Hostel Charges" proposals published in 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We expect to announce final decisions shortly.

Expenditure Plans

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if will publish table 15·1 of Cm. 615 in constant 1988-89 prices.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table.

Social security expenditure in real terms[1]
1983-84 to 1991-92—Great Britain

£ million

	1983-84 outturn	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn[2]*	*1989-90 plans[1]*	*1990-91 plans[1]*	*1991-92 plans[1]*
Contributory benefits[3]									
Pension benefits									
Retirement pension									
basic element	18,580	18,561	18,971	19,588	19,503	18,904	19,198	19,800	19,900
additional pension	77	106	163	244	311	377	474	600	700
Christmas bonus	131	128	121	119	114	109	105	100	100
Widows' benefits, etc.									
basic element	965	928	885	876	838	838	802	800	800
additional pension	19	32	38	45	53	70	84	100	100
Unemployment, incapacity and other benefits									
Unemployment benefit	1,911	1,929	1,833	1,935	1,560	1,143	920	900	1,000
Sickness benefit	338	341	318	200	205	205	196	200	200
Invalidity benefit									
basic element	2,304	2,497	2,564	2,768	2,876	3,057	3,347	3,600	3,800
additional pension	86	122	147	215	278	353	451	600	700
Death grant	22	21	21	20	3	—	—	—	—
Industrial injuries benefit									
Industrial disablement benefit	471	466	470	491	482	455	450	500	500
Industrial death benefit	69	67	67	68	60	57	57	100	100
Other industrial injuries benefits	6	6	6	4	4	4	4	—	—
Family benefits									
Maternity alowance	180	197	189	187	54	27	28	—	—
Guardian's allowance and child's special allowance	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	—	—
Total contributory benefit expenditure	25,162	25,403	25,793	26,765	26,343	25,600	26,116	27,300	27,900
Non-contributory benefits[4]									
Pension benefits									
Non-contributory retirement pension	52	48	47	50	39	36	36	—	—
Christmas bonus	8	7	8	9	9	7	8	—	—
War pension	669	665	670	657	636	603	592	600	600
Disability benefits									
Attendance allowance	632	704	791	869	953	1,042	1,140	1,200	1,300
Invalid care allowance	13	13	15	116	195	160	180	200	200

	1983-84 outturn	1984-85 outturn	1985-86 outturn	1986-87 outturn	1987-88 outturn	1988-89 outturn[2]	1989-90 plans[1]	1990-91 plans[1]	1991-92 plans[1]
Non-contributory invalidity pension/ severe disablement allowance	232	289	307	318	314	308	308	300	300
Mobility allowance	388	435	487	574	633	665	730	800	900
RPI adjustments	—	—	—	—	100	3	—	—	—
Supplementary benefit/income support									
Supplementary pension	906	1,088	1,164	1,315	1,404	—	—	—	—
Supplementary allowance	6,232	6,824	7,427	7,576	7,050	—	—	—	—
Income support	—	—	—	—	—	7,650	7,400	7,900	8,500
Social fund	—	—	—	—	31	164	139	100	100
Family benefits									
Child benefit	5,091	5,228	5,155	5,036	4,885	4,522	4,319	4,400	4,500
One parent benefit	137	147	155	165	173	174	183	200	200
Family income supplement/family credit	157	154	150	180	191	422	481	500	500
Maternity grant	22	22	20	16	—	—	—	—	—
Housing benefit									
Rent rebate	2,528	2,623	2,647	2,702	2,707	2,726	2,834	3,000	3,100
Rent allowance	684	841	963	1,057	1,103	1,092	1,562	1,600	1,700
Total non-contributory benefit expenditure	17,748	19,089	20,006	20,641	20,424	19,573	19,907	21,000	22,000
Total benefit expenditure	42,911	44,492	45,798	47,406	46,766	45,173	46,023	48,200	49,900
Administration and miscellaneous services									
National Insurance Fund administration (collection of contributions and payment of contributory benefits)	886	988	920	811	848	857	914	930	920
Non-contributory benefit administration (payment of non-contributory benefits)	956	950	959	1,157	1,307	1,312	1,416	1,470	1,430
Housing benefit									
Local authority administration	135	170	179	194	237	246	204	200	200
Total administration	1,978	2,108	2,057	2,162	2,391	2,415	2,534	2,610	2,550
Total—Social Security	44,888	46,600	47,856	49,568	49,157	47,588	48,557	50,800	52,400

[1] Using the GDP deflator at market prices.
[2] Estimated.
[3] ie those paid from the National Insurance Fund.
[4] ie those net from voted expenditure or paid by local authorities etc.

Family Incomes

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the total net income, including benefits, after tax and national insurance where appropriate, for a single mother aged 30 years with one child aged five years, living in privately rented accommodation at a cost of £56·62 per week rent plus £10·23 per week rates plus £2·31 per week water rates, with no capital and the following levels of earnings *(a)* Nil, *(b)* £15 per week, *(c)* £30 per week, *(d)* £50 per week, *(e)* £75 per week, *(f)* £100 per week, *(g)* £125 per week, *(h)* £150 per week and *(i)* £175 per week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is set out in the tables.

Lone parent with one child aged 5

Income support	*Earnings*	*Rent*	*Rates*	*Housing benefit*	*CHB*	*FSM*[1]	*Net income before housing costs*	
(a) Not working								
41·85	—	56·62	10·23	64·80	12·15	2·55	121·35	—
(b) Working under 24 hours—earnings £15								
41·85	15	56·62	10·23	64·80	12·15	2·55	136·35	—
(c) Working under 24 hours—earning £30[1]								
41·85	30	56·62	10·23	64·80	12·15	2·55	136·35	—

[1] Free school meals.

Earnings	*Tax*	*National Insurance*	*Family credit*	*Rent*	*Rates*	*Rent rebate*	*Rate rebate*	*CHB*	*Net income before housing costs*
(d) Working over 24 hours—earning £50									
50	0·00	2·50	38·15	56·62	10·23	41·09	3·40	12·15	142·29

Earnings	Tax	National Insurance	Family credit	Rent	Rates	Rent rebate	Rate rebate	CHB	Net income before housing costs
(e) Working over 24 hours—earning £75									
75	0·00	5·25	25·34	56·62	10·23	34·95	1·52	12·15	143·71
(f) Working over 24 hours—earning £100									
100	5·31	7·00	12·78	56·62	10·23	31·45	0·00	12·15	144·07
(g) Working over 24 hours—earning £125									
125	11·56	11·25	2·63	56·62	10·23	28·62	0·00	12·15	145·59
(h) Working over 24 hours—earning £150									
150	17·81	13·50	0·00	56·62	10·23	19·61	0·00	12·15	150·45
(i) Working over 24 hours—earning £175									
175	24·06	15·75	0·00	56·62	10·23	8·89	0·00	12·15	156·23

Note: Under Income Support water rates are treated like any other ordinary item of domestic expenditure and are paid by the claimant out of available income. There is no water rate rebate within Housing Benefit for claimants who are not on income support.
(i). Income support would be reduced by the amount that the earnings exceed the £15 disregard.

National Insurance

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total annual revenue received from employees' national insurance contributions paid by employees earning *(a)* less than £70 per week, *(b)* less than £105 per week and *(c)* less than £155 per week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows

Total annual revenue received from employees' national insurance contributions 1988-89

Earnings of employees	£ billion
Less than £70 a week	0·25
Less than £105 a week	0·85
Less than £155 a week	3·00

All figures are net of contracted out rebate, and exclude the reduced rate contributions paid by some married women and widows.

Single Homeless

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department has received a copy of the report of the Nottingham university single homeless monitoring project and from agencies serving the homeless in the Nottingham area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department can trace no record of having received this report.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people live in hostels for the homeless in Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.

The only figures collected centrally are the latest estimates of households placed in hostels by English local authorities. They are given in table 7 of the publication "Local Authorities' Action under the Homelessness Provisions of the 1985 Housing Act; England. Results for Third Quarter 1988, Supplementary Tables" which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Local authorities provide quarterly estimates of the numbers of people accepted as homeless under the terms of the homeless provisions of the Housing Act 1985.

An extract from table 7 of the Supplementary Tables Third Quarter 1988 reads as follows:

Number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of quarter

	Bed and breakfast	Hostels[1]	Others[2]
Ashfield	—	4	—
Bassetlaw	—	—	[3]245
Broxtowe	2	1	19
Gedling	—	10	—
Mansfield	—	8	16
Newark and Sherwood	—	48	—
Nottingham	1	60	21
Rushcliffe	1	8	9

[1] Including women's refuge.
[2] Including short-life dwellings.
[3] Bassetlaw often let temporary accommodation to homeless families and then rehouse them later.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Active Citizenship

14. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further initiatives he is taking to promote active citizenship.

Mr. Hurd: We are committed to encouraging active and responsible citizenship in people of all ages and from all sections of society. Much can be and is already being done through involvement in charitable work and voluntary groups—for example, through neighbourhood watch and victim support schemes. The Ministerial Group on the Voluntary Sector meets regularly to discuss promotion of volunteering. The Home Office's VSU—voluntary services unit—makes grants of £10 million to support voluntary organisations, many of which exist to promote voluntary activity and to support volunteers.

The Government as a whole spend some £2 billion in helping to fund the voluntary sector.

There is a need for even closer partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors. I have been having and will continue to have discussions with representatives of all three sectors in order to identify and publicise ways in which people can turn concern into effective voluntary action.

Violent Crime

15. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further action his Department is taking to combat violent crime.

19. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to combat violent crime.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have already strengthened the police, increased maximum sentences and cracked down on the possession of knives and other offensive weapons. New measures this year will include a further addition to police manpower of 1,100 more officers. From yesterday, there exists a new right of appeal for the prosecution against an over-lenient sentence, in addition the private ownership of lethal firearms, like the Kalashnikov rifle, is banned. The Prevention of Terrorism Bill, now before Parliament, will give the police and the courts the special powers which they need to counter the violent terrorist threat.

Chief Constables (Wales)

16. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last had a meeting with the chief constables of police forces in Wales; and how frequently he holds such joint meetings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In exercising his responsibilities for the police service in England and Wales my right hon. Friend frequently has meetings with chief constables. My right hon. Friend has not found it necessary to hold meetings with chief officers of police forces in Wales as a separate group.

Airports (Security)

17. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of police forces for security purposes at airports.

Mr. Hurd: Police are employed on work requiring police skills. Airport staff conduct other procedures such as screening of passengers and baggage. A working party has been examining those recommendations of the Transport Select Committee particularly directed to the police, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and I have now asked the working party to consider whether they wish to make any further recommendations in the light of the Lockerbie disaster.

Infant Life Preservation Act 1929

18. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the case for amending the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

66. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the case for amending the Infant Life Preservation Act.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During the past year our records show one leter received in favour of amending the Act.

51. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when was the last prosecution for child destruction under the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The last prosecution for which information is available centrally was 1987.

83. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to set up a working party to look into the working of the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

West Mercia Police

20. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in securing greater efficiency and value for money from the West Mercia police force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is advised by Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary about the efficiency of provincial police forces. The West Mercia police have improved the value for money they obtain from their resources by means such as the streamlining of administrative procedures and the introduction of operational support units; and the use of information technology for crime pattern analysis and fingerprint identification.

29. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of progress in securing greater efficiency and value for money from the West Mercia police force in considering applications for increases in its establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend announced on 30 January his decision to approve an increase of 28 police posts for West Mercia constabulary with effect from 1 April 1989. Full account was taken of the force's commitment to a programme of civilianisation over recent years.

Television (Scotland)

21. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his proposals for the future of television broadcasting from viewers in the Grampian, Scottish and Border television areas.

Mr. Renton: We have received a number of representations from viewers in Scotland, including a preliminary submission from Comunn Na Gaidhlig. We would welcome any further comments during the consultation period which ends on 28 February.

Random Breath Tests

22. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in favour of random breath testing in the past 12 months.

37. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the introduction of random breath testing.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received representations both for and against random breath testing from a number of organisations, from hon. Members and from individual members of the public. On 1 February, my right hon. Friend announced a period of public consultation on possible changes to police powers to require breath tests.

Crime (Rural Areas)

23. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had about the incidence of public disorder and crime in rural areas.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have had discussions within Government and with representatives of the police, the courts, and the licensed trade about the problems of hooliganism and alcohol-related disorder. Non-metropolitan disorder was considered by a working group comprising Home Office officials and representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers, the results of which my right hon. Friend announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 21 December.

Radio

24. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking in advance of any future Broadcasting Bill to increase the choice available to radio listeners.

69. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what he is doing in advance of any future Broadcasting Bill, to increase the choice available to radio listeners.

Mr. Renton: As I stated in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 26 January, at column *671*, we have endorsed IBA proposals to award 20 contracts for community radio and a further contract for a station covering Heathrow and Gatwick. In addition, we have authorised BBC and independent local radio stations to provide separate programmes if they wish on each of their current frequencies.

61. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to widen choice for radio listeners.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 26 January to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), at column *671*.

Prison Kitchens

25. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will request prison governors to liaise with local authority environmental health officers to ensure that the prison service inspections of prison kitchens are of the same standard as those of local authority environmental health officers in other establishments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The existing internal arrangements in the prison service are considered to be sufficient to set and monitor standards equivalent to those that would be required by local authority environmental health officers.

In addition, guidance has recently been issued which encourages governors, together with prison medical officers, to liaise with local authority environmental health officers. The liaison may include informal visits by these officers to prison in an advisory capacity.

Police Cells

26. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were being held in police cells in England and Wales on 31 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On Tuesday 31 January, 349 prisoners were held in police cells in England and Wales. Every effort is being made to reduce that number as quickly as possible in the face of the renewed growth of the inmate population.

72. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the most recent figure for the number of prisoners housed in police cells.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At unlocking on Wednesday 1 February, 322 prisoners were held in police cells in England and Wales.

73. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has had recent discussions with the Metropolitan police concerning conditions for remand prisoners in custody in police station cells in the Greater London area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Problems arising from the accommodation of remand prisoners in police cells are often discussed at the meetings which my right hon. Friend holds regularly with the commissioner of the Metropolitan police. I am well aware that conditions for remand prisoners in police cells are often far from satisfactory although the police do all they can in difficult circumstances.

Hooliganism

27. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with chief constables concerning the problems of hooliganism inside and outside football grounds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office is in regular contact with the Association of Chief Police Officers about these problems. The association was represented on the Minister for Sport's working party and will continue to be involved in discussions on the implementation of the Football Spectators Bill.

56. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to deal with unruly behaviour outside football grounds.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Much has already been achieved by alcohol restrictions, the powers for the police and the courts under the Public Order Act 1986 and the advice which my right hon. Friend recently gave to the courts on the need for swift justice following incidents of hooliganism.

The proposed football membership scheme, although designed primarily to prevent those intent on unruly behaviour from gaining admission to football grounds, is also intended to remove the football match as the central focus for the activities of hooligans. Those who know they are not going to be admitted to a match are unlikely to travel long distances to stand outside.

I believe that the scheme will curb football-related hooliganism, both inside and away from grounds.

Abortion

28. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to change the criteria used to decide whether it is in the public interest to order an inquest on babies born alive following abortions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

32. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further representations he has received about his decision not to order an inquest on the baby of 21 weeks gestation aborted at the Carlisle city general hospital in July 1987.

45. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many further representations he has received following his decision that it was not in the public interest to order an inquest on the baby of 21 weeks gestational age, aborted at the Carlisle city general hospital in July 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. I would refer to my reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 15 December, column *711*. We have received no further representations since then.

Carriers Liability Act

30. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the receipts to date under the Carriers Liability Act; and what are the arrears.

Mr. Renton: Charges totalling £7·366 million had been incurred by carriers under the Act up to 31 December 1988. Of this sum, £3·539 million had been paid, leaving £3·827 million outstanding.

Sunday Trading

31. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in response to his request for views on the reform of Sunday shopping.

82. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in response to his request for views on the reform of Sunday shopping.

84. **Mr. Mudd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received from interested parties on ways to amend the Shops Act 1950.

Mr. Renton: I would refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave earlier to the question from the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien).

85. **Sir Bernard Braine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from churches and other religious bodies concerning proposals to update the law on Sunday trading.

Mr. Renton: Since November 1986 we have received 66 written representations on behalf of a church or other religious body. Among the correspondents have been the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Hume, the Chief Rabbi and the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council. I have also met the Bishop of Gloucester, chairman of the General Synod's Board for Social Responsibility, on three occasions, and the Bishop of London.

Magistrates Courts

33. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the administration of the magistrates courts.

Mr. John Patten: It is because I see scope for improvements in the efficient management of the magistrates courts system that I have decided to set in hand a scrutiny as explained in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on 17 January, column *140*.

Broadcasting Standards Council

34. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council as often as circumstances dictate in order to discuss the work of the council and other matters.

Police Training

35. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives he is planning to improve police and police cadet training.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police training is kept under constant review and a number of developments are in hand. A new modular training course for recruits is to be introduced later this year, a centrally developed training package for newly promoted sergeants has recently come into use and a new course for inspectors on promotion is in the final stages of development. Cadet training is carried out in the seven police forces which run cadet schemes.

We have no plans to issue new guidance on this subject.

Crime (North Yorkshire)

36. **Mr Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress his Department is making towards reducing the level of crime in north Yorkshire.

Mr. John Patten: The total number of notifiable offences recorded by the police in north Yorkshire from January to September 1988 fell by 5 per cent. when compared with the same period in 1987. The national decrease was 3·7 per cent. In particular, burglaries in north Yorkshire decreased by 14·2 per cent. This coincides with an increase of over 250 good neighbour schemes in the area, bringing the total number of schemes there to 1,331, covering almost 32,000 households.

British Nationality

28. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long it now takes to process applications for British nationality.

Mr. Renton: The average time taken to complete applications for naturalisation and registration in December 1988 was 21 months and 14 months respectively.

Guardian Angels

39. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the need to regulate the activities of guardian angels operating on London local authority housing estates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Neither my right hon. Friend nor the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is aware of any so-called guardian angels operating on local authority housing estates in London. Members of the public who wish to support the police can most usefully do so through the special constabulary or active participation in neighbourhood watch schemes.

Metropolitan Police (Precept)

40. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations were made by London local authority associations on 17 January regarding the rise in the Metropolitan police precept for 1989-90; and what replies he gave them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The representations of the London local authority associations were mainly concerned with the size of the proposed Metropolitan police precept for 1989-90, which they regarded as excessive. My right hon. Friend was able, with the assistance of my right hon. Friend and Minister of State for Local Government, to explain the reasons for the proposed increases and to describe the steps which are being taken to strengthen the force's arrangements for securing greater efficiency and value for money in the deployment of its resources.

Tagging

41. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the Green Paper proposals for the use of electronic tags to monitor offenders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received a number of representations, some commenting on the suggestion that electronic monitoring might be used to enforce a curfew as part of the new court order proposed in the Green Paper. We shall consider the future use of electronic monitoring in the light of these comments and the pilot studies—monitoring defendants remanded on bail—which will begin later this year.

54. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the technology for the tracking tag, as opposed to the curfew tag, to be demonstrably effective; and if he will then introduce it into pilot schemes on tagging throughout England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that some companies are working on monitoring devices which allow the wearer to be tracked. This technology is still at the development stage and I do not expect its effectiveness to be reliably demonstrated in time for the forthcoming pilot studies.

Political Asylum

42. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the past 12 months police officers have been used to arrest persons seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: Under the Immigration Act 1971 a constable or immigration officer may arrest or detain certain persons in breach of the Act. Information about the number of occasions when police officers have exercised those powers is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. An application for political asylum is a separate issue which is considered entirely on its merits.

Police Surgeons

43. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many doctors are retained by police on a part-time basis to act as police surgeons attending to victims of crime and scenes of crime; and what was the position three and five years ago.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police surgeons are appointed by police authorities and no central record is maintained.

46. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on present arrangements for the work of police surgeons.

48. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to alter the arrangements under which general practitioners work as part-time police surgeons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Police surgeons are appointed by police authorities. The joint negotiating committee for the fees of doctors assisting local authorities issues national guidance about their conditions of service. But the onus rests with individual police authorities to ensure that suitable arrangements are made to secure the necessary coverage by police surgeons within the force area.

Firearms Licences

44. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans there are to prohibit the granting of a firearms licence to those under a certain age.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under section 22(2) of the Firearms Act 1968 it is an offence for a person under the age of 14 to have in his possession any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of the Act applies, except in the limited circumstances specified where a firearm certificate is not required anyway. These include target practice at an approved club and shooting at a miniature rifle range. Accordingly, firearm certificates are issued only to those over 14 years of age. We have no proposals to change the law in this respect.

With regard to shotgun certificates, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller).

Mr. Roberto Fiore

47. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with the further consideraton of the case of Mr. Roberto Fiore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my right hon. Friend to a question from the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 15 December, column *721*. No further request has been received from the Italian Government—the possibility of deportation is being considered. Representations against such action have been lodged.

Mr. Viraj Mendis

49. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from citizens of Manchester in respect of the extradition of Viraj Mendis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Up to 23 January 1989, 115 letters had been received from the Manchester area about the case of Mr. Mendis, of which 40 were in support of him. About 150 campaign postcards from the Manchester area and a number of petitions, some of which were signed by residents of Manchester, had also been received.

53. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a further statement on the case of Viraj Mendis.

58. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consideration he has given to the case of Viraj Mendis.

Mr. Renton: I would refer the hon. Members to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 26 January, column *672*.

Franchise

50. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to produce proposals to widen the franchise for Britons living abroad.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We attach considerable importance to extension of the franchise for British citizens living overseas and intend to bring forward legislation in this Parliament.

Prisoners (Escapes)

52. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners escaped from custody in 1988; and what crimes were they originally convicted of.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information held centrally shows that, during 1988, 267 inmates escaped from within closed prison service establishments in England and Wales or from outside escorts. This figure includes both convicted and unconvicted inmates. The offences of which they had been convicted, or with which they had been charged, are categorised in the table. Multiple offences or charges are categorised according to the most serious offence.

Offence categories (including attempts)

	Number
Murder or Manslaughter	6
Sexual offences	3
Other offences against the person	24
Burglary	120
Robbery	29
Theft, forgery and related offences	37
Others	48

West Midlands Police

55. **Mr. Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of progress in securing greater efficiency and value for money from the West Midlands police force in considering applications for increases in its establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend announced on 30 January his decision to approve an increase of 62 police posts for west midlands police with effect from 1 April 1989. Full account was taken of the progress which the force has made in recent times in obtaining police officers in considerable numbers through civilianisation.

Chief Charity Commissioners

57. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chief charity commissioner, Mr. Robin Guthrie; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend will be meeting the chief charity commissioner shortly to discuss the proposals the Government will be putting forward in the forthcoming White Paper on charities. My right hon. and noble friend has met the chief charity commissioner on seven occasions in the past year to discuss a wide range of matters concerning charities and the work of the commission.

Vietnamese Refugees

59. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of Vietnamese refugees accepted to settle in the United Kingdom to date; and whether provision for Vietnamese refugees will be increased.

Mr. Renton: Between 1979 and the end of the third quarter of 1988 some 20,400 Vietnamese refugees were admitted for settlement in the United Kingdom. For the future, I refer to the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) on 22 December, columns 588 and 589.

Tackling Crime (European Co-operation)

60. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his Department is doing to promote greater European co-operation against crime.

75. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his Department is doing to promote greater European co-operation against crime.

Mr. John Patten: We attach great importance to closer European co-operation to tackle crime and have actively sought to strengthen bilateral links; my right hon. Friend recently signed an agreement with Italy to combat terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime. Further action is in hand to improve bilateral and multilateral co-operation in a number of areas including mutual legal assistance and extradition arrangements, the exchange of drugs intelligence and the confiscation of drug traffickers' assets.

Broadcasting

62. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made towards a Council of Europe convention on broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from him on 23 January, column 393.

63. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss the White Paper on the future of broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. Friend met Mr. Russell on 10 January and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met him on 17 January to discuss our recent White Pa[per]

on broadcasting. My right hon. Friend keeps in regular touch with the chairmen of the BBC and IBA on a wide range of broadcasting matters.

Football Matches (Policing)

64. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether steps are being taken to reduce the cost of policing football matches.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The aim of the national football membership scheme envisaged in part I of the Football Spectators Bill *[Lords]* is to break the link between football and hooliganism by disqualifying troublemakers from attendance at all League grounds. In the longer term, the scheme should reduce considerably the heavy police commitment required to maintain order at football matches.

Burglaries

65. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the latest figures for burglary in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Burglary fell by 8 per cent. in the 12 months to September 1988 compared with the previous 12 months. This information is published in table 4 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 36/88, a copy of which is in the Library.

Right of Silence

67. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will make a statement on his conclusions concerning the right of silence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend is awaiting the report of the working group which was set up last year to consider what changes in the law are necessary. We expect to receive its report around Easter.

77. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received relating to the possible abolition of the right of silence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters from right hon. and hon. Members, including one from the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, West (Mr. Randall) on behalf of the Opposition, and from members of the public. I understand that the working group on the right of silence which my right hon. Friend set up to consider this issue has received responses to its consultation document from a wide range of interested bodies.

Metropolitan Police

68. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to promote greater efficiency in the Metropolitan police.

79. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in securing greater value for money from the Metropolitan police.

81. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in securing greater value for money from the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Measures have been introduced on a number of fronts to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and economic use of Metropolitan police resources and to ensure value for money of Metropolitan police expenditure. Changes were made last year to the systems of estimating, monitoring and controlling expenditure and to the composition of the cash limit in order to strengthen the controls on running costs and other current expenditure. An estimate screening process has been introduced to concentrate attention on the relative priorities of competing demands, increasing value for money in the use of resources and identifying policies or projects which require more detailed examination. Work is being done on the improvement of financial management information and pilot schemes to assess the effectiveness of divisional budgets. There is a programme of civilianisation to release police officers for operational duties and to ensure that functions are carried out in the most economic way. Independent inspections by Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary will augment the internal system of inspections in measuring the efficiency of the force.

Other initiatives aimed at improving greater Efficiency and value for money include a continuing programme of scrutinies and reviews, contracting out of services, and the wider use of output measures and performance indicators.

Some recent achievements include: 218 headquarters posts abolished through reorganisation in the last three years; 1,300 posts devolved from headquarters to areas in the last three years; 322 posts civilianised since March 1986; 500 cleaning posts contracted out; hours spent on street duty in 1988 up by some 7·5 per cent. over the previous year; a reduction of 10 per cent. in real terms in the overtime budget; a 7 per cent. improvement in arrest rates; and a 6 per cent. improvement in clear-up rates.

Police Forensic Service

70. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to establish a full-time police forensic service.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office forensic science service provides forensic science facilities to police forces outside London through its six regional laboratories. The Metropolitan police and the City of London police are served by the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory.

It would not be economical, or effective, for each provincial police force to establish its own laboratory.

Prison Sentences (Remission)

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent remission of prison sentences is based on the severity of the crime.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Remission may be earned on all prison sentences of more than five days. Those not exceeding a total term of 12 months may be reduced by up to half; longer sentences may be reduced by a third. The maximum amount of remission will, thus, reflect the length of sentence or sentences imposed on a prisoner, which is determined by a number of other factors in addition to the severity of the offence.

Drugs

74. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in securing greater international co-operation against the illegal drug trade.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier this afternoon to a similar Question from my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

Prisoners

76. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On Friday 27 January 48,867 prisoners were held in prison service establishments in England and Wales. A further 298 prisoners were held in police cells.

Police Efficiency

78. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he is taking to implement the recommendations of the Audit Commission on police efficiency.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Audit Commission recommendations contain valuable guidelines for improved value for money in the use of police resources. The Home Office and Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary will fully support and encourage chief officers of police and police authorities in implementing the recommendations.

Italy (Ministerial Visit)

80. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about his recent visit to Italy.

Mr. Hurd: I visited Italy from 11 to 14 January at the invitation of Signor Antonio Gava, the Italian Minister of the Interior. During the visit I had talks with Signor Gava and his officials about matters of common interest, and I signed a joint arrangement for co-operation between our two Governments on developing measures against terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking. Copies of this arrangement have been placed in the Library.

I called on a number of parliamentarians in Rome, and visited Turin and Milan where I met local officials and members of the business community, and visited a drug rehabilitation project.

Prisons (HIV Testing)

86. **Mr. Allason:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce compulsory HIV testing in all prisons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Practice in prisons follows Government policy for the general community. A test is carried out only with informed consent.

South Yorkshire Police

87. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to increase the current manning levels in the South Yorkshire police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend announced on 30 January, column 6, that he had approved an increase of 16 police posts for South Yorkshire and that he was prepared to approve a further 11 posts for stage II probationer training if the police authority made formal application for them.

Shops Act 1950

88. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken to seek the views of the local government authorities on ways of amending the Shops Act 1950; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I have met with the Association of District Councils on 14 July, 21 September and 13 December 1988 to exchange views on Sunday trading and have received the proposals which it published on 30 December.

Intoxicating Liquor

89. **Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to introduce legislation to amend the present definition of intoxicating liquor in the Licensing Act 1964; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are considering, in consultation with other Departments, whether it would be desirable to amend the definition of intoxicating liquor in the 1964 Act to relax restrictions on the sale of low alcohol products now becoming available. In particular, we are concerned to assess any possible effect on children and young persons of unrestricted access to low alcohol drinks.

Reparation and Mediation Schemes

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the results of his Department's research into the experimental reparation and mediation schemes will be published.

Mr. John Patten: In the spring.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is provided to police authorities on the provision of neighbourhood watch signs.

Mr. John Patten: There is no central guidance on the provision of neighbourhood watch signs. The permission of the highway authority—usually the county council or the London borough council—is needed when a sign is to be erected on highway land, and some authorities use this as a means of achieving standardisation of signs.

Child Abductions

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many United Kingdom children have been abducted overseas in defiance of orders from British courts over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally.

Football League Matches

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *492*, regarding events at Football League matches for the first part of the 1988-89 season, if he will give a further breakdown of the figure of 543 arrests at fourth division matches up to 31 October 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following my reply of 10 January, ACPO was informed of a substantial error in the return from one police force and the provisional total for division 4 has now been amended to 248.

At the end of each football season the Association of Chief Police Officers carefully reviews the returns from 43 individual forces relating to the number of arrests made at matches of the 92 Football League clubs. One part of a season is not comparable with another and where interim figures have been collected they have not been subjected to the same scrutiny. Since the provisional totals to 31 October 1988 have not been given a full end of season check, it would be inappropriate to publish a detailed breakdown, club by club, across the Football League or any division as a whole.

Prisoners (AIDS)

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy for the reception of an inmate into prison who is known or thought to be suffering from AIDS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: All prisoners are questioned about their medical history and are medically examined on reception. Where AIDS is diagnosed the prison medical officer will devise a clinical management plan appropriate to the individual case. Facilities for the care and support of prisoners with AIDS, AIDS-related illness and other infectious conditions are being developed on a contingency basis.

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women known to be suffering from AIDS were in prisons in England and Wales on 1 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There was no reported case of AIDS. Fifty male prisoners and seven females were known to be HIV antibody-positive.

Prison (Woolwich)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who will be responsible for the naming of the new prison at Woolwich; when a final decision will be announced; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Responsibility for the naming of new prisons rests with the Secretary of State. In accordance with usual practice the local authority—the London borough of Greenwich—has been invited to suggest a name for the new prison at Woolwich. A decision will be taken as soon as possible after its response is received.

Buckingham Palace Security

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on Buckingham Palace security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Arrangements for security at Buckingham Palace are regularly tested and kept under constant review.

A routine exercise, restricted in scope and using limited resources, was conducted by the royalty and diplomatic protection department of the Metropolitan police to test the security systems at Buckingham Palace on the evening of 17 January. The exercise met its objectives, and I understand that the commissioner is satisfied with the results.

Kerb Crawlers (Electronic Tagging)

Mrs. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of electronic tagging in relation to kerb crawlers.

Mr. John Patten: We have no plans as yet to introduce the use of electronic monitoring for convicted offenders. We shall review the use of electronic monitoring in the light of the forthcoming pilot studies monitoring defendants on bail.

English Folk Dance and Song Society

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Charity Commission as to why it refused to look into allegations of ballot rigging in the affairs of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Mr. John Patten: No. The propriety of the Society's recent election is a matter for the society itself and ultimately for the courts.

Association of Chief Police Officers

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received a report from the Association of Chief Police Officers regarding its recent emergency exercises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: A report on COMTEST '89 is being prepared by the Association of Chief Police Officers. Any conclusions on operational matters will be for chief constables to consider, but we are following developments closely.

SCOTLAND

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for levels of manufacturing investment in Scotland, both in cash and real terms; and what are the annual figures for each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest available figures relate to 1986. The volume estimates have been estimated using the United Kingdom deflator for manufacturing investment.

Manufacturing investment in Scotland
Gross domestic fixed capital formation

	£ million at current prices	£ million at 1985 prices	£ per employee at 1985 prices
1977	491	950	1,540
1978	523	908	1,515
1979	561	873	1,513
1980	644	871	1,634
1981	585	723	1,517
1982	541	627	1,400
1983	470	515	1,227
1984	596	631	1,589
1985	861	861	2,195
1986	788	757	1,984

Bathing Water

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those beaches in Scotland which failed to meet the European Community directive on bathing water quality standards in the last year for which data is available, when it is planned for each of these beaches to meet these standards; and what is the estimated cost in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on results for 1987, the latest year available, was given in my answers on 5 May at column *536*, and 29 June 1988 at column *247*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). A copy of the report "Bathing Waters in Scotland, Results of Monitoring: 1986 and 1987" is available in the Library.

The information on the quality of Scottish bathing waters during the 1988 bathing season is being collated at present. I expect to announce the results before the start of the 1989 bathing season. Discussions are currently taking place with the authorities concerned about plans and programmes of improvement for those bathing waters which did not meet the directive's standards in 1987.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the unemployment figures for each constituency in Scotland for each of the last three years; and if he will express the figures as a percentage of the previous year.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table.

Unemployed claimants in Scottish parliamentary constituencies

Constituency	December 1986	As percentage of December 1985	December 1987	As percentage of December 1986	December 1988	As percentage of December 1987
Aberdeen North	4,691	130·3	4,169	88·9	3,276	78·6
Aberdeen South	4,280	141·2	3,521	82·3	2,700	76·7
Angus East	4,509	117·8	3,839	85·1	2,905	75·7
Argyll and Bute	4,302	106·6	3,777	87·8	3,156	83·6
Ayr	5,223	103·4	4,504	86·2	3,507	77·9
Banff and Buchan	3,968	125·6	3,340	84·2	2,634	78·9
Caithness and Sutherland	2,575	103·1	2,435	94·6	2,181	89·6
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	6,751	102·2	6,138	90·9	4,956	80·7
Central Fife	5,656	99·4	5,229	92·5	4,085	78·1
Clackmannan	4,742	102·5	4,212	88·8	3,363	79·8
Clydebank and Milngavie	4,703	102·9	4,417	93·9	3,537	80·1
Clydesdale	5,179	103·8	4,423	85·4	3,409	77·1
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4,793	103·0	4,017	83·8	3,148	78·4
Cunninghame North	5,649	102·8	5,032	89·1	3,777	75·1
Cunninghame South	6,213	98·6	5,546	89·3	4,200	75·7
Dumbarton	5,605	94·9	5,388	96·1	4,422	82·1
Dumfries	4,055	101·6	3,442	84·9	2,742	79·7
Dundee East	7,748	94·0	7,004	90·4	5,630	80·4
Dundee West	6,363	95·6	5,655	88·9	4,712	83·3
Dunfermline East	5,021	102·7	4,489	89·4	3,642	81·1
Dunfermline West	3,796	106·1	3,388	89·3	2,788	82·3
East Kilbride	5,108	101·3	4,239	83·0	3,391	80·0
East Lothian	4,156	109·9	3,878	93·3	3,211	82·8
Eastwood	3,397	103·1	3,013	88·7	2,358	78·3
Edinburgh Central	5,584	111·9	5,136	92·0	4,148	80·8
Edinburgh East	4,590	99·3	4,341	94·6	3,323	76·5
Edinburgh Leith	6,974	106·9	6,469	92·8	5,044	78·0
Edinburgh Pentlands	3,535	95·8	3,237	91·6	2,524	78·0
Edinburgh South	4,323	106·1	4,096	94·7	3,129	76·4
Edinburgh West	2,611	108·1	2,196	84·1	1,709	77·8
Falkirk East	5,316	97·5	4,675	87·9	3,444	73·7
Falkirk West	4,650	98·4	3,811	82·0	2,895	76·0
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	4,231	104·9	3,569	84·4	3,360	94·1
Glasgow Cathcart	4,451	100·6	3,911	87·9	3,264	83·5
Glasgow Central	7,567	103·6	7,255	95·9	6,096	84·0
Glasgow Garscadden	6,214	98·0	5,485	88·3	4,904	89·4
Glasgow Govan	6,065	98·2	5,634	92·9	4,975	88·3
Glasgow Hillhead	5,829	106·9	5,370	92·1	4,660	86·8
Glasgow Maryhill	7,994	101·8	7,494	93·7	6,483	86·5
Glasgow Pollok	7,480	96·9	6,856	91·7	5,789	84·4
Glasgow Provan	8,706	95·4	7,539	86·6	6,671	88·5
Glasgow Rutherglen	6,887	98·9	5,955	86·5	5,079	85·3
Glasgow Shettleston	6,732	104·6	6,086	90·4	5,429	89·2
Glasgow Springburn	8,616	99·1	7,825	90·8	6,820	87·2

Constituency	December 1986	As percentage of December 1985	December 1987	As percentage of December 1986	December 1988	As percentage of December 1987
Gordon	3,365	160·2	2,595	77·1	1,795	69·2
Greenock and Port Glasgow	8,612	98·2	7,835	91·0	6,427	82·0
Hamilton	6,566	104·4	5,680	86·5	4,298	75·7
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	6,967	106·9	6,026	86·5	4,998	82·9
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	5,579	98·5	5,032	90·2	4,191	83·3
Kincardine and Deeside	3,143	168·5	2,483	79·0	1,825	73·5
Kirkcaldy	5,074	103·5	4,628	91·2	3,882	82·8
Linlithgow	5,716	97·3	4,580	80·1	3,443	75·2
Livingston	5,236	99·4	4,412	84·3	3,255	73·8
Midlothian	4,495	102·1	4,146	92·2	3,364	81·1
Monklands East	6,283	105·5	5,450	86·7	4,320	79·3
Monklands West	5,050	103·3	4,519	89·5	3,495	77·3
Moray	4,258	107·1	3,663	86·0	3,159	86·2
Motherwell North	6,597	103·6	5,545	84·1	4,373	78·9
Motherwell South	5,432	100·1	4,571	84·1	3,853	84·3
North East Fife	2,707	102·5	2,450	90·5	1,914	78·1
North Tayside	3,305	110·1	2,796	84·6	2,098	75·0
Orkney and Shetland	1,849	116·3	1,583	85·6	1,355	85·6
Paisley North	5,424	97·8	5,095	93·9	4,097	80·4
Paisley South	5,451	97·7	4,787	87·8	3,944	82·4
Perth and Kinross	4,246	110·0	3,507	826	2,724	77·7
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	3,764	100·5	3,407	90·5	2,563	75·2
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	5,275	104·3	4,994	94·7	3,948	79·1
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	2,038	105·8	1,799	88·3	1,350	75·0
Stirling	4,073	96·8	3,614	88·7	2,875	79·6
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	3,661	98·7	3,183	86·9	2,492	78·3
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	1859	107·1	1,499	80·6	1,268	84·6
Western Isles	2,354	127·8	2,093	88·9	2,157	103·1

Due to changes which have taken place in the compilation of the statistics during the period these figures are not directly comparable.

Crofters' Commission

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has drawn following his review of the Crofters' Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has accepted the main recommendation that the commission should remain in being as consituted. Most of the other recommendations were addressed to the commission which is now considering them. Consideration is also being given to those concerning the relationship between the commission and the Scottish Office and their respective responsibilities.

Turnhouse Airport (Transport Interchange)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what study his Department has made of the proposal put forward by Bridgehead 2000 for a central Scotland transport interchange to be located at Turnhouse airport, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The proposals by Bridgehead 2000 raise in the first instance matters for consideration by BAA plc, as owners of the airport, and the British Rail board.

Drug Offences

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Scottish Law Commission last examined the law as it relates to drug offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Law Commission has never examined the law in relation to drug offences.

Population

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the population of Scotland at present; and what projections there are for how this will change over the next 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: The registrar general's latest estimate of the population of Scotland, which relates to 30 June 1987, is 5,112,129. Projected populations based on this figure are given in the table.

Year	Projected population ('000s)
1988	5,104
1989	5,097
1990	5,091
1991	5,085
1992	5,081
1993	5,077
1994	5,073
1995	5,069
1996	5,064
1997	5,059
1998	5,053
1999	5,046

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Pupils

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils there are in Scotland at present in both primary and secondary sectors; and how these figures are expected to change over the next decade.

Mr. Rifkind: The provisional numbers of pupils in education authority primary and secondary schools at September 1988 were 432,500 and 311,900 respectively. The most recent projections of pupil numbers are based on actual pupil numbers at September 1987 and are set out in the table.

	Primary	*Secondary*
1989	436,700	296,800
1990	439,000	289,800
1991	438,500	289,200
1992	439,400	291,900
1993	443,400	296,700
1994	451,100	299,600
1995	459,900	300,300
1996	468,700	299,400
1997	476,500	298,300
1998	483,900	298,200

Students

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many full-time and part-time students there are in both further and higher education in Scotland; and what projections there are for changes in these figures over the next decade.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest available student numbers and projections for Scotland are given in the table.

Session	*Higher education*		*Vocational non-advanced further education*	
	Full-time and sandwich	*Part-time*	*Full-time and sandwich*	*Part-time*
Actual:				
1986-87	81,600	45,900	30,200	154,700
Projections:				
1987-88	83,400	49,800	n/a	
1988-89	84,400	52,800	n/a	
1989-90	84,800	55,900	n/a	
1990-91	84,700	58,600	n/a	
1991-92	83,400	61,000	n/a	
1992-93	81,900	63,100	n/a	
1993-94	81,000	65,000	n/a	
1994-95	80,000	66,700	n/a	
1995-96	78,600	68,000	n/a	
1996-97	78,100	69,100	n/a	

Notes:

1. The higher education projections have been taken from the high variant published in statistical bulletin No. 7/J1/1988 "Higher Education Projects for Scotland" which is available in the House.
2. Vocational non-advanced further education comprises various types of student, such as school leavers continuing education, adults returning to education, persons on government employment schemes, and employees undertaking training on a part-time basis. Projections of student numbers for the whole group of students are not available.
3. Over the period shown the base population of 17-year-olds is projected to fall by 25 per cent.

Prisoners

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners there are in Scottish prisons; and what is the average number for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of persons held in Scottish penal establishments at lock-up on Friday 20 January 1989 was 4,997. The average daily penal population in 1987 and 1988 is provisionally estimated as 5,446 and 5,229 respectively. For earlier years, corresponding figures are given in appendix 2 of the annual report "Prisons in Scotland Report for 1986" (Cm. 223) copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners in Scotland are on remand; and what this is as a proportion of the total number of prisoners at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of persons held on remand in penal establishments at lock-up on Friday 20 January 1989 was 782—16 per cent. of the penal population at that time.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scotland's prisoners have been imprisoned for non-payment of fines; and what is the average amount of fine involved at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: During December 1988 a total of 4 per cent. of the average daily prison population in Scotland had been imprisoned for non-payment of fines. Information is not available on the average amount of fine involved.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to health boards concerning the procedures to be followed before issuing a press release on competitive tendering.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards copy press releases to the Scottish Home and Health Department as part of their routine progress reports on competitive tendering.

Elderly People (Residential Care)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of continuing care residential places are provided for the elderly *(a)* by local authorities, *(b)* by voluntary organisations and *(c)* by the private sector in each health board for (i) the year 1987 and (ii) the year 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest information by local authority area is set out in the table.

Percentage of residential places in homes for the elderly at 31 March 1987

Region	*Total number of places*	*Local authority*	*Voluntary*	*Private*
Borders	566	62	23	15
Central	743	63	25	12
Dumfries and Galloway	534	61	23	16
Fife	1,120	62	19	19
Grampian	1,830	54	36	10
Highland	734	62	24	14
Lothian	2,538	56	34	10
Strathclyde	6,012	65	24	11

Region	Total number of places	Local authority	Voluntary	Private
Tayside	2,295	46	29	25
Orkney	82	85	0	15
Shetland	86	81	19	0
Western Isles	200	98	0	2
Scotland	16,740	60	27	14

Note: Because of roundings, the national totals exceed 100 per cent.

New Towns

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the survey undertaken by East Kilbride district council on the attitudes of the residents of East Kilbride district to the consultation document, "The Scottish New Towns, Maintaining the Momentum", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Lang: I welcome the findings of the survey as a constructive contribution to the consultation process and recognise the professional manner in which the survey was conducted.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the method by which he will consult tenants within the Scottish new towns on the consultation document, "The Scottish New Towns, Maintaining the Momentum".

Mr. Lang: I expect shortly to consider proposals from my officials regarding the conduct of a survey in the Scottish new towns. I intend that the results of that survey will be published to inform the debate on the future of the Scottish new towns.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the timetable of the consultation process that he proposes to undertake involving new town tenants in relation to the consultation document, "The Scottish New Towns, Maintaining the Momentum".

Mr. Lang: I expect that the fieldwork element of the Government commissioned survey will be completed in April and that a full report on the findings should be published in the early summer.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to commission a survey into the attitudes of new town residents to the issues raised within the consultation document, "The Scottish New Towns, Maintaining the Momentum".

Mr. Lang: Yes.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations which have responded to the consultation document, "The Scottish New Towns, Maintaining the Momentum", identifying district councils as potential landlords on the wind-up of the new towns.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his previous question of yesterday's date. It has not yet been possible to analyse the detailed contents of the responses received to date. I shall write to the hon. Member once these details are available.

NHS (Reorganisation)

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit East Kilbride to explain to the residents the Government's proposed reorganisation of the National Health Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend and I do not have any plans to visit East Kilbride for this purpose. We have given wide publicity to the Government's proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" and the Lanarkshire health board is making information available locally.

Fisheries

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations his Department is having with the Federation of Highlands and Islands Fishermen to discuss stock conservation, licensing and fisheries management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is in regular contact with the Federation of Highlands and Islands Fishermen and its constituent bodies on matters of mutual concern, including conservation, licensing and fisheries management.

City Technology Colleges Trust

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any meetings have taken place with the City Technology Colleges Trust involving Ministers or civil servants.

Mr. Micheal Forsyth: Yes.

Locate in Scotland

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of inward investment projects attributed to Scotland by Locate in Scotland in each of the years 1981-82 to 1987-88, including the number of jobs involved, and the volume of expenditure.

Mr. Lang: The following table shows the number of decisions to locate inward investment projects in Scotland as announced in the years 1981-82 to 1987-88.

	Number of projects	Planned jobs	Planned investment £ million
1987-88	88	11,852	337
1986-87	50	5,084	427
1985-86	58	8,217	562
1984-85	69	9,443	689
1983-84	54	6,900	166
1982-83	46	5,400	186
1981-82	32	7,000	234

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions have taken place with the Scottish Development Agency about the future of Locate in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: There have been no discussions with the Scottish Development Agency regarding the future of Locate in Scotland. We recognise the substantial benefits which flow to Scotland from its activities and no changes are foreseen to its present method of operation.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any meetings have taken place with the Grant Maintained Trust involving Ministers or civil servants.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

Chernobyl

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission a special study of areas near Kinloch, Rannoch and Carstairs in Scotland of the exposure experience to radioactivity from fall-out from the Chernobyl accident.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Studies already commissioned by the Department of the Environment and by the Scottish Office to evaluate exposures in Scotland resulting from the Chernobyl accident have been in progress for some time. The areas covered include Kinloch, Rannoch and Carstairs.

Teachers (Incentive Allowances)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what incentive allowances exist for teachers in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Teachers in Scotland do not receive incentive allowances; these are paid to certain teachers in schools in England and Wales. The average salary of teachers in Scotland is higher than that of England and Wales—£14,250 against £13,600 based on current pay scales.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Potatoes

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of United Kingdom potato production was treated with tecnazene in 1988 and in any of the previous five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ryder: No figures are available for the 1988 crop. Figures available from the 1986 crop in Scotland indicate that some 20 per cent. of stored ware potatoes were treated with tecnazene. This proportion is likely to be similar in the rest of the United Kingdom. New potatoes and main crop potatoes which are sold to consumers without being stored will not have been treated with tecnazene.

In 1982 the latest year to which figures are available for England and Wales, they indicate that some 5 per cent. of potatoes stored on farms were treated with tecnazene but no data is available for off-farm stores. A further survey of the current use of tecnazene is planned for the 1988 crop.

Meat Products

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what checks are made on the meat content of meat products; and what is the number of cases of inaccurate labelling of meat content in each of the last two years.

Mr. Ryder: Where there is a statutory requirement regarding the meat content of a meat product or where such information is declared on the label, the enforcement of the relevant food law is undertaken by local authorities who are food and drugs authorities. Information on infringements of these laws is not held centrally.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what standards exist to specify and require the contents of meat products including beefburgers, sausages, salami, saveloys, haslet, and white pudding; what measures are taken to enforce those standards; and what information he has as to standards for meat products in other countries of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Ryder: The Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984 require most meat products to bear a declaration of their minimum meat content on the label. In addition, they contain minimum meat content requirements for a number of products, including burgers and sausages. White pudding is not regarded as a meat product for the purposes of the regulations but, in common with all foodstuffs, is subject to the general provisions of the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 and the Food Act 1984. Enforcement of this food law is carried out by those local authorities which are food and drugs authorities.

My Department does not keep detailed information on standards for meat products in other member states of the European Community.

Nitrates

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he proposes to implement, following the European Community directive on nitrates in drinking, ground and sea water, to minimise the leeching of nitrates from agricultural land.

Mr. Ryder: The document referred to is only a proposal at this stage and will have to be examined in detail and agreed by the Council of Ministers before any question of implementation arises.

Farmers

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all those subsidies, grants, tax-allowance and schemes currently available to British farmers.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 26 January 1989]:* Market support measures, provided under the CAP, vary according to commodity but generally include some or all of the following: intervention purchase, private storage aid, production aid, livestock premia, import levies and export refunds, and minimum prices.

In addition, national schemes have been introduced under EC and United Kingdom legislation. These include capital and non-capital grant schemes, the farm diversification grant scheme, hill livestock compensatory allowances, environmentally sensitive areas, set-aside and the farm woodland scheme.

Questions concerning tax allowances are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

ENERGY

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether there is any connection between the Central Electricity Generating Board's nuclear power stations and the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no connection between the Central Electricity Generating Board's nuclear power stations and the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what system nuclear materials have been deemed to be civil or military after the co-processing of safeguarded and unsafeguarded spent Magnox nuclear fuel at BNFL Sellafield since May 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 11 March 1988 at column *362*.

Cash Limits

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits or running costs limit for 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson: Subject to Parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made. The cash limit for Class VI, Vote 2 will be increased by £58,223,000 from £277,922,000 to £336,145,000. This is to cover restructuring costs relating to the fast reactor programme and outstanding liabilities of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to British Nuclear Fuel plc for decommissioning and radioactive waste management operations. This increase is partly offset by savings of £5,077,000 on this Vote. The net increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The cash limit for Class VI, Vote 3 is increased by £1,275,000 from £26,788,000 to £28,063,000. This is the net effect of higher than forecast costs arising from the Piper Alpha technical investigation and public inquiry and on departmental staff and supporting services, plus provision for an extra Minister and the transfer of £3,000 to Class XX, Vote 1 as a contribution towards the costs of the direct entry grade 7 competition 1988. Savings of £291,000 have also been taken into account. The net increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The Department of Energy's running cost limit will be increased by £827,000 from £28,249,000 to £29,076,000.

Electricity Supply Industry Employees

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the rights of those electricity supply industry employees and former employees currently enjoying concessionary electricity tariffs will be protected after privatisation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am pleased to be able to confirm that we have received an assurance from the electricity supply industry that benefits such as this will not be affected by the changes resulting from privatisation.

Plutonium

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has anything to add to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, (Dr. Thomas) *Official Report*, column *157*, 17 January, concerning the total export figure for plutonium.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In compiling figures for the earlier answer, officials made a simple clerical error in combining sub-totals. The underlying data were not affected.

DEFENCE

Infantry Soldiers (Ulster)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what additional pay rate or leave entitlement is granted to an infantry soldier serving in Ulster to that granted to one in the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Neubert: In the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, soldiers of the rank of corporal and below are entitled to 30 days leave. (All leave includes weekend days). In order to reflect the special circumstances of service in Northern Ireland soldiers serving in the Province:

(a) Receive Northern Ireland pay at a current rate of £2·75 a day (taxable) to compensate them for the abnormally long and unsocial hours which they are required to work there.

(b) Are exempted from paying food and accommodation charges if living in single accommodation, or receive the equivalent financial compensation if living in married accommodation.

(c) Have an additional leave entitlement of seven four-day long weekends, which must be taken outside Northern Ireland.

(d) Receive a total of seven leave warrants annually, if single or six if married and accompanied; married and accompanied soldiers are able to use their warrants to enable their families to travel with them to Great Britain three times per year.

A soldiers basic pay does not vary from one theatre to another. In the British Army of the Rhine a soldier is entitled to local overseas allowance (not taxable) to compensate for the higher costs of living in Germany and is entitled to 42 days leave per year. He is entitled to three leave warrants annually. When battalions are sent from BAOR to Northern Ireland on four-month unaccompanied tours, married soldiers are entitled to retain 75 per cent. of their local overseas allowance, and single soldiers to retain 40 per cent. This is to compensate them for continuing commitments which they may have in Germany.

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to visit RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Neubert: I expect to visit RAF Upper Heyford when the full study into the costs and implications of realigning the runway at the base has been completed.

Low-flying Exercises (Accidents)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of accidents in the United Kingdom and abroad during low flying exercises in 1987

and 1988, for each of the three services; and what is the cost of damage to, or loss of, aircraft of each of those services, at 1989 prices.

Mr. Neubert: It would not be possible, without disproportionate cost and effort, to provide this information for all accidents—many of them extremely minor—affecting aircraft of the three services. Since 1980 it has been the practice of this Government to publish in the statement on the Defence Estimates a complete list of all major accidents to aircraft of the three services. The information sought for 1987 was set out in considerable detail by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), in his two letters to the hon. Member dated 23 March and 16 August 1988.

The information for 1988 is as follows:

	Number
Royal Navy	1
Army	1
Royal Air Force	4

As for the publication of information on unit costs of equipment, I refer the hon. Member to column *811* of the *Official Report* for 14 December 1987.

Procurement Executive (Unfilled Posts)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many posts in the Procurement Executive remained unfilled in each grade at the most recent convenient date; what steps he is taking to fill vacancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The latest figures available as at 1 September 1988 show that a total of around 1,100 posts for scientists or engineers, and around 400 posts for administrative/clerical staff, were unfilled in the procurement executive, there were negligible numbers of vacant posts in the service grades and industrial grades. These unfilled posts are out of a total of some 35,000 posts, which include the research establishments, quality assurance, project management and procurement executive headquarters.

A wide range of initiatives is in hand to make good these manpower shortfalls such as new pay arrangements and special pay additions to assist with recruitment and retention, national recruitment campaigns, changes in work patterns to introduce more flexibility, job sharing and short service contracts. Looking further ahead, relocation of major parts of the procurement executive away from the south-east is being considered, which should assist in recruitment and retention.

Pilots (Voluntary Retirement)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many trained fast-jet pilots took premature voluntary retirement in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1981, *(d)* 1982, *(e)* 1983, *(f)* 1984, *(g)* 1985, *(h)* 1986 and *(i)* 1988.

Mr. Neubert: The numbers of trained fast-jet pilots who took premature voluntary release are recorded within financial years; since 1979-80 the numbers are as follows:

	Number
1979-80	20
1980-81	21
1981-82	21
1982-83	15
1983-84	12
1984-85	28
1985-86	32
1986-87	24
1987-88	33
[1]1988-89	31

[1] To January 1989.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many trained fast-jet pilots requested premature voluntary retirement in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1981, *(d)* 1982, *(e)* 1983, *(f)* 1984, *(g)* 1985, *(h)* 1986 and *(i)* 1988.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested was not separately maintained prior to 1 April 1985. Since that date the number of trained fast-jet pilots who have requested premature voluntary release have been recorded within financial years, as follows.

	Number
1985-86	56
1987-87	51
1987-88	39
[1]1988-89	33

[1] To 1 January 1989.

Airmen (Engineering)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Royal Air Force airmen currently serve in each of the following categories *(a)* armament engineering, *(b)* mechanical engineering, *(c)* electrical engineering and *(d)* electronic engineering;

(2) how many Royal Air Force airmen became qualified in 1988 to serve in the following branches *(a)* armament engineering, *(b)* mechanical engineering, *(c)* electrical engineering and *(d)* electronic engineering;

(3) how many Royal Air Force airmen left the Royal Air Force in 1988 in each of the following categories *(a)* armament engineering, *(b)* mechanical engineering, *(c)* electrical engineering and *(d)* electronic engineering; and how many of these failed to complete their engagement.

Mr. Neubert: The numbers of ground airmen (including airwomen) in each category in each of the specified groupings of trades are as follows:

	Groupings of Trades			
	Armaments	*Mechanical*	*Electrical*	*Electronic*
1988				
Total trained outflow	170	1,005	310	808
Numbers who failed to complete engagement	107	517	164	436

	Armaments	Mechanical	Electrical	Electronic
Numbers who entered trained strength in year	275	572	246	381
Total trained numbers serving at 1 January 1989	3,390	15,447	4,372	11,127

Radioactivity (Holy Loch)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), *Official Report*, 23 January, column 407, he will set out the methods used to monitor the Holy Loch for radioactivity since 1960; on how many occasions annually such monitoring has been done; and where the results have been published.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had carried out monitoring of radio-activity in environmental materials and gamma dose rates in air at Holy Loch since 1961. The results have been published annually since 1975 in aquatic environment monitoring reports, which also explain the frequency and methods used. Copies of these reports are available in the Library of the House.

The Ministry of Defence has carried out its own monitoring of Holy Loch since 1965, which has comprised gamma dose rate measurements and analysis of sediment and biological samples. The frequency of monitoring has varied: at present, dose rate measurements are taken monthly and combined with quarterly sample analyses.

The results of the MOD's own monitoring are not published; they are, however, consistent with those produced by MAFF.

Contour Mapping Programme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has access to data from the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration sea beam seafloor contour mapping programme.

Mr. Neubert: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the hydrographic surveying and charting of the United States exclusive economic zone which the NOAA is currently conducting. My Department has not had reason to seek to acquire data from this exercise.

Royal Naval Shipyards (Radioactivity)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost, in each year at 1989 prices, since the commencement of the Military Atomic Energy programme began, of cleaning up radioactive contamination from accidents, leaks or routine operation at *(a)* AWE Aldermaston, *(b)* AERE Harwell, *(c)* AWE Burghfield, *(d)* AWE Caerwent, *(e)* Royal Naval shipyard, Chatham, *(f)* Royal Naval shipyard Rosyth, *(g)* Royal Naval shipyard Coulport, *(h)* Royal Naval shipyard Devonport, and *(i)* Royal Naval shipyard Portsmouth; and if he will make a statement on present progress in the environmental clean-up programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: There has never been an accident or leak at a United Kingdom naval or AWE establishment which has required a major remedial radioactive decontami-nation programme or has resulted in any need to decontaminate the public environment.

AERE Harwell is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

United States (Nuclear Production Facilities)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to offer technical assistance to the United States Department of Energy in the remedial clean-up programme of its military nuclear production facilities.

Mr. Sainsbury: Any decontamination of United States military nuclear production facilities would be a matter for the United States Government.

Falkland Islands (Argentine Yacht)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the Argentine yacht which breached the Falkland Islands security cordon on 29 or 30 January obtained clearance to do so from the British security forces;

(2) whether he will order an investigation into the alleged breaching of the Falkland Islands exclusion zone by an Argentine yacht on 29 or 30 January.

Mr. Neubert: An Argentine yacht entered Port Stanley harbour on 27 January with a damaged rudder. Following repairs, it was escorted out and sent on its way the next day. It did not obtain the permission of the British Government to be in the area. Security measures in the Falklands are kept under review, and this episode will be taken into account in that process.

Low Flying

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the average decibel level created at ground level by *(a)* Tornado aircraft, *(b)* Buccaneer aircraft, *(c)* Harrier aircraft, *(d)* Jaguar aircraft, *(e)* Phantom aircraft and *(f)* Hawk aircraft when flying at 450 mph and at a height of 250 ft;

(2) what is the average decibel level created at ground level by *(a)* Tornado aircraft, *(b)* Buccaneer aircraft, *(c)* Harrier aircraft, *(d)* Jaguar aircraft, *(e)* Phantom aircraft and *(f)* Hawk aircraft when flying at 450 mph and at a height of 100 ft.

Mr. Neubert: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of low-flying training carried out by the Royal Air Force was undertaken in the United States of America and Canada in each year from 1974 to 1988.

Mr. Neubert: My Department does not keep records of the proportion of the Royal Air Force's training at low level conducted in the countries listed, and it would require disproportionate effort to cull this information from available statistics.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were flown by United States Air Force aircraft in the United Kingdom in each year since 1980.

Mr. Neubert: Records of low-level sorties by the United States Air Force in the United Kingdom were not kept prior to 1985. They flew 25,157 sorties in 1985, 25,217 in 1986 and 21,869 in 1987. The total statistics for 1988 are not yet available.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were flown by British military aircraft in the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Neubert: Statistics for 1988 are not yet available.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the rate of major accidents for Royal Air Force aircraft which occurred during low-level operations in 1988.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 22 December 1988 at col. *371-72*.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many major accidents have occurred to: *(a)* Tornado aircraft, *(b)* Buccaneer aircraft, *(c)* Harrier aircraft, *(d)* Jaguar aircraft, *(e)* Phantom aircraft and *(f)* Hawk aircraft during the low-flying operations in each year since 1980.

Mr Neubert: Since 16 August 1988, the following aircraft suffered major damage during low flying operations:

	Date
Gazelle	19 October 1988
Jaguar	7 September 1988

Information on previous such accidents is contained in a letter dated 16 August 1988 from my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Cash Limits

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes to make any changes to the defence cash limits and running costs limit for 1988-89.

Mr. Younger: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary spring Supplementary Estimates the following changes are being made:

Defence Cash Limits

Class and Vote	*Current Cash Limit*	*Increase /Decrease*	*£'000s*	*Revised Cash Limit*
I, 1	7,775,660	+72,434	72,447 transferred from I, 3, I, 4 and I, 5, less 13 transferred to XX, 1	7,848,094
I, 3	1,101,516	−12,447	Transferred to I, 1	1,089,069
I, 4	1,581,212	−30,000	Transferred to I, 1	1,551,212
I, 5	471,789	−30,000	Transferred to I, 1	441,789

These changes allow for transfers within the Ministry of Defence's block cash limit to reflect the pattern of expenditure now expected, and a decrease of £13,000 to offset a corresponding increase in the limit of the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) for the transfer of costs for recruitment under the direct entry grade 7 competition 1988. These changes will not, therefore, add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Running Costs Limit

This limit is being increased by a net £3,221,000 to £5,411,054,000. It reflects an increase of £8,033,000 in respect of the running costs element of the restructuring costs of the PSA as it moves towards untying in 1990; and a decrease of £4,799,000 to compensate for an overspend in 1987-88. This follows the normal practice of reducing the limit for one financial year by the amount of the previous year's overspend. In addition, a decrease of £13,000 is required to offset the transfer to class XX, vote 1 mentioned above.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 3 February 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of those commitments.

Mrs. Rumbold: The activities of the European Community, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of Europe each have an education component and this Department provides the United Kingdom representations. In addition, the Department participates appropriately in the scientific activities of these organisations. The Government's contribution to the budgets is provided through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In addition, this Department makes specific contributions to the centre for educational research and innovation of the OECD (£97,143 in 1987-88) to the International Baccalaureate organisation (£16,100 in 1987-88) and to the European university institute (£1,232 million in 1987-88).

Boarding Schools (London)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the establishment of a London special boarding schools trust to take over responsibility for these schools after the abolition of the Inner London education authority; and what response he has given.

Mrs. Rumbold: Representations have been received from representatives of the London special boarding schools trust to establish a trust which would take responsibility for all ILEA's residential special schools. Representations in support have also been received from the heads of the residential special schools and in correspondence to the Department. The trust is one of the options being considered by the working party that my right hon. Friend set up to consider the future of the schools.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for alternative locations for his Department's offices, following the sale of the property currently occupied in York road, London SE1.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department is currently planning to relocate its headquarters staff in Sanctuary Buildings towards the end of 1990. The new headquarters will not provide for all London-based staff and some supplementary accommodation is being sought. Studies are being undertaken to examine the feasibility of relocating some London based staff outside the London area. The lease of the present headquarters is held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. He is considering its future.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

European Court of Justice (Advocacy)

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Attorney-General whether under the proposals in the Green Paper "The Work and Organisation of the Legal Profession", it is envisaged that advocacy before the European Court of Justice will require a full or limited advocacy certificate.

The Attorney-General: Under article 17 of the protocol on the statute of the Court of Justice of the European Economic Community, parties other than the states and institutions of the Community must be represented by a lawyer entitled to practise before a court of a member state. Under the proposals in the Green Paper on the work and organisation of the legal profession, advocates with both limited and full advocacy certificates would have rights of audience before the courts, although the extent of these rights would depend on whether their certificates are full or limited. If the proposals in the Green Paper are implemented, lawyers with either full or limited advocacy certificates should be entitled to practise before the European Court of Justice.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

ODA (Outstanding Debt)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by country the amounts of debt outstanding to the Overseas Development Administration as at 31 March 1988.

Mrs. Chalker: Amounts due to be repaid to the Overseas Development Administration as at 31 March 1988 are shown in the table. Repayments of past aid loans are added to the annual public expenditure survey provision for overseas aid and are thus available for new aid spending.

	£
Antigua	145,033·72
Barbados	561,770·30
Belize	10,630,803·02
Bolivia	270,856·48
Brazil	3,416,096·55
British Virgin Islands	2,480,774·86
Cambodia	118,498·47
Cameroon	83,967·58
Cayman Islands	989,582·42
Colombia	2,847,924·56
Costa Rica	3,214,041·25
Cyprus	371,322·97
Dominica	5,601,561·30
Ecuador	7,557,273·24
Egypt	6,599,586·12
Falkland Islands	211,771·03
Fiji	2,123,799·52
Ghana	388,706·65
Gibraltar	1,011,047·10
Grenada	2,499,586·02
Guyana	25,041,467·13
Honduras	3,352,298·07
India	[1]224,423,946·91
Ivory Coast	1,814,770·77

	£
Jamaica	49,180,720·59
Jordan	39,335,226·08
Laos	30,653·00
Liberia	77,749·50
Malta	8,307,651·86
Malaysia	15,124,721·87
Malawi	400,775·67
Mauritius	9,394,024·71
Nicaragua	584,705·62
Nigeria	5,175,084·04
Paraguay	4,220,000·00
Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen	4,162,899·66
Peru	4,194,608·68
Philllipines	5,481,634·67
St. Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla	853,094·63
St. Lucia	56,843·78
Senegal	916,329·67
Seychelles	10,763,427·49
Singapore	8,333,320·00
Solomon Islands	4,655,107·25
Swaziland	11,115,470·54
Thailand	1,120,392·08
Tonga	1,826,041·29
Trinidad and Tobago	120,000·00
Tunisia	381,782·01
Turkey	77,475,430·46
Vanuatu	128,880·00
Vietnam	196,798·37
Zambia	45,207,629·42
Zimbabwe	28,165,170·40
Total	642,742,659·38

[1] India has benefited from Her Majesty's Government's policy of retrospective terms adjustment through the provision of aid to meet the local costs of projects as an equivalent measure.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Fixed Capital Formation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give total gross domestic fixed capital formation for the United Kingdom at market prices as a percentage of GDP(E) at market prices for each year since 1959 to the most recent available date, together with the average for *(a)* 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* 1979 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Major: This information may be obtained from the Central Statistical Office databank, a collection of macroeconomic time series in computer readable form to which the House of Commons Library has direct access.

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for take-up of profit-related pay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Profit-related pay has just completed its first full year of operation, under the innovatory scheme for tax relief which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced. At the end of 1988, a total of 830 schemes were registered, covering well over 120,000 people.

The progress of PRP is encouraging, but experience has suggested that one of the rules has discouraged some employers from setting up schemes and complicated things unnecessarily for others. This is the rule that PRP should be at least 5 per cent. of total pay if profits are unchanged from the base year. The Government have therefore decided to abolish it.

I am authorising the Inland Revenue to operate an extra-statutory concession to this effect from today. This means that employers whose accounting years begin on 1 April will be able, if they wish, to register schemes before then without having to meet the 5 per cent. test. We shall put forward the necessary legislation in the Finance Bill.

This change should simplify considerably the operation of profit-related pay. I hope that it will help those who have already opted for PRP, and encourage others to follow in their footsteps. Full details of the changes are available in a press release published by the Inland Revenue today.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quota

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to set a date limit for the notification of milk quota transfers in England and Wales.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Following discussion with the industry, I have decided to make use of the powers provided by the Dairy Produce Quotas (Amendment) Regulations 1989. Quota transfers notified after 21 April, even if they are notified as having occurred in the previous quota year, will not affect the calculation of supplementary levy liability until the start of the new quota year on 1 April.

I hope that this will encourage producers to notify transfers of quota in good time, which should in turn facilitate the smooth running of the quota system.

Milk and Dairies Regulations

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about charges for work in connection with the enforcement of the milk and dairies regulations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Following consultations with interested parties about the recommendations on the efficiency scrutiny report published last year, my right hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales propose to make certain adjustments which will enable us to reduce the charge for work in connection to the enforcement arrangements with a scheduled dairy farm inspection visit. We are proposing that this should be set at £78 with effect from 1 April 1989. The existing charge is £90 but it would otherwise have had to be increased to £105 to take account of increased costs since April 1987. We also propose to increase the concession for producers with fewer than 20 cows from £10 to £18, giving a proposed charge of £60 compared with the current charge of £80.

The scrutiny report did not identify any savings in the system for sampling and testing untreated milk and private water supplies. In order to recoup costs associated with the work it will be necessary to increase these charges from £22 to £26 to take account of increased costs since 1987. The charge will also need to be increased by a further £5 if the efficiency scrutiny's recommendation for changes to the tests on untreated milk is implemented. These changes are still to be considered.

The overall effect of the proposed changes will be to give a worthwhile reduction for virtually all milk producers.

Proposals for revised regulations reflecting these changes will be circulated shortly to interested organisations.

Untreated Milk

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban the sale of untreated milk.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have recently been reviewing our arrangements for the sale of untreated milk, which represents 2 to 3 per cent. of milk sales in England and Wales. Effective heat treatment is the only way to minimise the risks of transmitting milk-borne diseases to the consumer. My right hon. Friend and I propose therefore to consult the interested parties with a view to prohibiting the sale of untreated milk from the earliest possible date. We shall consult also on what arrangements should be applied to sales of untreated milk in the interim period.

A consultation document will be issued shortly inviting comments on this proposal and on the detailed arrangements for its implementation.

SCOTLAND

Education Expenditure

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much public expenditure there has been on education in Scotland in the current year; and what are the figures for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: Estimated outturn for total public expenditure (by central and local government) on education in 1988-89 is £2,126 million. The equivalent figures for the past 10 years are set out in the table:

	£ million
1978-79	901
1979-80	1,051
1980-81	1,273
1981-82	1,432
1982-83	1,505
1983-84	1,574
1984-85	1,616
1985-86	1,676
1986-87	1,802
1987-88	1,948

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland are presently on the enterprise allowance scheme; and what are the figures for each year since its inception.

Mr. Rifkind: On 24 January 1989, the latest date for which information is available, there were 7,979 people participating in the enterprise allowance scheme in Scotland. The number of people entering the scheme in Scotland in each year since its inception in August 1983 is set out in the table.

Enterprise allowance scheme

Year	*Entrants in Scotland*
[1]1983-84	2,249
1984-85	3,794
1985-86	5,311
1986-87	8,260
1987-88	9,894
[2]1988-89	7,151

[1] August to March.
[2] Up to 24 January 1989.

Part-time Work

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland are in part-time work; what is the average number of part-time workers for each of the past 10 years; and what proportion these figures represent of the total work force in employment at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on part-time workers in Scotland for each of the past 10 years is available only for female part-time employees in employment. These estimates, given in the table, exclude part-time male employees, the self-employed and participants on work-related Government training programmes. For the years 1978, 1981 and 1984 the censuses of employment record some 0·06 million male part-time employees in employment. In September 1988 female part-time employees comprised 20·6 per cent. of all employees in employment in Scotland and 18·2 per cent. of the civilian work force in employment.

Female part-time employees in employment in Scotland[1]

Year	*Annual averages millions*
1978	0·31
1979	0·33
1980	0·33
1981	0·34
1982	0·34
1983	0·34
1984	0·35
1985	0·36
1986	0·37
1987	0·38
September 1988[2]	0·39

[1] These estimates may be revised when the results of the 1987 Census of Employment becomes available.
[2] Not adjusted for seasonal variation.

Lockerbie Air Disaster (Statements)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on behalf of the Lord Advocate on the police investigation of David Johnstone of Radio Forth for statements relating to the Lockerbie air disaster.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Lord Advocate has no intention of requiring Mr. David Johnston, head of news, Radio Forth, to be brought before a sheriff to be precognosced on oath. If Mr. Johnston has new information of value to the investigating authorities, it is to be expected that, out of a proper sense of public responsibility, he will disclose it to them.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the name, location and size of each of those forest estates sold by the Forestry Commission from 21 June 1984 to date; and if he will list the price obtained for the sale of such public assets in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 January 1989]:* In view of its length, I have arranged for copies of the list to be placed in the Library of the House. This covers the period from 22 October 1984 to 21 December 1988, the latest date for which information is available. Lists of forest areas sold between 22 June 1984 and 21 October 1984, or which were in the process of being sold at the latter date, were provided on 5 December 1984 in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) at columns *139-50.*

THE ARTS

National Theatre for Dance

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has met the chairman of the London residuary body to discuss plans to build a national theatre for dance.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* No.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on plans to build a national theatre for dance on the south bank.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* None. The plans were put forward by the private sector.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the reasons for the withdrawal of plans to build a national theatre for dance on the south bank.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* I am informed that a bid was made for the county hall site, which included the building of a dance theatre; but another bid worth £20 million more from the County Hall Development Group was accepted by the London residuary body, under its statutory obligation to obtain the maximum benefit for the ratepayers, in June 1988.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Overseas Investment

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will supply figures on levels of overseas investment in the United Kingdom by region for each of the past five years.

Mr. Newton: Figures for net inward direct investment in the United Kingdom are not available by region. For the United Kingdom as a whole they are as follows:

	£ million
1983	3,301
1984	−246
1985	4,123
1986	4,078
1987	[1]5,664

[1] Provisional.

Wireless Telegraphy (Licensing)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what additional measures are being taken to reduce the burden of licensing requirements under the Wireless Telegraphy Acts.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is today laying a statutory instrument under section 1 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 further to reduce licensing requirements, in line with intentions expressed in the White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" (Cm. 512), published in November 1988.

Following the outcome of the review announced on 20 December 1988 in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Wireless Telegraphy Apparatus (Receivers) (Exemption) Regulations 1989 will exempt from licensing requirements the use of radio equipment used for receiving —as distinct from transmitting—with one important exception. The television licence fee will continue to be charged as the arrangements for licensing users of television to receive authorised broadcasts are not affected by these proposals.

Licences for receivers are not required for radio spectrum management purposes. Reception of authorised sound radio broadcasting and of radio amateur transmissions was exempted some time ago. In particular, people will no longer need a separate licence to use television receive-only (TVRO) equipment such as satellite dishes for television broadcasts direct to the home from fixed-service satellites. Removal of licensing will, moreover, avoid the costs to users and to Government caused by changing requirements as new services develop.

The statutory instrument will come into force on 27 February 1989.

Water

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the European Commission to establish whether the proposal of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on merger policy with regard to the water industry of 11 January, *Official Report,* column 841, is likely to contravene European Economic Community competition policy and what response he has received.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* Formal clearance by the EC Commission of the proposals for mergers in the water industry is not necessary. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will, however, be keeping the Commission informed about the details of his proposals.

Chemical Weapons

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any guarantees and conditions on the use and production of chemical weapons have been attached to the Britain-Iraq £340 million trade credit.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* The UK-Iraq £340 million financial protocol makes no specific reference to imports which might conceivably relate to the production of chemical weapons. However, it can be used only to finance goods which meet United Kingdom export licence requirements, and these specifically prevent the

supply of a number of key precursors. The protocol makes an important contribution to Government policy of developing economic and commercial relations with Iraq and is based on a commercial assessment of the risks involved. We have made clear to the Iraqi Government our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons and we expect the Government of Iraq to honour their pledge not to use these weapons in the future.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration Rules

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce immigration rules to consolidate the rules contained in HC 169 and all subsequent amendments of those rules.

Mr. Renton: Yes. We propose to do so on the next occasion on which changes are made to the immigation rules.

Police Surgeons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley, 20 January, *Official Report*, column *352-53* about the numbers of female victims of sexual offences treated by *(a)* male and *(b)* female police surgeons, if he will list by police authority comparable figures for the other police authorities in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

River Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions prosecutions have been brought under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in relation to river pollution; if he will list such occasions in date order and by court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information held centrally for 1987, which may be incomplete, is given in the table. Provision of corresponding information for other years would involve disproportionate costs.

Persons proceeded against at magistrates' courts in 1987 under Sections 31 and 32 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974

England and Wales	*Number*[1]
Avon and Somerset	12
Cambridgeshire	2
Cheshire	8
Cumbria	7
Derbyshire	3
Dorset	1
Durham	1
Gloucestershire	7
Greater Manchester	1
Hampshire	3
Humberside	7
Leicestershire	10
Lincolnshire	3
Merseyside	1
Norfolk	10
North Yorkshire	12
Northamptonshire	3
Shropshire	4
Staffordshire	3
Suffolk	15
Surrey	2
Sussex	2
Warwickshire	2
West Midlands	1
West Yorkshire	6
Wiltshire	3
Dyfed-Powys	27
Gwent	3
North Wales	3
South Wales	5
England and Wales	167

[1] The figures held centrally are approximate and may be incomplete; detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Ethnic Origins)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make public the ethnic origin of prisoners held in Her Majesty's prison, Wormwood Scrubs at the most recent convenient date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is given in the table.

Population[1] *of Wormwood Scrubs prison: by ethnic origin 30 September 1988*

	Number
White	657
West Indian, Guyanese, African	276
Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi	39
Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin	19
Other, not recorded, refused	19
All persons	1,010

[1] The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to what standard classifications are used when recording the ethnic origin of prisoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The standard classification used to record the ethnic origin of prisoners, is that currently used in the EC labour force survey. Details are to be found in "The ethnic origins of prisoners: the prison population on 30 June 1985" and persons received July 1984 to March 1985 (Home Office statistical bulletin 17/86).

Prisoners (Training Courses and Jobs)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how prison governors ensure that all inmates have equal access to training courses and to jobs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In general, inmates are informed of the opportunities for education, training, and employment, and are invited to express their preferences at the beginning of their sentence. An assessment is then made of their suitability for the activities of their choice in terms of medical fitness, educational standard, and motivation.

While the wishes of inmates are taken into account, access to a particular course or specific type of employment is dependent on the suitability or otherwise of the individual and on the constraints of local circumstances. Opportunities for choice may be more limited in local prisons and remand centres and for prisoners with special needs.

Prisoners (Racial Discrimination)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure that all prisoners are aware of their right to write to the Commission for Racial Equality at the same time as raising internally any complaint of racial discrimination.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Guidance was issued to establishments in 1977 about the right of prisoners to write to the Commission for Racial Equality. Specific reference to this will be included in the next revision of the information booklet for prisoners.

Metropolitan Police (Sex Discrimination)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the extent of employment discrimination against women within the Metropolitan police and the action he is taking to counteract it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Like the chief officers, the Commissioner is aware that, subject to the specific exceptions provided by section 17(2) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, any sex discrimination in the treatment of police officers is unlawful.

Over the last four years, the Metropolitan police has worked with the Equal Opportunities Commission on the implementation of its equal opportunities policy, as the commission recognised in its 12th annual report. The force has a dedicated equal opportunities unit, and a formal grievance procedure which can be used by officers who consider that they have suffered from sexist behaviour or language.

Equal opportunities training is included in central and local training programmes. Detailed guidelines on equal opportunities legislation and practice are issued to all officers of inspector rank and above, and are available to other ranks.

Police Officers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends removing the requirement for police officers *(a)* to serve warrants for non-payment of fines and *(b)* to act as coroners' officers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Arrangements for service of warrants for non-payment of fines are settled locally between police forces and the courts. As much as possible should be dealt with by civilian staff rathern than police officers in order to release the latter for operational duties.

As regards coroners' officers, it has been suggested to police authorities, chief officers of police and the coroners' service that civilians rather than police officers should be appointed to such posts. This is in line with the conclusion of the Broderick committee on coroners.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many extra police have been allocated to the West Midlands police force for each year between 1974 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Year	*Posts approved*
1974 and 1975	—
1976	38
1977 to 1980	—
1981	175
1982 to 1987	—
1988	70

Prisons

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has plans for changing the way in which the regions and headquarters of the prison service are organised.

Mr. Hurd: Fresh start has brought fundamental changes over the past two years to the way in which individual establishments in the prison service operate. I have decided that the time is now ripe for carrying this process a stage further and undertaking a comprehensive study of the organisation and location of the service's headquarters and regions. The terms of reference for the review are:

To study the organisation of the prison service in England and Wales above the level of individual establishments and the locations at which work is done and to make recommendations for changes to improve effectiveness and value for money.

The work is being done by a small team of consultants and civil servants and is due to be completed by the end of July.

Prisoners (Cruelty to Children)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were sent to prison in each of the last three years for cruelty to children.

Mr. John Patten: The information is not all available in the form requested. The number of persons given immediate custody for offences of cruelty to or neglect of children under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", supplementary tables 1.1(a) and 2.1(a). The number of offences of homicide where the victims were children is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", Cm. 498, tables 4.6, 4.12 and 4.13. Copies of these publications are in the Library of the House. The number of persons sentenced for other offences of violence against children is not available separately.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what prison association is allowed for inmates at Wandsworth prison.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The position before the recent intensification of industrial action was that, apart from the hospital ward complex, there was no general association other than that which occurred during exercise periods and other group activities.

Remand Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the average time a person on remand in custody has spent in prison during the last 12 months.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest readily available information was published in table 2.1 of "Prison statistics England and Wales 1987" (Cmnd. 547), a copy of which is held in the Library.

Firearms and Shotguns

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will extend the validation period of shotgun certificates from three years to six years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to extend the validation period of firearms certificates to six years; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing the extension of the validation period of shotgun certificates from three years to six years; what the percentage the latter is of the former; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received occasional representations on this matter but details are not available in the form requested. Proposals for extending from three to six years the validity of shotgun and firearm certificates were made during the passage of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988. These were not acceptable to the Government. I remain of the view that review of the conditions attached to a certificate and the circumstances of the holder at three-yearly intervals is right, and that to extend the period to six years would represent an unacceptable relaxation of the controls. We have, however, made provision in the 1988 Act for the co-termination of firearm and shotgun certificates, which will represent a substantial saving in costs for those holding both types of certificate.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to make the sale of live shotgun cartridges dependent upon the production of a valid shotgun certificate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Section 5 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 makes it an offence to sell shotgun ammunition to a person (other than a dealer in such ammunition) unless that person produces his shotgun certificate, or produces a certificate belonging to some other person together with a written authority from the holder to purchase the ammunition on his behalf, or shows that he is entitled to possess a shotgun without holding a certificate. This is an important strengthening of the law which it is intended to bring into force, with other relevant new provisions, by way of a second commencement order early in the summer.

Missing Persons

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable as to how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women, *(c)* boys under 18 years of age and *(d)* girls under 18 years of age were reported as missing in the Thames valley during each of the last five years for which records are available; and how many and what percentage in each category were subsequently traced;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable as to how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women, *(c)* boys under 18 years of age and *(d)* girls under 18 years of age were reported as missing in Warwickshire during each of the last five years for which records are available; and how many and what percentage in each category were subsequently traced.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information in the form requested is not available.

Immigration

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of persons aged 18 years or below who were refused leave to enter the United Kingdom by virtue of relationship with a person resident in the United Kingdom, and whose application was refused on the ground that they could not establish such relationship, in each year since 1975.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not available centrally. Information on the total number of children under 18 years of age in the Indian subcontinent initially refused entry clearance to the United Kingdom in 1977-87 is given in table 7 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 1987" (Cm. 415), and 770 children were refused in the first three quarters of 1988. The estimated corresponding numbers of children initially refused a certificate of entitlement to, or confirmation of, the right of abode in the United Kingdom were negligible prior to 1986, 560 in 1986, 350 in 1987, and 200 in the first three quarters of 1988. Some applications refused initially are subsequently granted on appeal.

Illegal Parking

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 31 January, if he will call for a report from the Comissioner of Police of the Metropolis summarising the specific criteria applied by traffic wardens and police officers in deciding *(a)* to tow away an illegally parked vehicle, *(b)* to clamp an illegally parked vehicle and *(c)* to issue a fixed penalty notice for an illegally parked vehicle and as to what account is taken of the gravity of the infringement and the likelihood of the vehicle causing an obstruction; and if he will publish this summary in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The enforcement of road traffic law is a matter for individual chief officers of police. I am generally content that the enforcement of parking restrictions is conducted with common sense, tact and discretion and that there are adequate safeguards for those motorists who feel they have been treated unreasonably.

Lincolnshire Constabulary

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many serious offences were committed in the area covered by the Lincolnshire constabulary in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* The information is published annually in table S3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", supplementary tables, volume 3, a copy of which is in the Library.

DNA Test

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy under a DNA

testing scheme to permit the test to be taken by individuals over 18 years who applied for entry as dependants under the age of 18 years and were turned down;

(2) if he will list the countries of origin of dependants who may apply to join relatives already settled in the United Kingdom to whom the DNA testing scheme, if approved, will apply.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* My right hon. Friend announced on 26 July 1988 that we were considering whether DNA testing should continue to be left to private initiative or organised on a centrally run scheme. We will announce our conclusions on these matters as soon as possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Prime Minister whether, in the light of her answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South *Official Report*, 29 November 1988, column *178*, she will take steps to ensure that the Department of Health will not seek crown immunity from prosecution for health authorities when the anticipated controls on pollution emissions come into effect.

The Prime Minister: I confirm that we do not intend there to be any crown immunity for health authorities in respect of the proposed new controls on emissions to the atmosphere.

Cabinet Office (Cash Limit)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if there are any proposals to change the 1988-89 cash limit and running costs limit for the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: Both the overall cash limit and the running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: Other Services (class XX, vote 2) have been reduced by £3,000, from £16,137,000 to £16,134,000 and from £19,616,000 to £19,613,000 respectively. These decreases will be offset by corresponding increases in the cash limit and running costs limit for the Cabinet Office: Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XX, vote 1) and reflect the transfer of costs for recruitment under the direct entry grade 7 competition, 1988.

There is no overall increase in either cash limits or gross running costs limits for Government as a whole as a result of these changes, which will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

ENERGY

Electricty Generation (Land Use)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the land use impact of electricity produced by nuclear power compared to that used by coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB advises me that the construction process of an 1,800 MW coal-fired power station equipped with FGD plant requires some 100 hectares of land of which about half would be retained for operational use. The construction process of a 1,200 MW PWR nuclear power station requires some 75 hectares of which about a third would be retained for operational use.

In general a coal-fired power station requires more land for operational use than a nuclear power station.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list by type and location the total land holdings of the Central Electricty Generating Board in the three counties of Yorkshire.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Wind Turbine Generators

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on information available to his Department on the merits of three-bladed steel wind turbine generators as a source of energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department's research and development programme is intended to examine the merits of wind energy, in particular its economic and environmental acceptability. On the basis of information available from our studies to-date we believe that wind energy has the potential to make a substantial contribution to United Kingdom energy supplies and that the three-blade, horizontal axis configuration is one of the more promising options.

Steel is used extensively in the manufacture of wind turbines, for both the rotating components and the support structure. It can be used for making the rotor blades, but lighter composite materials are preferred by most manufacturers.

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether the Central Electricity Generating Board or his Department has calculated the fissile plutonium content of the approximately 18 tonnes of fuel discharged from Berkeley reactor 1 between 4 April and 17 July;

(2) on what dates in 1987, 1988 and 1989 Bradwell nuclear power station was refuelled; if he will give the figures for fuel discharged and loaded; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether the Central Electricity Generating Board or his Department has calculated the amount of fissile plutonium in irradiated fuel discharged from Bradwell nuclear power station between January 1987 and January 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what is the typical period or length of time that the fuel remains in the core of a typical Magnox nuclear power reactor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are operational matters for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

North Sea Safety

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he plans to issue any further safety notices in respect of practices in the North sea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. I have today issued the following safety notice:

The Department is concerned that the provision of alcohol offshore, even on a strictly controlled basis, may provide opportunities for abuse.

Operators are asked to ensure that all their staff are aware that if such abuse occurs they may render themselves liable to prosecution under S.7 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Operators may also render themselves liable under S.2.

However, the Department consider that operators should not allow any such opportunities to arise. This can be done only by barring the possession or use of alcohol offshore. The Department expects operators to ensure that they implement such a policy.

WALES

Drinking Water

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those water supplies in Wales which fail to meet the standards set out in the European Economic Community directives on the safety of drinking water and whether or not these are are the subject of derogations; how and when it is proposed for each of these water supplies to meet the standards laid down; and what the latest estimated cost of complying with the standards is in each case.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The following sources of supply in Wales, many of which serve populations of less than 1,000, are the subject of derogations under article 9 of the drinking water directive (80/778/EEC):

Source
Alwen
Caerau
Carno
Crai Reservoir
Elan Aquaduct
Garret Lwyd
Garw Levels
Georgetown
Lovesgrove Borehole
Nantybwch
Nantymoel
Portis
Strata Florida
Ystradfellte

Small Sources (serving population of less than 1,000)
Afon Cwm-y-Llan
Bettws-y-Coed
Croesor
Cwm Cegr Springs
Cwmsymlog
Gryn Goch
Llanbedr Springs
Llanfynydd
Llan Penmachno
Nantmor
Penygoyallt
Rhyd
Rhyd-Ddu
Rhydyronnen
Tir-Garwen
Upper Wenallt Springs
Wern Ddu

The temporary relaxation of the directive's standards does not pose any threat to public health and the Welsh water authority has an ongoing programme of remedial works which should ensure that supplies regularly comply by 1992. The full cost of the programme is still being evaluated.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many full-time hill farmers there are in Wales; what was the corresponding figure 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In June 1977, there were 9,960 whole-time farmers, partners and working directors on holdings in the original less-favoured area, (now known as the severely disadvantaged area). In June 1987, there were 16,637 whole-time farmers, partners and working directors in the extended LFA, of which 9,902 are estimated to be on land directly comparable to the original LFA.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the planned expenditure by his Department on trunk roads in Ceredigion district for the years 1989 and 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Planned expenditure on new construction and improvement (excluding renewal) is £2·4 million for 1989-90 and £3·5 million for 1990-91. This does not include local authority expenditure. Information about major scheme starts will be given in the Welsh commentary on the public expenditure White Paper and in the forthcoming edition of "Roads in Wales".

Montgomery Canal

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with British Waterways about the future of the Montgomery canal.

Mr. Grist: The Secretary of State discussed the proposal to restore the Montgomery canal with the chairman of the British Waterways Board last November.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions his officials have had with Powys county and Montgomeryshire district council, the Welsh tourist board and the Mid Wales Development Board about funding restoration work on the Montgomery canal; what estimate has been given for this work; and whether any European Economic Community funding was available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Welsh Office officials have had many discussions with members of the steering group seeking to restore the Montgomery canal. Restoration proposals have been variously estimated to cost £14 million to £18 million. No decision was taken on whether EC funding would have been available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

AVCs (Teachers)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether in the light of the voluntary contributions requirements of article 14 of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, he proposes to introduce additional facilities for AVCs within the teachers' superannuation scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Prudential Pension Fund Services has been appointed to provide a new additional voluntary

contribution (AVC) scheme for teachers who are members of the teachers' superannuation scheme for Northern Ireland.

It is intended to make regulations as soon as possible to give effect to the new scheme, and to secure approval for it under section 592 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 so that teachers' contributions are allowable as a deducation from income before assessment to tax. Subject to these requirements, the scheme is intended to come into operation on 1 April 1989, enabling members to secure tax relief on single premium payments in the 1988-89 tax year.

The AVC scheme will offer a flexible, money purchase alternative to the existing provision for buying in added years. Members will be able to choose to invest their contributions in a with-profit or a unit-linked fund, or on cash deposit at building society rates of interest, or to apply them to the purchase of additional life insurance cover, or in any combination of these investment vehicles. Members will also be free to vary their contributions, and their allocation between investments, at any time.

ENVIRONMENT

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the information available to him about the relative environmental record of HCFC 22 and chlorofluorocarbons 11 and 12.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: HCFC22 is estimated to have a very low ozone depletion potential—one twentieth of that of CFC 11 and CFC 12. The Government's view on the use of HCFC22 is set out in its reply to the first report from the Environment Committee (Session 1987—88HC 270-1) on air pollution. (Cm. 522).

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects HFA 134a to be in use as a substitute for chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that it is available for use as a refrigerant as soon as possible.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are encouraging the manufacturers of chlorofluorocarbons and halons to develop suitable and safe substitutes as quickly as possible. HFC134a is expected to be available in commercial quantities in the early 1990s, subject to the satisfactory outcome of toxicological testing.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will take steps to bring the disposal of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants in industrial premises under safety at work legislation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures his Department is taking to ensure the safe disposal of chlorofluorocarbons from air conditioning systems in trains, airplanes, motor coaches and cars;

(3) if he will take steps to make it illegal to discharge chlorofluorocarbons used in refrigeration into the atmosphere;

(4) if he will make a statement on the facilities available in the United Kingdom for *(a)* the safe disposal and *(b)* the recycling of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants;

(5) what steps he is taking to ensure that adequate facilities exist for the disposal and recycling of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This question, together with others by the hon. Member, reflects the recommendations of a report prepared by the Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association called "Safe Disposal of CFC Refrigerants". My right hon. Friend and I have recently been sent copies of the report. Officials are discussing it with the association and with other industry representatives.

Tourism

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much financial assistance has been given by his Department towards tourism for each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Expenditure on a number of the Department's programmes assists tourism particularly those concerned with the heritage, including parks and palaces, the countryside, rural development, inner city initiatives and activities by local authorities. Overall figures are not available.

Gipsies

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present number of caravan sites for gipsies in Greater London under the Caravan Sites Act 1986.

Mr. Trippier: Currently, there are 28 sites, two of them temporary.

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the allocations for 1989-90 for inner area programme authorities and the corresponding figures for 1988-89.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) on 1 February, at columns *215-17*, when I announced the initial urban programme allocations for 1989-90. The initial allocations for 1988-89 are in the table.

Region and authority	*Initial allocation 1988-89 £ million*
Northern	
Newcastle and Gateshead	16·84
Hartlepool	1·75
Langbaurgh	1·75
Middlesbrough	5·5
North Tyneside	3·42
South Tyneside	4·4
Stockton	1·37
Sunderland	4·4
North West	
Manchester and Salford	22·2
Blackburn	4·0
Bolton	3·75
Burnley	1·8
Oldham	3·7
Preston	2·0
Rochdale	3·6
Wigan	2·2

Region and authority	Initial allocation 1988-89 £ million
Merseyside	
Liverpool	20·5
Halton	1·43
Knowsley	3·91
St. Helens	1·7
Sefton	1·5
Wirral	3·42
West Midlands	
Birmingham	24·68
Coventry	4·79
Dudley	1·25
Sandwell	4·87
Walsall	1·5
Wolverhampton	5·39
The Wrekin	0·57
East Midlands	
Derby	1·41
Leicester	5·43
Nottingham	5·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley	1·5
Bradford	4·5
Doncaster	1·75
Hull	4·89
Kirklees	0·82
Leeds	4·4
Rotherham	1·75
Sheffield	5·5
London	
Hackney	9·66
Islington	9·65
Lambeth	11·75
Brent	3·91
Greenwich	1·9
Hammersmith and Fulham	4·31
Haringey	2·25
Kensington and Chelsea	1·85
Lewisham	1·95
Newham	2·25
Southwark	2·25
Tower Hamlets	4·5
Wandsworth	4·5
South West	
Bristol	1·5
Plymouth	1·0

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities which have received allocations in 1988-89 and are to receive proposed allocations in 1989-90 under the private sector renewal initiative; and if he will indicate the respective figures.

Mr. Trippier: We gave additional allocations under the private sector area renewal initiative as follows:

	£
1988-89	
Allerdale	245,000
Birmingham	400,000
Blackburn	401,000
Bolton	200,000
Derby	50,000
Hyndburn	203,000
Middlesbrough	50,000
Pendle	101,000
Rochdale	200,000
Sheffield	400,000
Stoke-on-Trent	250,000
Wirral	500,000
1989-90	
Allerdale	700,000
Birmingham	3,500,000
Blackburn	800,000
Bolton	500,000
Burnley	200,000
Derby	500,000
Doncaster	250,000
Hyndburn	500,000
Kirklees	350,000
Lancaster	150,000
Langbaurgh	780,000
Leeds	600,000
Leicester	400,000
Lincoln	200,000
Liverpool	600,000
Middlesbrough	370,000
Newham	200,000
Pendle	500,000
Preston	200,000
Rochdale	700,000
Rossendale	400,000
Sheffield	2,000,000
Stoke-on-Trent	800,000
Stockport	300,000
Walsall	600,000
Waltham Forest	300,000
Wansbeck	600,000
Wirral	3,300,000
Wolverhampton	300,000

Rating Reform

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exemplify the figures applicable for the London borough of Hillingdon under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax.

Mr. Gummer: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to figures equivalent to those quoted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 25 January at column 1012 concerning a ward sister. A ward sister earning £15,000 living in a flat in Hillingdon worth £60,000 and with a rateable value of £275 would pay rates bill of £558, a community charge of £242, disregarding the transitional safety net, and £640 under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax.

St. Edmundsbury Council

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how many full-time equivalent employees the staff of St. Edmundsbury council has increased over the 12-month period to the latest count by his joint manpower watch; by what percentage this figure varies upwards or downwards from the national averages for shire county districts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The number of staff, full-time and part-time, employed by St. Edmundsbury district council increased by 34 (+4·5 per cent.) in the 12 months to September 1988. In this same period, the overall increase for non-met district councils was 83 employees (less than +0·05 per cent.). Full-time equivalent figures are not available at individual authority level.

SSSIs (Registration)

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure that all land in England and Wales notified as a site of special scientific interest under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act has been registered as such by the appropriate local land charge office.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that details of SSSI notifications are forwarded to local land charge offices, who are requested to register them as a local land charge as required by section 28 (11) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Anglian Water Authority (SSSIs)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites of special scientific interest in the ownership of the Anglian water authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is currently being assembled by the Nature Conservancy Council. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Endangered Species

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will produce an annual report on his Department's progress in the implementation of the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1985.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We propose to include details of the Department's activities in the appropriate yearly supplementary reports on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora. Copies of these reports are placed in the Library.

Pollution (Chichester Harbour)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what direction Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has given to the Southern water authority in respect of pollution in Chichester harbour; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is aware of the problem of Chichester harbour, which appears to emanate from the authority's Bosham sewage treatment works during periods of heavy rainfall. The authority has plans to remedy the situation, which the inspectorate is discussing with it.

Water

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Southern water authority's announced need for an increase in charges.

Mr. Howard: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) on 1 February at columns *213-14*. Southern Water will be announcing its own charges for 1989-90 in due course.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what European Economic Community directives on the disposal of hazardous and toxic waste have yet to be implemented by the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All directives in respect of waste disposal have been implemented except for directive 87/101 on waste oils, for which the implementation date is 1 January 1990, and directive 84/631 on transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste in respect of Northern Ireland. Regulations to implement the latter are expected to come into force next month.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the sites and the local authority areas in the west midlands used for the disposal of hazardous and toxic waste; and if he will indicate whether they are council operated or operated by a private firm.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has a record of some 151 waste disposal facilities in the west midlands area. These are listed by local authority area and by ownership:

	Council	*Private*
Birmingham	5	31
Coventry	2	7
Dudley	6	13
Sandwell	9	28
Solihull	2	12
Walsall	1	22
Wolverhampton	3	10

Details of the sites, including information on the types of waste for which they are licensed, can be obtained from the appropriate waste disposal authorities, who are required to maintain a public register.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to answer parliamentary questions relating to those activities of residuary bodies which have a direct effect on *(a)* individuals in contact with those bodies or their tenants or *(b)* their staff.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Residuary bodies are non-departmental public bodies whose main line of accountability is to Parliament through the Secretary of State. My right hon. Friend will, of course, answer questions on all matters relevant to his ministerial responsibilities in relation to them. In accordance with normal practice relating to non-departmental public bodies, questions on their day-to-day affairs should be referred to the residuary bodies themselves.

Asbestos (New St. Andrew's House)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what tests have been carried out to establish the presence of blue asbestos at New St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh; what levels of asbestos were found; when he expects to make known the results of such tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Repeated air samples have been taken from New St. Andrew's house and no blue asbestos has been found. Brown and white asbestos has been found in sprayed ceiling insulation and to a lesser extent in ceiling tiles, but the repeated air tests have shown any asbestos to be below accepted minimum safety standards.

The Scottish Office has been kept aware of the results of tests. A joint inspection by the Health and Safety Executive, the PSA Scotland safety officer and a trade union representative was carried out in August 1988. The conclusion was that the asbestos was in a safe condition and that there was no immediate risk to staff. Inspection of the building will continue and any required air tests will be taken.

Low-cost Housing (Rural Areas)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he plans to give to planning authorities in rural areas as to whether they can properly take account of local needs for low-cost housing in drawing up local plans and deciding planning applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: In preparing their local plans authorities must ensure that adequate provision is made, consistent with the structure plan, for housing demand of all kinds. As was made clear in circular 1/85, planning controls are concerned with the use of land rather than with the identity of the user. The question of who is to occupy premises for which permission is to be granted will normally be irrelevant.

I recognise, however, that in some rural areas there are genuine difficulties in securing an adequate supply of low-cost housing for local needs. In such areas, the need for low-cost housing and the existence of arrangements made by the developer, or between the developer and the landowner or the local authority, to ensure that new low-cost housing is made available for local needs could be material considerations which the authority would take into account in deciding whether to grant planning permission. Such considerations might be particularly relevant to the release of small sites within or adjoining existing villages which would not otherwise be allocated for housing.

Since planning conditions cannot normally be used to impose restrictions on tenure or occupancy, the planning authority would need to satisfy itself before granting planning permission that other secure arrangements to the effect would be made. Examples of such arrangements might be the involvement of a village trust or housing association with a suitable lettings policy; or covenants designed to give priority to first-time buyers from the locality; or an agreement between the planning authority and the developer under section 52 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. It would be important for schemes to ensure that the benefits of low-cost provision pass not only to the initial occupants but to subsequent occupants as well.

Local plan policies should make it clear that the release of such sites to secure provision of low-cost housing for local needs will be additional to the provision made in the plan for general housing demand, recognising that particular local needs may justify the release of land that would not normally be allocated to meet general housing demand. It should be made clear that land allocated in the plan to meet general housing demand will not be confined to local needs only, and planning permission for such land should not be refused on the ground that the developers or landowners are not prepared to enter into arrangements to secure provision for local needs.

The case for releasing additional land that would not normally receive planning permission for housing, in order to secure provision of low-cost housing for local needs, will be essentially a matter for local judgment. Where a planning authority refuses permission for such development, and the matter goes to appeal, I and my inspectors will bear in mind the essentially local nature of the decision, though each case will be considered on its merits.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Refuseniks

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to raise the case of long-term refuseniks, including Boris Chernobilsky of Moscow.

Mr. Waldegrave: We press the Soviet Authorities at every possible opportunity about long-term refusenik cases such as Boris Chernobilsky. The most recent occasion was at the United States-USSR bilateral talks on human rights on 26 January.

Cyprus

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *575*, community grant aid will be monitored within the different geographical areas of Cyprus; and if he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that the area known as the Turkish republic of north Cyprus derives appropriate benefit.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Community has made it clear that assistance under the EC-Cyprus financial protocol should benefit the whole population of the island. The commission is responsible for the administration of grants to Cyprus; but all projects are subject to member states' approval by qualified majority.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of those commitments.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following sets out the international organisations to which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office paid subscriptions in the 1987-88 financial year. Total contributions paid by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to these organisations was £578,273,000.

Organisation	*1987-88 outturn*
Subscriptions paid from class II, vote 2, other external relations	
UN Regular Budget and Peacekeeping Operations	
Commonwealth Secretariat	
Council of Europe: General Expenses	
Council of Europe: Buildings	
Council of Europe: European Youth Foundation	
Western European Union	

Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation: Civil Budget
NATO: International Staff Secretariat
South Pacific Commission
Commonwealth Foundation
Co-ordinating Committee, Paris
International Institute for the Unification of Private Law
International Exhibitions Bureau
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Permanent Court of Arbitration
Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
Universal Postal Union

Subscriptions paid from class II, vote 5, overseas aid
International Development Association
International Finance Corporation
Asian Development Bank:
African Development Bank:
Inter-American Development Bank:
Caribbean Development Bank:
International Fund for Agricultural Development
Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development Capital Subscription
UN Development Programme (UNDP)
UN Children's Fund
Food and Agricultural Organisation
UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO)
UN Education and Training Programme for South Africa
UN Development Fund for Women
International Atomic Energy Agency
UN Centre for Human Settlements
Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
Commonwealth Youth Programme
Commonwealth Media Development Fund
Commonwealth Secretariat—Nassau Fellowship
Commonwealth Science Council
UN Fund for Population Activities
International Foundation for Science
International Planned Parenthood Federation
World Health Organisation (WHO): Special Programme
International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research
Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Rome
UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
Colombo Plan Bureau
European Development Fund
European Community
World Food Programme
Food Aid Committee

MBFR Talks

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the mutual and balanced force reduction talks.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 2 February 1989 the negotiations on the mutual reduction of forces and armaments and associated measures in central Europe (commonly known as MBFR), which began in Vienna in 1973, formally came to an end by mutual agreement of all participants. A copy of the joint communiqué marking the closure of talks, has been placed in the Library of the House. The negotiations failed to produce any agreement, something which the Government regret. They nonetheless represented a first exploration of the vital area of conventional arms control; and they have increased mutual understanding of the complexity and importance of the issues involved. The experience gained by the participants about the process of negotiating about conventional armaments has been valuable; and some convergence of views was reached on certain principles which should apply to conventional arms reductions. The talks have thus laid a foundation for further consideration of these issues in the forthcoming negotiations on conventional armed forces in Europe: these are scheduled to begin in Vienna in March.

Romania

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Romanian ambassador; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Waldegrave: I summoned the ambassador of Romania on 30 January to protest about the infringement of the rights both of Her Majesty's ambassador in Romania and of the Romanian citizen, Mrs. Doina Cornea. We will continue to protest strongly about Romanian policies, which run counter to their obligations under the Vienna CSCE agreement, at every suitable opportunity.

United States Secretary of State

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he is next going to meet the United States Secretary of State.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet Mr. Baker in the very near future.

Palestine

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the Palestine state declared by the Palestine National Council in November 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We do not recognise the state of Palestine declared by the PNC in Algiers. Our contacts with Palestinians do not and cannot amount to Government-to-Government dealings. We regard the persons with whom such contacts take place not as governmental representatives but as Palestinian leaders. Accordingly, such contacts do not and cannot affect our position of not having recognised the state of Palestine.

HEALTH

NHS Grading (Barnsley)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nursng, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in Barnsley district health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is available in the Library.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appeals by category are awaiting a hearing following the regrading of nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff in the Barnsley health authority area.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Bioplan Ltd.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the numbers and names of district

health authorities that have entered into contracts for the provision of hospital services with Bioplan Ltd., with the dates on which the contracts were signed and the length of the individual contracts in each case.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that Coventry, Crewe and Oxfordshire district health authorities have negotiated contracts with Bioplan Holdings Ltd., but we do not collect information about the details of the individual contracts.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of treating a patient for renal dialysis in the Crewe district health authority; how many such patients are at present registered; and how many he estimates in future will be treated in the private hospital owned by Bioplan Ltd.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Crewe health authority for this information.

Private Hospitals

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will institute an immediate study of the number of National Health Service patients treated in the private sector in 1987-88, who have been readmitted to National Health Service hospitals in the six months following their treatment in the private sector.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will institute an immediate system of medical audit for patients treated in private hospitals monitored by independent medical authorities outside the private sector.

Mr. Mellor: No.

NHS Review

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the implications for the promotion of good health and for preventive medicine of the proposals in his White Paper "Working for Patients", Cm. 555.

Mr. Mellor: The White Paper concentrates on the organisation and management of services to patients. Health authorities and general practitioners will continue to have a central role in health promotion and the prevention of ill health, in particular encouraging people to help themselves by adopting a healthier lifestyle. The Government's recent circular announcing its acceptance of the chief medical officer's report "Public Health in England" makes clear its policy on public health.

Bradford DHA

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings between representatives of Bradford district health authority and Bradford council have taken place, from September 1988 to date, concerned with the joint funding arrangement; who has attended meetings; on what dates meetings have taken place; what decisions have been reached; and what expenditure has been approved for the year 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor: This is a local matter and the hon. Member may wish to contact the district general manager at Bradford health authority for full details. I understand that following a number of meetings between the bodies concerned joint funding expenditure of £1·109 million has now been agreed for the year 1989-90.

TRANSPORT

RULE Ratings

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out a table showing for each month of 1988, what percentage of new car registrations were categorised under the following RULE ratings *(a)* R—refer to dealer, *(b)* U—unleaded only, *(c)* L—leaded only and *(c)* E—either.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Four in five—80 per cent.—of new cars could be using unleaded petrol. Percentage figures have been estimated for Great Britain for 1988 as follows:

	Per cent.
R— refer to dealer	47
U— unleaded	0
L— leaded	16
E— either	33

Diesel accounted for 4 per cent. of new car registrations.

Figures are not readily available on a monthly basis for new car registrations categorised under the RULE ratings.

Public Utilities Street Works

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the need for new legislation to replace the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last two months we have received over 50 representations from hon. Friends and hon. Members, local authorities and the utility companies. We have accepted the need for new legislation and will introduce a Bill as soon as a suitable opportunity can be found. There are major potential gains for road users on foot and wheel, to highway authorities and to statutory undertakers.

Yachts (Light Dues)

Mr. Macdonald : To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the results of the feasibility study into extending light dues to yachts and pleasure craft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: This study is being undertaken by the British Ports Federation at my right hon. Friend's request. The federation expects to complete it later this year.

Trading Fleet

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the present numbers and deadweight tonnages of the United Kingdom-owned trading fleet; what were the figures one year ago; and whether he has measures in mind to prevent any further decline.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is as follows:

Trading vessels directly owned in the United Kingdom

	31 December 1987		*31 December 1988*	
	Number	*million dwt*	*Number*	*million dwt*
100 grt and over	857	17·6	857	16·6
of which				
500 grt and over	648	17·5	621	16·5

A number of measures were introduced last year, including assistance towards officer training and crew relief costs. The effect of these measures is being closely monitored.

Violence (Stations)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will *(a)* place in the Library and *(b)* publish the report of the survey conducted by British transport police on violence at London Underground and British Rail stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that British Rail and the BTP consider that further research is needed and that it would be inappropriate to publish the survey conducted at Liverpool Street and Fenchurch Street stations last autumn. These are matters for BR and the BTP.

BT Police

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on current staffing levels in British transport police and how this differs from what Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary has recommended in its most recent report on this matter.

Mr. Portillo: I understand from the British transport police that the force has 1,500 officers in post in respect of British Rail and 328 officers in its London Underground L division. The complement of L division was recently increased from 350 to 400 following a recommendation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary in a report on L division. Some 80 additional officers from the Metropolitan and the City of London police are now assisting the BTP while L division is brought up to strength. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary has recently carried out an inspection of the rest of the BTP and a report is being prepared.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years the number of vehicle accidents reported within four miles of either side of the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the past five years there have been 34 vehicular accidents involving personal injury on the M4 within four miles of the Severn bridge in England, excluding the bridge itself.

These are:

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1984	0	2	2	4
1985	0	2	7	9
1986	0	3	4	7
1987	0	1	5	6
1988	0	2	6	8

Information in respect of accidents on the Welsh approach to the crossing may be obtained from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last five years the number of vehicle accidents reported on the Severn bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the past five years there have been 87 vehicular accidents involving personal injury on the Severn crossing between junctions 21 and 22 on the M4.

These are:

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*total*
1984	0	7	12	19
1985	0	5	10	15
1986	1	4	19	24
1987	0	0	16	16
1988	0	3	10	13

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the criteria he will apply in deciding whether to approve or reject British Rail's application for a fixed high speed rail link between the Kent coast and London termini.

Mr. Portillo: I refer to my answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on 30 January at column *53*.

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of incorrect information supplied to owners of fishing vessels on the application forms for transfer to the new registry of fishing vessels, he plans to adhere to the closing date for the transitional period of 31 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Known ownership details have been sent to owners of all United Kingdom registered fishing vessels. They have been asked to verify or correct the information and return the form together with a signed declaration of British character to the registry of shipping and seamen. To date, only some 5,000 out of 13,000 sent out have been returned and it is to be hoped that owners will respond quickly. The transitional period ends on 31 March 1989, the date prescribed in regulations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of families in receipt of family income supplement in each standard region on 31 March 1987 and 31 March 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information for 31 March 1987 is as follows:

	Number of recipients (thousands)
North	14
Yorkshire and Humberside	23
North West	38
East Midlands	16
West Midlands	22

	Number of recipients (thousands)
South West	21
East Anglia	7
South East	37
Wales	14
Scotland	27
TOTAL	218

Information for 31 March 1988 is not available.

Hostel Charges

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations for and against the proposals in "Help with Hostel Charges" he has received from voluntary organisations working with the homeless.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The majority of responses from voluntary organisations dealing primarily with homeless people favoured retaining the present arrangements for paying income support to people in hostels. An important factor in their reaction was concern about the financial implications of the proposals for reform. Because of that concern, we have deferred change until after April 1989 while we consider the matter further.

Community Grant

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated outturn for community grant expenditure in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Expenditure on community care grants has risen steadily to 77 per cent. of anticipated monthly expenditure. Expenditure for the period from April to the end of December is provisionally calculated at £22·8 million. Outturn expenditure will depend upon the success of our efforts further to increase take-up, and we are confident that the rising trend will continue.

Unemployment-related Benefits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of claims of unemployment-related benefits disallowed by adjudication officers in each standard region of the United Kingdom for each year since 1980, broken down by each category of disallowance in a manner consistent with the annual report of the chief adjudication officer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested for 1980 and 1981 is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information for years 1982 to 1988 is available, but will take a little time to collate in the form requested. I shall place complete tables in the Library as quickly as possible.

Mr. RFD (Eviction)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the steps taken by his Department to ensure that Mr. RFD, about whom the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security wrote to the hon. Member for Stretford on 9 January (reference POS(4)2558/50), was not threatened with eviction whilst payment of his benefit was suspended.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: An undertaking was received that while inquiries were being made, tenants, including Mr. RFD, would not be evicted.

War Widows

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what information he has concerning the number and ages of war widows from the second world war who are still alive;

(2) what information he has concerning the number of war widows from the first world war who are still alive.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Pensions are payable to the widows of service men who served in the armed forces between 1914 and 1921 and since 1939 whose death was due to service during those periods or subsequently; and to the widows of merchant seamen whose death was due to war injury during the first world war and since 1939. At the end of last year 57,550 pensions were in payment, of which 53,100 were to the widows of those who served since 1939. Information about the ages of these widows is not readily available and could be obtained only at a cost considerably in excess of the normal cost of answering a parliamentary question.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a breakdown by military campaign of the numbers and average age of war widows from campaigns since the end of the second world war.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information could be obtained only at a cost considerably in excess of the normal cost of answering a parliamentary question.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total average income of *(a)* a pre-1973 war widow and *(b)* a post-1973 war widow.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This information is not available. As war widows' pensions are not income related, no information is held about the recipients' total income. The standard war widow's pension is £53·50. In addition, age allowances of £5·75 at age 65, £11·50 at age 70 and £14·45 at age 80 are paid. About 75 per cent. of war widows over pension age receive a retirement pension, and some will be in receipt of occupational pensions or other income. Post-1973 war widows also receive a pension from the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met representatives of British War Widows and Associates.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have not yet met representatives of British War Widows and Associates. My right hon. Friend and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State hope to do so at a reception sponsored by my hon. Friend to be held in the House on 2 March.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, what estimate he has of the numbers of first and second world war widows who die each year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: About 1,000 widows from the first world war and 2,000 widows whose husbands served in the armed forces from 1939 onwards die each year.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many current war widows were

widowed before April 1973; how many of those receive income support; what would be the net cost of giving them similar pension treatment to those widowed after April 1973; and how many current war widows were widowed during the 1939-45 war.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that precise information about the numbers and circumstances of current war widows who were widowed before April 1973 or during the second world war could be obtained only at a cost considerably in excess of the normal cost of answering a parliamentary question. At the end of last year, there were 57,550 war widows, of whom it is estimated between 1 and 2 per cent. were in receipt of income support. It is also estimated that if the 1973 improvements to the armed forces pension scheme were to be extended to pay pensions to pre-1973 war widows on the same basis and rates as for current awards, the gross additional cost would be in the region of £200 million a year.

DEFENCE

Efficiency and Savings

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what success he has had in persuading the services to implement efficency and savings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A specific efficiency programme was introduced on 1 April 1988, to last for three years. The target is to enhance efficiency, either by producing the same output from reduced input or by increasing output from the same input, by 2½ per cent. per annum. This target encompasses the whole of the defence budget except for service pensions and capital equipment procurement, the latter being the subject of separate value for money initiatives. This is an important initiative aimed to ensure that we make the most cost-effective use of the resources available to us. It has the full and enthusiastic support of the top management of the department, including the service chiefs of staff.

NATO (40th Anniversary)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans his Department has for celebrating the 40th anniversary of NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 22 December 1988 at columns 377-78.

Manpower

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department is taking to deal with the expected shortfall in manpower in the 1990s.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any proposals to increase the numbers of young people enlisting in the armed forces.

Mr. Neubert: In 1994 the number of young men in the United Kingdom aged between 16 and 19 will have fallen by around 23 per cent. compared with current levels and by 30 per cent. compared with the peak in 1983. The armed forces are tackling this problem in a variety of ways and are carrying out a number of studies. For example, expenditure on recruitment advertising is being increased and measures aimed at improving the retention of trained personnel are being taken. We are also increasing the career opportunities for women and examining how to attract more recruits from the ethnic minorities. We will ensure that pay, allowances and conditions of service are such that a career in the armed services remains attractive to young people.

With regard to civilian staff, we are continuing to identify ways of making the most efficient use of manpower, while at the same time making considerable efforts to attract and retain the staff we need to fill those posts which it is essential should remain within the Civil Service. I am hopeful that new flexible pay agreements, improved recruitment publicity and, for example, the greater scope for encouraging people from older age groups and part-time staff will enable us to achieve this.

Conventional Stability Talks

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the Government's policy for the conventional stability talks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom and its NATO allies are currently finalising the proposals for tabling at the negotiation on conventional armed forces in Europe, previously known as the conventional stability talks, which is due to begin in Vienna in March. The objective will be to eliminate capabilities for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action by measures which include the elimination, by reductions, of the current imbalances in key equipments such as tanks and artillery. A total ceiling on tanks of about 40,000, shared equally between the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, is envisaged. Such measures will require heavily asymmetrical reductions by the Warsaw Pact to reflect its higher force levels, which will remain even if the reductions in its forces announced recently are implemented.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Haynes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of Royal Air Force Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No firm decisions have yet been taken on the future use of RAF Molesworth, but it is envisaged that it will continue to be made available to the United States authorities for military use. There is no prospect of converting the base to an operational flying role; although RAF Molesworth was a wartime bomber base, no runways now remain there. The site remains open to Soviet inspection under the terms of the INF treaty until June 2001.

Soviet Union (Visits)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on briefing hon. and right hon. Members undertaking visits to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be happy to consider any request for briefing from hon. or right hon. Members undertaking visits to the Soviet Union.

Sir John Cuckney

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met Sir John Cuckney; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Secretary of State's last meeting with Sir John Cuckney at the Ministry of Defence was on 19 May 1988. Their discussions at this meeting are treated as confidential, as are all private discussions between the Secretary of State for Defence and senior representatives of our contractors.

NATO

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the British contribution to NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom contributes to all three legs of NATO's triad of forces (strategic nuclear, theatre nuclear, and conventional) and commits forces to all three major NATO commanders. The nature of this contribution is described in more detail in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988".

Submarines (Radioactivity Discharge)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what level of radioactivity Royal Navy submarines are allowed to discharge into the sea.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 24 January 1989 at column *555*.

MESAR Radar Project

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the ability of the MESAR radar project will be in the detection of stealth aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: Whilst not primarily designed for this purpose, MESAR technology has the potential to counter the threat from stealth aircraft.

Exercise Salty Hammer

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans there are for further exercises in the Salty Hammer series.

Mr. Neubert: Consideration is being given to an exercise in this regular series later this year.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were flown during exercise Salty Hammer on 10 May 1988.

Mr. Neubert: Central records of the number of sorties flown during specific exercises are not held. However, according to available records, 89 low-level sorties were flown during Exercise Salty Hammer on 10 May 1988.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft participated in exercise Salty Hammer on 10 May 1988; and how many of these were from United States Air Force units based in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Neubert: A total of some 227 aircraft participated in the exercise, of which some 70 were stationed at United States Air Force bases in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Exercise OSEX 16

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what area will be used for Exercise OSEX 16.

Mr. Neubert: OSEX 16 (Offensive Support Exercise) is to be centred on the Elan valley, Powys, with related low flying in other parts of Wales and Cheshire. As usual for significant exercises, hon. Members in local constituencies, the local media, farmers' unions and landowners' organisations will be given advance notice of exercise activity likely to affect their areas.

Military Airfields (Compensation Arrangements)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the paper entitled "The Review of the Ministry of Defence's Compensation Arrangements near Military Airfields", by A. M. Boardman of the Ministry of Defence, published in the proceedings of the Institute of Acoustics, volume 8, part 4, 1986, pages 121 to 126, represents his Department's policy on this subject; and if the measures outlined in the paper are current policy.

Mr. Neubert: In relation to the Ministry of Defence's compensation arrangements for the effect of noise near military airfields the paper by A. M. Boardman reflected departmental policy. The compensation arrangements described remain current. Additionally, the Ministry of Defence will consider claims for damage or loss where there is evidence that this results from military aircraft activity.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of low-level flights in low flying area 20(T) for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of low-level flights in low flying area 16 for each year since 1979;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of low-level flights in low flying area 13 for each year since 1979;

(4) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of low-level flights in low flying area 12 for each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: It is not our practice to publish detailed information relating to specific low-flying training areas.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if low flying at less than 250 ft is permitted during any phase of the Mallet Blow series of exercises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Apart from flying within the range areas being used for the Mallet Blow exercises when aircraft are permitted to descend below 250 ft during the final approaches to a target, no low flying at less than 250 ft is currently carried out during the Mallet Blow series of exercises.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the aircraft types permitted to fly at less than 250 ft over the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: Fixed-wing flying below 250 ft is not formally limited to particular aircraft types, but in practice approval for such flying is normally granted only for aircraft whose operational role requires such low level flights. Helicopters may operate below 250 ft anywhere in the United Kingdom subject to the constraints of the United Kingdom low flying system's regulations.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were flown on Saturdays in each year since 1979; and how many of these were flown by fast jet aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested could not be provided without disproportionate effort and cost.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consideration he has given to the relocation of some low-flying exercises.

Mr. Neubert: The most appropriate location for exercises involving low-flying training are kept under continuing review in the light of the desirability of maximising training value and spreading potential disturbance as equitably as possible.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the speed, height and purpose of the low-level flight over the built-up area of Tranent at 2.51 pm on Tuesday 31 January.

Mr. Neubert: Without additional information concerning the incident, such as type—for example, jet, propeller driven, helicopter—and number of aircraft, I regret I am unable to provide the information requested. If the hon. Member would care to write to me with this information, I would be happy to have the alleged incident investigated.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measurements have been made of noise levels on the ground caused by military jet aircraft overflying at 100 ft and speeds of up to 550 knots.

Mr. Neubert: No recent measurements of these noise levels have been made, but I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 26 January 1989 to the hon. Member for Meirionnyd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) at column *753*.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy towards compensation where dwellings are subjected to noise levels from military aircraft of 125 dB (A) or more.

Mr. Neubert: Should any dwelling in the vicinity of a military airfield be found to be subject to maximum noise levels from military aircraft of 125 dB (A) or more, departmental policy would be to seek to purchase the property. No such dwellings have been identified in any of the noise surveys carried out so far and it is considered unlikely that the situation will arise in the future.

Practice Air Attacks

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many practice air attacks were made on the Otterburn range in each year since 1979;

(2) how many practice air attacks were made on the Spadeadam range in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: Records of range activity do not encompass this information.

Submarine Discharges

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines discharge contaminated reactor coolant water in the Clyde estuary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on matters which would give information on the operation of the nuclear submarine fleet. So far as the release of radioactivity from RN submarines is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 24 January 1989 at column *554*.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Royal Navy nuclear submarines discharge contaminated reactor coolant water into the waters of ports visited which are not operational submarine bases.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice of the Royal Navy to discharge reactor coolant water directly to sea in any port.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines are equipped with retention tanks to store excess reactor coolant water derived for operating the submarine inside United Kingdom territorial waters so that it can be subsequently dumped outside United Kingdom territorial waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: During the normal operation of the nuclear reactors in Royal Navy submarines, coolant water is retained within the system. Royal Navy submarines are equipped with tanks which can be used to store excess coolant water created when a reactor is shut down and then restarted, and are suitable for use when the submarine is on the surface. However, it is rarely necessary to use such tanks. It is likely that future RN nuclear-powered submarines will carry retention tanks which may be used when submerged. So far as the release of radioactivity is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 24 January 1989 at column *554*.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether United States nuclear submarines or their tender ships operating in the Holy Loch discharge reactor coolants into United Kingdom territorial waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 24 January 1989 at column *555*.

Space Tracking Station (RAF Feltwell)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to in which United States fiscal years funding for the proposed deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell was given.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am informed by the United States authorities that funding has been approved for the deep space tracking system on a worldwide basis and it is not possible to isolate specific provision for the project at RAF Feltwell in particular years.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give *(a)* the date of commencement of works on the deep space tracking station to be built at RAF Feltwell, *(b)* the expected date of completion of these works and *(c)* the expected date of start of operations of the deep space tracking station at Feltwell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Construction of the deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell began on 12 September 1988. It is anticipated that the work will be completed late in 1989 with the station becoming operational in 1991.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if information gathered by the United States Air Force or any other United States service or agency at the proposed deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell will, as a matter of routine, be shared with the United Kingdom and other NATO allies.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) gave the hon. Gentleman on 18 May 1988 at column *512*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the construction of the deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell is being undertaken in pursuit of a NATO force goal, or other NATO decision.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The deep space tracking station is not part of a NATO programme.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what personnel, other than from the United States Air Force, will be employed at the proposed deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The construction of the deep space tracking station at RAF Feltwell will involve the employment of British contractors. Once complete, the station will be manned by United States Air Force personnel.

Bloodhound

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the first Bloodhound surface-to-air missile entered service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current Bloodhound mark 2 system entered RAF service in March 1964. Since then, there have been a number of modifications to the system to enhance its capability.

Buccaneer

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the first Buccaneer aircraft entered service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Buccaneer mark 1 first entered service with the Royal Navy in 1960; the Buccaneer S2 first entered service with the RAF in 1969.

Helicopters

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the helicopters of 22 Squadron first entered service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The in-service dates of the Wessex aircraft currently assigned to No. 22 Squadron search and rescue are as follows:

	Aircraft
1963	3
1964	3
1965	2
1966	4
1967	1
1968	5

NATO Requirements

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to meet all North Atlantic Treaty Organisation requirements for Royal Air Force warstocks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 22 December 1988 at column *371*.

Rapier

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the average number of towed Rapier surface-to-air missile systems stationed on the mainland of Europe in 1987;

(2) what was the average number of tracked Rapier surface-to-air missile systems stationed on the mainland of Europe in 1987.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to disclose details of the numbers of such equipment. Both towed and tracked Rapier numbers are included in the total of 350 United Kingdom air defence systems given on page 16 of the NATO publication "Conventional Forces in Europe: The Facts", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. I refer the hon. Member to annexes B and C of volume one of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988" (Cm. 344-I) for more information on the location of our air defence forces.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what items have been included in the current development costs for Rapier field standard C that were not included in the original estimate of the development cost.

Mr. Sainsbury: The items concerned reflect a wide variety of changes made to the Rapier field standard C development programme, in the period prior to incentiveness of the contract. A major change was the incorporation of a project contingency in the cost of estimates, other changes arose from the process of defining the requirement more closely.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of the increase in development costs for the Rapier field standard C is due to *(a)* unforeseen technical problems and *(b)* the restricted funding of development.

Mr. Sainsbury: As noted in the 47th report from the Public Accounts Committee on major defence projects, unforeseen technical problems and restricted funding of development together accounted for a 10 per cent. increase in development costs of Rapier field standard C between 1982 and 1986. Individually they accounted for 6 and 4 per cent. respectively.

Foxhunter Radar

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether all the Foxhunter radars currently in service perform to the specification that was agreed with GEC Marconi when they were first ordered.

Mr. Sainsbury: As we have stated on a number of occasions, the Foxhunter radar does not yet meet in full all the requirements of the Royal Air Force. Radars to an agreed interim standard are now in service in the Tornado air defence variant, which is already providing an operational capability superior to that of the aircraft it is replacing. The programme of work placed under firm price contractual arrangements with Marconi Defence Systems last year is expected to bring the Foxhunter radar up to the standard required.

Army Medals

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many applications for the dispatch of Army medals awarded in connection with the 1939-45 war are waiting to be processed; and what is the average waiting time.

Mr. Neubert: There were 6,839 outstanding claims for medals at 31 December 1988. Of these 2,661 were awaiting more information from the applicants or other governmental Departments, 2,608 were awaiting documents from archives and 1,570 were awaiting assessment at the Army medal office. All applicants are told that they may expect to wait about eight months for their claims to be processed.

War Widows

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now revise his estimated cost of £200 million per annum for improving the pensions of pre-1973 war widows to take into account the numbers of deaths of such widows since the figure was first calculated.

Mr. Neubert: The figure of £200 million remains a broad estimate of the annual additional cost of paying attributable widows pensions, on the same basis and rates as for current awards, to all those war widows who do not qualify for the revised provisions which were introduced into the armed forces pension scheme in 1973. The net reduction in the number of widows who would be affected, since that estimate was first made, is offset by the increase which would have occurred under index-linking arrangements in the rates of pension which would have been payable.

EMPLOYMENT

Back Pain

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action his Department is taking to reduce the number of working days lost due to back pain; what resources Her Majesty's Government provide for training employees to lift heavy weights; what guidelines he gives to employers to ensure that weights to be lifted are not too heavy; what guidelines are given in respect of office workers to ensure that office furniture and equipment do not contribute to back pain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: On 31 October 1988 the Health and Safety Commission published a consultative document "Handling loads at work" containing proposals for regulations and guidance. The regulations would apply to all persons who handle loads at work, including office workers, and repeal existing fragmentary and outdated legislation. The proposals would give employers a clear strategy for reducing injuries. The guidance stresses the importance of establishing a safe system of work, taking into account the nature of the task and the load to be handled. The commission considers that excessive reliance on weight limits is inappropriate and cannot be justified on medical grounds. Training in handling techniques is likely to be effective only as a complement to a safe system of work, not as a substitute for one.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percent age fall in unemployment in the last 12 months in the south-east.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988, the level of unemployment seasonally adjusted in the south-east was 421,700 compared with 582,000 in December 1987—a fall of 160,300 or 27·5 per cent.

Bonnybridge Employment Office

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) whether he will list the percentage rate of unemployed people in the Bonnybridge area for each month since the Bonnybridge part-time employment office was opened;

(2) whether he will list the number of unemployed people in the Bonnybridge area for each month since the Bonnybridge part-time employment office was opened.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the wards which cover the Bonnybridge area for each month from June 1983. Figures for wards are not available prior to June 1983. The figures are affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and by the change in benefit regulations affecting under 18-year-olds in September 1988. Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas.

Unemployment in the Bonnybridge area[1]

	Number of Unemployed Claimants
1983	
June	668
July	679
August	673
September	703
October	658
November	653
December	638
1984	
January	695
February	745
March	705
April	672
May	685
June	690
July	694
August	682
September	705

	Number of Unemployed Claimants
October	716
November	705
December	696
1985	
January	746
February	759
March	752
April	763
May	790
June	774
July	755
August	766
September	755
October	722
November	782
December	813
1986	
January	840
February	826
March	799
April	802
May	758
June	769
July	764
August	752
September	780
October	779
November	779
December	770
1987	
January	805
February	767
March	708
April	705
May	669
June	649
July	637
August	618
September	596
October	608
November	602
December	602
1988	
January	609
February	579
March	563
April	540
May	507
June	512
July	488
August	483
September	477
October	434
November	441
December	439

[1] Denny and Dunipace wards.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will consult local authorities and local community organisations about his proposal to close the Bonnybridge part-time employment office.

Mr. Lee: There are no plans to consult local authorities and local community organisations about the closure.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has of the success rate of the part-time employment office at Bonnybridge in finding jobs for unemployed people.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available. Bonnybridge is a part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse and is not specifically involved in finding jobs for unemployed people. This function is currently performed by the jobcentre in Denny.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make an official visit to the part-time employment office at Bonnybridge in order to discuss with local people, particularly unemployed people, his proposal to close the office.

Mr. Lee: There are no plans for the Secretary of State to visit Bonnybridge part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the disadvantages and the advantages of the proposed closure of the part-time employment office at Bonnybridge.

Mr. Lee: The employment service is committed to helping the unemployed find pathways back to work and to offering an efficient enquiry and counselling service about both benefits and job-training opportunities. It is impossible to provide all these facilities in a small part-time benefit office such as Bonnybridge which is open for only two hours a week and is housed in inadequate premises. Following the closure of Bonnybridge part-time unemployment benefit office, members of the public will be asked to attend the full-time unemployment benefit office in Denny. New claims are already taken at this office and it is equipped with a computer system to speed up the handling of inquiries. More senior and experienced staff are available to assist and offer advice about both benefits and job-training opportunities and a full-time jobcentre is situated in the same building.

Although members of the public will have to travel a little further to 'sign-on', therefore, they will benefit from the comprehensive range of services available in Denny, and particularly from having regular access to information about job vacancies and training courses.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will arrange for the issue of a questionnaire to all people using the part-time employment office at Bonnybridge to ascertain *(a)* what use they make of the office and *(b)* whether they agree with his proposal to close the office.

Mr. Lee: There are no plans to issue a questionnaire to the people who use the part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse at Bonnybridge as there are alternative and more comprehensive facilities available nearby.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated cost of additional travel expenses which will be incurred by clients at present using the Bonnybridge part-time employment office if the office is closed.

Mr. Lee: In most cases, clients who currently attend the part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse at Bonnybridge will be expected to travel to the nearest local office in Denny, which is three miles away. There is half-hourly bus service between Bonnybridge and Denny and the fare is £1 return. Clients who live six miles or more from the nearest local office and people with disabilities or those with significant travel difficulties will no longer be required to attend for their fortnightly claims but will be able to make these by post.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are required to staff the part-time employment office at Bonnybridge; and for how many hours per week.

Mr. Lee: Currently two members of staff are required to attend the part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse at Bonnybridge each Wednesday, when they spend two hours at this office.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the estimated financial saving, to his Department if the proposed closure of the Bonnybridge part-time employment office goes ahead.

Mr. Lee: The estimated financial saving from the closure of Bonnybridge part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse is £950 per annum.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list for each month since its opening, the number of people using the Bonnybridge part-time employment office for use of the freephone employment inquiry service; and what is the cost of this service.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available, as this service is not provided at the part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse in Bonnybridge.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list, for each month since its opening, the number of people using the Bonnybridge part-time employment office for signing-on purposes.

Mr. Lee: The part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse at Bonnybridge opened in 1973. Information on the number of people using the office is no longer available for the months prior to January 1985. The number of people signing as unemployed in each month since January 1985 is given in the table.

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
January	424	416	461	315
February	421	405	453	311
March	455	411	439	242
April	451	430	439	292
May	433	413	380	295
June	433	411	383	295
July	413	423	368	278
August	405	443	345	270
September	420	444	346	242
October	412	420	339	244
November	425	448	341	231
December	402	444	351	246

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list, for each month since its opening, the number of people using the Bonnybridge part-time employment office for the job vacancy notice-board service; how many job vacancies have been notified on the notice-board; and how many have been filled as a result.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available. Bonnybridge is a part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse. Although it has a general noticeboard, it does not display job vacancies. Local job vacancies are notified to the jobcentre in Denny, which is responsible for advertising jobs and submitting people to vacancies.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual cost to his Department of leasing part of Bonnybridge community centre for the part-time employment office at Bonnybridge.

Mr. Lee: The annual cost of leasing part of Bonnybridge community centre for the part-time unemployment benefit office outhouse at Bonnybridge is £260 plus £120 for utilities.

Youth Training

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish, for each area of the Manpower Services Commission—Training Commission the accident statistics for the years 1987 and 1988 for YTS in the form given to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), *Official Report*, 8 April 1987, columns *299-306*.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 1 February 1989]*: Because of the exceptional length of the reply, I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 6 February 1989

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Recycled Materials

74. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he is taking to promote the use of recycled materials.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is pursuing an awareness campaign to encourage industry to consider the benefits of using recycled materials in its production processes. We are holding a series of sector conferences in this field and technical advice for industry is provided through our Warren Spring laboratory. Where appropriate further initiatives will be introduced.

Telecom Advisory Committees

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how the membership of telecom advisory committees is decided.

Mr. Forth: The chairman and members of the four national advisory committees for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, are appointed by the Secretary of State and those of the two specialist committees for the elderly and disabled and for small businesses by the Director General of Telecommunications. In appointing members to the committees the Secretary of State and director general aim to have a balanced membership representing the interests of all telecommunications users and of the special needs of small businesses and the disabled and elderly people.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the role of telecom advisory committees.

Mr. Forth: The common duty of all the advisory committees is to advise the Director General of Telecommunications on telecommunication matters affecting the interests of people which the committee was established to represent. Matters may either be referred to the committee by the director general or the committee may decide to offer advice on its own initiative. The national committees for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, also have a specific role in handling consumer complaints where the consumer has been unable to resolve the matter directly with the industry.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many telecom advisory committees have been established.

Mr. Forth: There are six advisory committees on telecommunications in total. These are made up of four national committees—one for each of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland—and two specialist committees, one to represent the needs of small businesses and one for the disabled and elderly people.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will name the chairpersons of telecom advisory committees and provide a contact address for each.

Mr. Forth: The chairmen and contact address of the advisory committees are as follows:

Committee	*Address*
English Advisory Committee on Telecommunications	Mr. H. R. Hutton, Atlantic House, Holborn Viaduct, London EC1N 2HQ
Welsh Advisory Committee on Telecommunications	Mr. T. D. Lynch, Caradog House, St. Andrews Place, Cardiff CF1 3BE
Scottish Advisory Committee on Telecommunications	Mr. W. K. Begg, Alhambra House, 45 Waterloo Street, Glasgow G2 6AT
Northern Ireland Committee on Telecommunications	Mr. J. J. Eccles, 3rd Floor, Chamber of Commerce House, 22 Great Victoria Street, Belfast BT2 7PU
The Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Disabled and Elderly People (DIEL)	Mr. D. Hobman, Atlantic House Holborn Viaduct London EC1N 2HQ
The Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Small Businesses	Mr. M. Ashton, Atlantic House, Holborn Viaduct, London EC1N 2HQ

GATT Talks

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the result of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade talks in Montreal.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the member for Keighley (Mr. Cryer) on 12 December at column *400*.

Privatisation

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list, for each company or part of company in the aerospace, shipbuilding and motor vehicle businesses privatised since 1979 *(a)* the annual turnover in the year prior to privatisation, *(b)* the value of assets in the year prior to privatisation, *(c)* the number of employers in the year prior to privatisation, *(d)* the approximate total of Government financial assistance in the five years prior to privatisation, and *(e)* a breakdown of the public expenditure costs in terms of capital reconstruction, elimination of debt or guarantees, redundancy and other restructuring, any other items and total receipts stating the year in which they arose.

Mr. Newton: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible and place a copy in the Library.

Ford Sierra (Manufacture)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he estimates would be the effect on Britain's balance of trade and hence on the balance of payments, of a transfer of the manufacture of the Ford Sierra car from Britain to another country.

Mr. Alan Clark: Such an estimate would depend on a large number of variables, including projected consumer demand, the incidence of import substitution, dealer incentive programmes and others. I do not think, therefore, that it would be of tangible value.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Arts Education Services

75. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will allocate funds to offset the loss of local education authority funding to theatre-in-education and other arts education services under sections 33 to 36 of the Education Reform Act.

Mrs. Rumbold: Circular 7/88, issued on 6 September, a copy of which is available in the Library, makes clear that local education authorities will be free to except from delegation the school-related costs of services such as arts education under schemes of local management. Where authorities exercise this discretion, they will continue to fund arts education services directly. Where authorities choose to delegate the costs to schools, the schools themselves will decide whether they wish to continue to support the services.

Heriot Watt

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what Government assistance is being given to establish the private medical laboratory on the Heriot Watt campus at Riccarton in Edinburgh; and which companies are being considered to manage it.

Mr. Jackson: I know of no such proposal.

University Staff

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has recieved from the Association of University Teachers regarding pay increases; and what action he intends to take.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend exchanged correspondence with the Association of University Teachers in August last year, and there has been informal contact since. My right hon. Friend is considering a letter from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Teachers about the pay of academic staff and technicians in the universities.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to alter present Treasury practice which prevents selected university staff in part-time employment who have in the course of the last three years taken a privately funded early retirement scheme from qualifying for reimbursement and redundancy costs if the period of part-time employment exceeds three or four years.

Mr. Jackson: Public funds are provided to meet universities' expenditure on premature retirement compensation where staff retire fully, but the Government do not consider this appropriate where the change is simply from full-time to part-time employment. The rules of the scheme operated by the University Grants Committee have now been appropriately clarified. Contrary to some institutions' fears, this clarification does not have retrospective effect.

Teachers (Pay and Conditions)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what are the average annual earnings of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary state school teachers in each of the European Community countries, Canada, Norway, Sweden, the United States of America and the United Kingdom in their (i) first, (ii) fifth, (iii) tenth and (iv) fifteenth working year for 1987 and 1988;

(2) what are the comparable average weekly working hours of *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary state school teachers in the European Community countries, Canada, Norway, Sweden, the United States of America and the United Kingdom in 1987 and 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: Comparable information is not available for 1987 and 1988. Some information on EC teachers' salaries and conditions in 1985 is published in a detailed report, "The Conditions of Service of Teachers in the European Community", published by the European Commission in 1988 (pages 133 to 160 in particular). A copy is available in the Library.

Computers

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make available copies of the report produced by the National Council for Education Technology on the compatibility of computer hardware and software for local education authorities.

Mr. Butcher: This report was commissioned by the Department to inform the guidance given to local education authorities on microcomputers for educational use in schools. Consideration is being given to how the information contained in the report can be conveyed most effectively to LEAs.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* full details of the educational support grants he made to Lancashire county council in 1987 and 1988 for the purchase of micro computers; and if he will show which of these was capable of running MS-DOS software.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend approved education support grant expenditure by Lancashire LEA on the purchase of microcomputers in 1987-88 and 1988-89 as follows:

Activity	*1987-88 £ thousands*	*1988-89 £ thousands*
IT in NAFE	63·5	—
Micro equipment for FE students with special educational needs	14·0	—
IT in schools	—	267·4

It is for authorities to decide, in consultation with Her Majesty's Inspectorate as appropriate, what machines and software are best suited to their needs. DES guidance to LEAs is that new computers purchased under the IT in Schools programme should offer access to MS-DOS, but this is not mandatory.

Halls of Residence

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether rates paid in respect of

university halls of residence will be reimbursed by the Universities Funding Council, including business rates for university halls of residence, for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Jackson: The Universities Funding Council has yet to decide its approach to this and other funding issues for 1990-91 and subsequently.

AS Courses

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the best information known to him on the availability of AS-level courses in schools and colleges, including the information relating to the variety of courses on offer, and the proportion of A-level students who are also able to follow a course at AS level.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The results of a survey of school pupils and FE college students studying AS-level courses in England from September 1987 and of the courses studied, were published in the Department's statistical bulletin 12/88 last October, a copy of which is available in the Library. This shows that about 4 per cent. of first year A-level students in schools were studying AS levels and that about 15 per cent. of schools were offering these courses. It also provides information on the courses on offer. First indications from a similar survey for September 1988 are that nearly three times as many students and schools are starting and offering AS-level courses. I hope to announce the results of the latest survey shortly.

Community Charge (Scottish Universities)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the University Grants Committee-Universities Funding Council will reimburse Scottish universities in 1989-90 for the standard community charge on vacant flats registered with the accommodation service of universities, as against halls of residence.

Mr. Jackson: The Universities Funding Council will reimburse the standard community charge in 1989-90 in respect of vacant property owned by Scottish universities for the purpose of students.

Media Studies

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many trainee teachers have taken media studies courses in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table gives details, for the past five years, of the number of students recruited to courses of initial teacher training which include media studies.

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
West Glamorgan institute of higher education	—	—	19	36	44
London university institute of education	13	15	13	11	11
Exeter university	12	10	19	20	18

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many *(a)* pupils in secondary schools, *(b)* students in colleges of further education, *(c)* students in polytechnics and *(d)* students in universities take media studies courses;

(2) how many *(a)* secondary schools, *(b)* colleges of further education, *(c)* polytechnics and *(d)* universities offer media studies as part of their curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: Readily available information is as follows:

	Number of pupils/students	*Number*[4]
Secondary schools	na	na
Colleges of further education[1]	2,280	53
Polytechnics[1]	279	5
Universities:		
Undergraduates	[2]124	[3]4
Postgraduates	[2]708	na

na = not available.

[1] England, November 1987. Covers both higher education and further education level courses.

[2] Great Britain, 1987-88. Has wider subject coverage than colleges of further education and polytechnic figures.

[3] United Kingdom institutions offering first degree courses for October 1989 entry.

[4] Institutions with pupils/students on relevant courses.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the teacher training colleges which offer media studies courses.

Mrs. Rumbold: In England and Wales the West Glamorgan institute of higher education and London university institute of higher education offer initial teacher training courses with main subject specialisms entitled, respectively, "literature and media studies", and "English and media studies". Exeter university offers "media studies" as a second subject specialism.

Under-Fives

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the annual expenditure by central and local government on education for the under-fives for each year from 1971 to 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: The table below shows annual recurrent spending by local authorities on under-fives since 1976-77. These figures include expenditure supported by grants from central Government which cannot be separately identified. Figures on a comparable basis before 1976-77 are not available.

Recurrent local authority spending on under fives

	Spending £ million cash	*Index from 1976-77*
1976-77	127	100·0
1977-78	128	100·8
1978-79	146	115·0
1979-80	177	139·4
1980-81	222	174·8
1981-82	241	189·8
1982-83	274	215·7
1983-84	296	233·1
1984-85	331	260·6
1985-86	350	275·6
1986-87	397	312·6

	Spending £ million cash	Index from 1976-77
1987-88[1]	443	348·8
1988-89[1]	495	389·8

[1] Provisional outturn figures.

Institute of Terrestial Ecology

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time scientific, administrative and other staff were employed at the Institute of Terrestial Ecology research station at Bangor and at the research vessel support service at Barry in each of the years 1979 to 1988; and what figures are projected for 1989.

Mr. Jackson: The information on staffing is as follows:

ITE Bangor—staff

	Science	Administration	Part-time
1979	32	12	(1)
1980	33	10	(1)
1981	32	11	(2)
1982	31	11	(2)
1983	33	10	(2)
1984	33	10	(2)
1985	33	9	(2)
1986	34	9	(2)
1987	27	9	(1)
1988	27	7	(1)
1989	[1]21	5	(1)

[1] Five staff transferred to ITE Monks Wood.

RVS Barry—staff

	Science	Administration	Ships crew	Other	Total
1981	32	17·0	128	29·0	206·0
1982	32	17·0	132	29·0	210·0
1983	34	16·0	116	30·5	196·5
1984	32	15·5	127	31·5	206·0
1985	30	14·5	98	28·0	170·5
1986	34	1·0	104	26·0	165·0
1987	31	4·0	106	29·0	170·0
1988	29	3·0	106	27·0	165·0
[1]1989					

[1] No significant change expected.

A breakdown of full- and part-time staff, and separate figures for Barry before 1981, are not available.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what budget his Department has allocated *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* adjusted to today's prices to the Institute of Terrestial Ecology research station at Bangor for each of the years 1979 to 1988; and what figure is projected for 1989.

Mr. Jackson: Information in the form requested is not immediately available and I shall write to the hon. Member.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what factors he has taken into account in considering the budget to the Natural Environment Research Council for 1989; and what indications he has given to that council of the purpose of any budget increase.

Mr. Jackson: In considering the level of grant-in-aid to the Natural Environment Research Council in 1989, my right hon. Friend will take account of advice from the council, the Advisory Board for Research Councils, and other representations that he has received. A detailed announcement will be made shortly.

Discovery (Refit)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he estimates to be the cost of a major refit for the Natural Environment Research Council vessel Discovery at today's prices; what allowance he has made for funding such a refit in whole or in part in the coming financial year; and when he anticipates that refit may commence.

Mr. Jackson: The total cost of a major refit for the RRS Discovery was estimated by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils in their advice published in July 1988 as about £10 million at current prices. Details of the grant-in-aid to the Natural Environment Research Council for the period 1989-90 to 1991-92 will be announced shortly. It will be for the NERC to determine its priorities, both in 1989 and later years, in the light of the available resources.

Antarctic

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the stated increase in the Natural Environment Research Council's budget for 1989 has been allocated to the Antarctic survey based in the Falklands.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend announced on 8 November (*Official Report*, columns 134-5) an additional £10 million allocation to the British Antarctic survey in 1989-90 for a new BAS airstrip and rebuilding the Halley station. Details of the overall grant-in-aid to the Natural Environment Research Council will be announced shortly.

Environmental Research Vessels

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what facilities currently exist at Southampton for the support of environmental research vessels; and how many staff are employed there.

Mr. Jackson: Southampton has a deep-water port that is well suited to environment research vessels. I understand that support facilities and staff for their proposed oceanographic centre would be organised by the Natural Environment Research Council.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Motions

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Lord President of the Council on how many days each of the motions tabled by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) entitled *(a)* Procedure, *(b)* Sittings of the House and *(c)* Members' Facilities has appeared in the Remaining Orders of the Day and Notices of Motions during the parliamentary Sessions (i) 1987-88 and (ii) 1988-89.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Session 1987-88

	Number
(a) Procedure	69
(b) Sittings	69

Session 1988-89

	Number
(a) Procedure	33
(b) Sittings	33
(c) Facilities	25

Up to and including 3 February 1989.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the current daily cost of printing on the Remaining Orders of the Day and Notices of Motions the motions in the name of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) entitled *(a)* Procedure, *(b)* Sittings of the House and *(c)* Members' Facilities.

Mr. Wakeham: Her Majesty's Stationery Office estimates that the current daily printing cost of the three motions totals £145.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times since 1959 each signatory to the European convention on human rights has been found to be in violation of the convention by *(a)* the European Court of Human Rights and *(b)* the Committee of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall be writing to the hon. Member.

Soviet Union (Visits)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on holding briefings for hon. Members planning to visit the Soviet Union.

Mr. Eggar: We actively encourage hon. Members to contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office before and after their overseas visits. We welcome the opportunity to offer written and oral briefing when hon. Members would find this useful.

Caribbean Territories

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the recent study by Coopers and Lybrand of the development of the offshore financial sectors in the Turks and Caicos Islands, there is any intention to extend this scrutiny to other dependent territories in the Caribbean.

Mr. Eggar: After consultation with the dependent territory Governments concerned, Coopers and Lybrand, acting as financial consultants to Her Majesty's Government, have been appointed to carry out a review covering the regulation of the offshore financial sectors in Anguilla, Montserrat, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands. The terms of reference for this consultancy will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of assaults on prison officers in each of the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available. The table shows the number of offences of gross personal violence to a prison officer, or of assault on a prison officer, or of attempts to commit such offences, of which inmates were found guilty on adjudication in each of the years 1985-87. Figures for 1988 are not yet available.

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Gross personal violence	17	12	10
Attempt to commit gross personal violence	125	37	17
Assault	1,216	1,221	1,149
Attempted assault	117	158	151

Animal Experiments

Mr. Tom Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animals were used in experiments either for medicine or cosmetics in each of the last three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest available information is published in "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals Great Britain 1987" (Cm. 515). Information for medicine for 1985 to 1987 is given in table 20 and for cosmetics for 1987 in table 3. Information on experiments for cosmetics for earlier years is contained in table 15 of "Statistics of Experiments on Living Animals Great Britain 1986" (Cm. 187). Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Broadcasting (Deaf People)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in finalising his plans for broadcasting in the 1990s, he will make it his policy to take full account of the resolution of the Scottish Association for the Deaf, of which he will have a copy.

Mr. Renton: Careful account will be taken of all the comments we receive on the broadcasting White Paper (Cm. 517) including all representations made on behalf of those with impaired hearing.

Probation Committees

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many area probation committees employ a public relations consultant; and what is the cost of providing this service.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Immigration

Mr. Holland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish details of the number of port refusals made at each of the major ports of entry, by week for the months of October, November and December 1988 and the first three weeks of January 1989.

Mr. Renton: The figures for those initially refused entry at the major ports are given in the table:

Refusals at the Major Ports

	Terminal 1	*Terminal 2*	*Terminal 3*	*Terminal 4*	*Gatwick South*	*Gatwick North*	*Dover*	*Total*
Week ending								
8 October 1988	37	88	69	76	47	27	99	443
15 October 1988	44	86	72	87	73	22	73	457
22 October 1988	41	71	51	65	53	21	73	375
29 October 1988	34	93	61	72	34	28	61	383
5 November 1988	40	83	49	57	48	25	75	377
12 November 1988	31	82	88	53	56	30	58	398
19 November 1988	35	86	61	52	45	24	45	348
26 November 1988	27	78	57	69	49	30	55	365
3 December 1988	33	74	82	48	45	26	39	347
10 December 1988	39	86	58	63	50	35	44	375
17 December 1988	46	88	70	42	46	32	62	386
Fortnight ending								
Week ending								
31 December 1988	113	224	143	131	175	82	198	1,066
7 January 1989	51	72	54	26	62	31	46	342
14 January 1989	28	88	37	25	63	41	46	328
21 January 1989	26	87	48	22	59	28	46	316
Total	625	1,386	1,000	888	905	482	1,020	6,306

Mr. Holland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish details of *(a)* the number of deferrals of removal requested by hon. Members of this House and *(b)* the number granted, by week for the months of October, November and December 1988, and the first three weeks of January 1989.

Mr. Renton: Details of the number of deferrals of removal granted in the months of October, November and December 1988 are as follows:

	Number
October	175
November	153
December	150

Weekly totals for this period are not readily available. There are no central records of the number of deferrals of removal requested by hon. Members during this period.

As to the number of requests for deferral of removal in the first three weeks of January 1989, I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 16 January to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) at column 6.

Passports

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of issuing passports in each of the past 10 years; and what was the annual revenue received in each of these years.

Mr. Renton: The table below shows the available information for the financial years 1981-82—1988-89 covering;

(a) the cost of issuing standard United Kingdom passports in the United Kingdom and at United Kingdom consular posts overseas, and;

(b) the cost of issuing British visitor's passports, mainly at Crown post offices in Great Britain,

together with the revenue accruing from the issue of such passports.

Information for earlier years is not readily available.

	(a) Standard passports		*(b) British visitors' passports*	
	Issuing costs £ million	*Revenue £ million*	*Issuing costs £ million*	*Revenue £ million*
1988-89[1]	33·7	44·6	9·0	17·7
1987-88	31·7	38·7	9·4	17·7
1986-87	26·5	39·9	10·2	14·9
1985-86	25·6	34·7	9·3	11·8
1984-85	25·9	33·8	8·2	12·4
1983-84	14·6	25·3	8·4	8·5
1982-83	14·8	22·3	7·7	7·7
1981-82	12·8	19·8	7·0	9·9

[1] Provisional.

Notes:

1. Figures under *(a)* for 1981-82 to 1983-84 *exclude* overseas costs and revenues.

2. Revenues include an element for non fee-bearing Consular services available to United Kingdom passport holders abroad.

Identity Cards

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has as to the cost of establishing and maintaining a national identity card system for every British citizen aged 12 years or over.

Mr. John Patten: The cost would depend on the administrative details of the system and the checks required before an identity card was issued. If a similar system was operated to that used for issuing passports the unit costs could be about £7·50. The costs (excluding initial capital costs) of issuing identity cards to all British citizens aged 12 or over would then be around £350 million. The annual running cost would depend upon the number of new card holders applying each year, the frequency with which cards had to be renewed, and whether card holders had to notify changes of address. It would probably be between £50 million and £100 million.

Voting Rights

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce legislation to extend the period of eligibility for voting rights for United Kingdom citizens living abroad.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 2 February 1989, at column *383*.

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions searches of premises have been authorised by a superintendent of police under the provisions of paragraph 4(4) of schedule 3 to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, and the similar provisions in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 and 1976.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Searches have been authorised under these provisions on nine occasions in England and Wales. I understand from my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State that such searches have been authorised on five occasions in Scotland and on no occasion in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received a report from the Viscount Colville of Culross QC on the operation in 1988 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions Act) 1984.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have received the report from Viscount Colville on the operation in 1988 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 and placed copies in the Library.

Street Offences (London)

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offences are recorded as having occurred on the streets in each of the Chelsea, Fulham, Tottenham and Wimbledon Metropolitan police districts in each of the weeks since 1 August 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* The available information relates to offences of street robbery of personal property and theft from the person (snatches) and is given in the following table.

Street robbery of personal property and theft from the person (snatches) recorded by the police in certain areas of the Metropolitan police district

Number of offences

	Chelsea	*Fulham*	*Tottenham*	*Wimbledon*
1987				
August	12	17	108	7
September	16	24	96	8
October	13	18	114	11
November	3	12	64	9
December	12	12	79	12
1988				
January	6	6	54	10
February	12	10	1	10
March	19	5	129	13
April	8	14	64	6
May	4	8	2	11
June	2	13	138	14
July	6	9	54	10
August	11	10	99	8
September	6	31	59	12
October	19	20	2	11
November	6	6	102	17

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Crop Substitution

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total value of projects aided by his Department to encourage crop substitution in the fight against the illegal trade in drugs.

Mr. Chris Patten: We are currently financing projects to encourage crop substitution to a value of about £7 million. In addition, we provide training and other support for drugs control organisations in developing countries and we contribute to several multilateral aid agencies whose programmes include projects which help diversify income-earning opportunities in drug-producing areas.

Development and Aid Budget

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for the development and aid budget, expressed as a percentage of gross national product.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest available figure for United Kingdom net official development assistance expressed as a percentage of gross national product is 0·28 per cent. in 1987.

UNICEF

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase governmental contributions to UNICEF's general resource funding to £12·5 million; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I propose to increase Her Majesty's Government's contribution to UNICEF's general resources to £8 million in the next financial year.

Developing Countries (Nationalised Industries)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the terms of reference of the exercise undertaken on gathering information in relation to possible assistance with the privatisation of nationalised industries in the developing world.

Mr. Chris Patten: Diplomatic missions were asked to try to identify possible opportunities for assisting developing countries with their promotion of private sector development, including privatisation. They were also asked to look for chances of co-operating on such projects with USAID.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Poultry and Eggs

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many poultry have been killed, and how many eggs have been destroyed, following the recent publicity about salmonella diseases since 1 December 1988; what has been the cost of compensation to producers in Northern Ireland; if the scheme for compensation is being continued; and if he will make a statement about the present state of the poultry and egg industries and their future prospects.

Mr. Viggers: Under the Slaughter of Hens (Northern Ireland) Scheme and the Egg Industry (Northern Ireland) Scheme 50,663 hens have been slaughtered and 10,230,120 eggs had been destroyed in Northern Ireland up to 26 January at a compensation cost of £333,837. Slaughtering of hens has been completed. Eggs for which applications were submitted by 17 January, the closing date, are still being destroyed. The Government have no plans to extend either scheme.

Fish Farming

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what applications have been made for fish farming developments around the Antrim coast; what approvals have been given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: There have been three applications; two have been granted consent to discharge under the Water Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 of which one has also been given a fish culture licence under the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966. The most recent application is still under consideration.

Mr Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has had concerning fish farming developments, and their impact on Glenarm and Red bay.

Mr. Viggers: Besides representation by the developers a total of 24 letters and submissions from 13 different groups and individuals have been received. The Northern Ireland Ministers for Agriculture and Environment jointly met a delegation comprising most of the parties who have made representations against these salmon farming developments.

RUC (Deaths)

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve were killed as a result of road traffic accidents during 1988; and how many were killed by terrorists in the same period.

Mr. Ian Stewart: During 1988 11 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserve were killed in road traffic accidents and six were killed by terrorists.

Prisons

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are currently being held in each prison in the province, and in total; and how many prison officers are currently in each prison in the Province, and in total.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As at 1 February 1989, there was a total of 1,780 prisoners in prison establishments in Northern Ireland, including 272 untried prisoners. The following is a breakdown by establishment:

	Number
Her Majesty's Prison, Belfast	[1]521
Her Majesty's Prison, Maghaberry	[2]253
Her Majesty's Prison, Magilligan	285
Her Majesty's Prison, Maze	578
Her Majesty's Young Offender's Centre	143

[1] Includes 264 untried prisoners.
[2] Includes eight untried prisoners.

As at 31 January 1989, there was a total of 3,166 prison staff in prison establishments in Northern Ireland. This figure includes staff serving at the prison service college and headquarters. The following is a breakdown by establishment.

	Number
Her Majesty's Prison, Belfast	662
Her Majesty's Prison, Maghaberry	483
Her Majesty's Prison, Magilligan	468
Her Majesty's Prison, Maze	1,294
Her Majesty's Young Offenders Centre	223
Prison Service College	26
Headquarters	10

Special Branch

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much from the total budget was allocated to special branch for each year from 1979 to the current date.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* The allocation of expenditure on special branch activities is a matter for the Chief Constable. In the particular operational circumstances of Northern Ireland this information is confidential.

Sinn Fein Councillors (Lisburn)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate the approximate sums and the hours of police time it has taken to provide protection for the Sinn Fein councillors at meetings of Lisburn district council in 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 17 January 1989]:* No. During 1988 police were not detailed to protect individual councillors or specific groups within Lisburn district council.

PRIME MINISTER

Rolls-Royce

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what are the implications for the Government's privatisation proposals of the European Commission's decision of 21 December 1988 to initiate proceedings against the Government over the infringement of competition policy in the case of the flotation of Rolls-Royce.

The Prime Minister: None. There is no parallel with the Government's proposals for water and electricity privatisation.

WALES

Schizophrenia

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients in Wales suffering from schizophrenia and discharged from hospital in 1986 and 1987 after a second or subsequent admission went *(a)* to their own homes, *(b)* to local authority residential accommodation, *(c)* to live with a relative elsewhere, *(d)* to private residential accommodation, *(e)* to residential accommodation provided by voluntary bodies and *(f)* to other accommodation.

Mr. Grist: Information in the form requested is not available. Details of after-care arrangements for discharged patients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia are as follows:

Discharges, after a second or subsequent admission

	1986	1987
Local authority residential accommodation	18	20
Psychiatric hospitals	87	87
Non-psychiatric hospitals	20	24
Mental nursing homes	—	2
Convalescent or after-care home	18	23
Other forms of after-care[1]	1,460	1,511
Total	1,603	1,667

[1] Including for example, that provided by GP's, out-patient departments and those not requiring further treatment.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients suffering from schizophrenia and discharged from Welsh hospitals in 1986 and 1987 after a first admission went *(a)* to their own homes, *(b)* to local authority residential accommodation, *(c)* to live in with a relative elsewhere, *(d)* to private residential accommodation, *(e)* to residential accommodation provided by voluntary bodies and *(f)* to other accommodation.

Mr. Grist: Information in the form requested is not available. Details of after-care arrangements for discharged patients with a diagnosis of schizophrenia are shown in the following table:

Discharges, after first admission

	1986	1987
Local authority residential accommodation	—	—
Psychiatric hospitals	14	9
Non-psychiatric hospitals	1	—
Mental nursing homes	—	—
Convalescent or after-care home	1	2
Other forms of after-care[1]	201	153
Total	217	164

[1] Including, for example, that provided by GPs, out-patient departments, and those not requiring further treatment.

Bee Keepers

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many bee keepers there are in each county in Wales; and what was the number of bee keepers during each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

County	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	[1]1988
Clwyd	365	334	364	343	336	320
Dyfed	1,021	1,065	1,088	1,087	1,048	993
Gwent	335	93	139	151	220	204
Gwynedd	482	477	466	414	462	415
Powys	497	492	490	487	479	456
Mid Glamorgan	107	84	34	32	60	89
South Glamorgan	109	96	48	55	90	103
West Glamorgan	138	103	64	53	115	111
Total	3,054	2,744	2,693	2,622	2,810	2,691

[1] Provisional.

Abattoirs

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many abattoirs there are in each county in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of abattoirs by county is as follows:

	Number
Clwyd	16
Dyfed	12
Gwent	4
Gwynedd	9
Mid Glamorgan	5
Powys	11
South Glamorgan	—
West Glamorgan	6

Group Practices

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many group practices there are in Wales, by region.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the following table:

Group practices as at 1 October 1987

Family practitioner committee	Number
Clwyd	37
Dyfed	44
Gwent	44
Gwynedd	35
Mid Glamorgan	47
Powys	15
South Glamorgan	47
West Glamorgan	42

General Practitioners

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of National Health Service general practitioners in Wales for each year from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Grist: The number of general medical practitioners in Wales is given in the table. Figures for 1988 are not yet available.

Unrestricted principals as at 1 October

	Number
1979	1,339
1980	1,372
1981	1,397
1982	1,431

	Number
1983	1,465
1984	1,492
1985	1,523
1986	1,549
1987	1,587

Regional Health Authorities

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the services provided by the Welsh regional health authorities.

Mr. Grist: There are no regional health authorities in Wales. However, certain services which to be clinically effective and economically viable need to be provided to a population which is greater than that of a health district are designated as regional services by the Welsh Office. The responsibility for planning their capacity and location and for the funding of approved developments rests with my right hon. Friend, whilst the district health authorities which host the regional services are responsible for their operational management.

The services presently designated as regional are:

Assay services
Blood transfusion service
Bone marrow transplantation
Burns, plastic and maxillo-facial surgery
Invasive cardiology and cardiac surgery
Medical genetics
Perinatel intensive care
Pharmaceutical quality control services
Poisons information service
Radiotherapy and medical oncology
Forensic psychiatry
Renal dialysis for end-stage renal failure
Renal transplantation
Spinal injury rehabilitation
Thoracic surgery
Welsh Hearing Institute

The catchment areas of these services vary.

Hospitals (Beds)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the hospitals in each Welsh district health authority with 250 beds or more.

Mr. Ian Grist: The following hospitals had 250 beds or more on 30 September 1988.

Health authority/hospital

Clwyd
North Wales
Ysbyty Glan Clwyd
Ysbyty Maelor

East Dyfed
Bronglais
St. David's
West Wales General

Gwent
Llanfrechfa Grange
Nevill Hall
Pen-y-Fal
Royal Gwent
St. Cadoc's
St. Woolos

Gwynedd
Bryn Y Neuadd
Ysbyty Gwynedd

Mid Glamorgan
East Glamorgan
Glanrhyd
Hensol
Parc
Prince Charles
Princess of Wales

Pembrokeshire
Withybush

Powys
Mid Wales

South Glamorgan
Cardiff Royal Infirmary
Ely
Llandough
University Hospital of Wales
Whitchurch

West Glamorgan
Cefn Coed
Morriston
Neath General
Singleton

Resource Management Initiative

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which Welsh hospitals are involved in the resource management initiative and whether any will be joining the initiative in the next year.

Mr. Grist: Acute hospitals in the Clwyd North unit will be piloting a resource management system based on an order communications network, following initial work in West Glamorgan health authority. Acute hospitals in West Glamorgan are also still involved in the medical records, diagnosis related group (DRG) coding, and organisational development aspects of the initiative; and the authority is currently considering the possibility of testing a "bolt-together" resource management system along the lines of those currently being piloted at various sites in England. Other Welsh authorities have expressed interest in acquiring a resource management capability at the earliest opportunity; and the Government's intention, as noted in the White Paper "Working for Patients", is to ensure that the requisite information systems are in place throughout Wales by 1992.

NHS Land

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much undeveloped land is owned by the National Health Service in Wales; and if he will list those sites of 10 acres or more.

Mr. Grist: The information is not recorded in the form requested. Currently the NHS in Wales owns some 358·5 acres of land which it no longer needs. This land, which will be sold at the best possible price for the benefit of health care in Wales, includes plots of 10 acres or more at the following sites:—

Aberdare general hospital, Aberdare
Bronllys hospital, Brecon
Bryn-y-Neuadd hospital, Llanfairfechan
Mid Wales hospital, Talgarth
Parc Beck nurses home, Swansea
St. Cadoc's hospital, Caerleon
Whitchurch hospital, Cardiff
William Nicholl home, Cardiff

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much land has been sold, and for how much in 1987-88 prices, by the National Health Service in Wales, in each year from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the following table:

Financial year	*Acreage sold*	*Proceeds of sale (1987-88 prices) £000*
1979-80	10·1	0·33
1980-81	148·5	1·02
1981-82	205·8	0·28
1982-83	740·9	1·77
1983-84	52·5	0·95
1984-85	11·1	1·55
1985-86	28·0	1·78
1986-87	76·4	2·88
1987-88	9·4	1·73

Source: NHS Wales Land Sales 1979-80 to 1987-88.

M4 (Storm Damage)

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from Gwent county council concerning damage caused to the M4 following storm damage to manhole covers; and when he proposes to carry out the remedial work necessary to repair the damage.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No damage has been caused to the M4 motorway by the existing drainage system although there have been isolated instances of manhole covers becoming dislodged in exceptionally heavy rainfall conditions.

A scheme to remove the manholes from the M4 carriageway to prevent further incidents has been designed in conjunction with Gwent county council and, subject to the availability of finance, work is planned to start in 1989-90.

Farm Workers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farmworkers were employed in each county in Wales in June 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information for June 1988 is not yet available. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman when the county figures are available.

ENERGY

North Sea Oil and Gas

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what exploration activity for oil and gas has taken place in the firth of Clyde in each of the past 10 years; if he is able to state the conclusions reached on the commercial potential of any finds; and if he will make a statement on the latest position.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Exploration for oil and gas in the firth of Clyde had been limited to the acquisition of seismic data in 1981, 1982, 1984 and 1985, but no wells have been drilled to date in the firth of Clyde.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total value of North sea oil revenues to the United Kingdom Treasury in the period 1978 to 1988.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury on 24 January to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) at column *488*.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Parkinson: In the 1987-88 financial year, the most recent for which full figures are available, the Department of Energy represented Her Majesty's Government on the following international organisations:

	Contribution £
International Energy Agency	524,000
International Atomic Energy Agency	4,527,000
Nuclear Energy Agency	270,000

Nuclear Power (Publicity)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total funding of the current publicity campaign by the nuclear electricity information group; and what contribution is being made to that campaign from his Department's budget.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority contributes to the nuclear electricity information group's costs using funds provided by my Department through the public information programme letter. I understand that the authority's contribution to the current nuclear electricity information group advertising campaign is £42,500. The total level of funding of this campaign is a matter for the nuclear electricity information group.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has made any representations to British Nuclear Fuels concerning inaccuracies in its recent publicity material.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I have made no such representations.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give *(a)* the original design rating, *(b)* the cumulative average load factor and *(c)* the present actual annual load factor of each nuclear power station operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if he will project the efficiency of Sizewell B in the same terms on the basis of the actual performance of the board's existing nuclear plant.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board and I have asked the chairman of the board to write to the hon. Member.

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will specify each donation made by his Department in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Parkinson: The Department of Energy has made one donation in response to public appeals for financial aid since financial year 1979-80. This was a donation of £1 million to the Piper Alpha disaster fund in 1988-89.

Gas Reserves

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest estimates for natural gas reserves in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The latest estimates for remaining recoverable natural gas reserves within the United Kingdom and its continental shelf were published in the 1988 Brown Book (my Department's report to Parliament on the development of United Kingdom oil and gas resources) and lay in the range 644 to 1,950 billion cubic metres.

The figures for remaining recoverable gas reserves for end 1988 will be published in the 1989 Brown Book in April; they are not yet available.

Fiddlers Ferry

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects flue gas desulphurisation equipment to be fitted at Fiddlers Ferry power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board and its successors will decide the order in which large coal-fired power stations should be retrofitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment in order to meet their share of the United Kingdom's commitment to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions. I expect to receive a planning application for the next plant shortly.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the most up-to-date cost in the present and next financial year of the cost of privatisation of the electricity supply industry to each of the 12 area boards and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Expenditure incurred in preparing for privatisation is a matter for the individual boards concerned.

British Coal (Trading Margins)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has yet fully assessed the financial implications of the squeeze on British Coal's trading margins discussed in the recent Public Expenditure White Paper, Cm. 606.

Mr. Parkinson: The projections set out in Cm. 606 assumed breakeven in 1988-89 and steadily growing profitability thereafter. External finance requirements were set as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	750
1989-90	560
1990-91	385
1991-92	273

However, subsequent negotiations with the CEGB and other major customers have resulted in a price freeze. This, together with the effect of higher cost inflation than expected, loss of output due both to geological difficulties and to industrial relations problems, mainly in Yorkshire, and the reduction in sales caused by the recent mild weather have caused the industry's trading position to deteriorate. As a consequence the corporation's operating profit in 1988-89 is likely to be reduced by some £50 million to about £450 million.

The corporation is responding firmly to these pressures by accelerating the restructuring of its operations into 1988-89 and the first half of 1989-90, by shedding unprofitable business in non-core markets, and by further reduction of its capital requirements over the period to 1991-92. While these actions should lead to a more profitable industry in the future, there is nevertheless an adverse short-term effect on the corporation's bottom line result because of additional restructuring costs and terminal depreciation. This together with the lower operating profits and a higher interest charge will lead to an overall loss for 1988-89 of around £100 million. The adverse market factors which have affected operating profit and the bottom line in the current year will have an even greater effect on British Coal's outlook for 1989-90. The industry is planning at least to sustain the level of operating profit in 1989-90; however, after taking account of significantly higher restructuring and terminal depreciation costs, and interest charges, a further overall loss is expected.

The corporation's external finance requirements are now projected as follows:

	£ million
1988-89	850
1989-90	720
1990-91	335
1991-92	223

I am accordingly raising the corporation's external financing limits for 1988-89 and 1989-90 to £850 million and £720 million respectively. These increases will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. The capital allocations for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are being reduced from £650 million and £575 million to £600 million and £550 million respectively. British Coal's temporary borrowing limit is being increased from £1,800 million to £2,050 million immediately and further increased to £2,500 million from the beginning of 1989-90. A Supplementary Estimate for additional voted loans to meet the extra financing requirements in 1988-89 will shortly be laid before the House.

Coal Mining

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what percentage of coal mining face-workers are mechanically transported underground from the shaft to the coal face;

(2) what percentage of British coal is *(a)* cut, *(b)* conveyed and *(c)* cleaned by mechanical means.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for British Coal and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

11. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to assist with child care costs recipients of income support who wish to take employment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. Such costs are not disregarded in housing benefit and family credit. It would be inequitable to allow a concession for those in part-time work when none is available to those in full-time work. We have said that we will monitor the new earnings rule in income support and consider what changes, if any, are necessary in the light of its operation.

Pensions and Earnings

13. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he is considering restoring the index link between pensions and earnings.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to restore the link between pensions and earnings. The key factor in considering pensioners' incomes is the total net income available. Our policies of protecting basic pension against price increases, ensuring that income from savings keeps its value, and encouraging the growth of occupational pensions have resulted in a 23 per cent. real terms increase in pensioners average total net incomes between 1979 and 1986.

18. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate how much has been saved by abolishing the earnings link in pensions and linking it to the cost of living.

Mr. Scott: The additional public expenditure that would be needed in 1988-89 to uprate retirement pensions in line with earnings would be £3·7 billion.

Child Benefit

14. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish details of child benefit payments paid by the United Kingdom and other European Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: We have every reason to be proud of our record of recognising the extra costs of providing for children. Our provision for and recognition of these costs compares very favourably with that of other EC countries.

For a two-parent family with one child under two the United Kingdom stands ahead of every other member state in its child benefit payments. In addition, for a two-parent family with two children under six the United Kingdom ranks third. The details that my hon. Friend is seeking are given in my Department's publication, "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities (Position at 1 January 1988)", a copy of which is in the Library.

Care of the Elderly

15. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual cost to his Department of care in the community for the elderly living in their own homes as an alternative to residential care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Within Government the lead responsibility for community care rests with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health. Of course, many elderly people are helped to live in their own homes by a range of social security benefits such as attendance allowance, invalid care allowance and income support, as well as by payments from the independent living fund and the social fund.

Family Credit

16. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest average length of time taken to process applications for family credit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have reduced the average length of time from 22·9 working days in November to 21·7 days in January. Of that only 5·5 days was for work within family credit branch. The remaining 16·2 days were taken up by waiting for responses to enquiries, mainly from employers.

29. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding the take-up of family credit.

38. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further measures he is considering to increase the take-up of family credit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have received very few representations about family credit take-up from outside this House, where there has been a concentration on the number of people receiving the benefit. There has been less recognition of the fact that expenditure is running above the levels we originally estimated, which indicates that families who most need the benefit are getting it. The average award is over £25 a week, and I am sure that family credit is welcomed by the quarter of a million families currently receiving it.

We are planning a major campaign, to include television, to coincide with the uprating of family credit in April. The claim form is being revised and a new range of publicity material is being prepared. Our regional information teams will continue to raise awareness of family credit through the local media and by talking to employers, trade unions and others, especially to make clear the levels of income at which it can be paid.

Departmental Spending

17. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what amount spending by his Department on pensions and related benefits is forecast to increase in real terms in 1989 over 1988.

Mr. Scott: The details of expenditure published in the Department's chapter of the 1989 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 615) show that real terms spending on pensions and other benefits for the elderly is planned to be

over £500 million higher in 1989-90 than in the current year. In addition, we announced last November a package of help to poorer, older pensioners from October 1989 worth nearly £100 million in 1989-90 and almost £200 million in a full year.

These increases mean that social security expenditure on the elderly is forecast to rise by 2·7 per cent. in real terms between 1988-89 and 1989-90, at a time when the number of pensioners will rise by less than one half of one per cent.

16 and 17-Year-Olds (Financial Support)

19. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on financial support available to 16 and 17-year-olds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are monitoring the effects of the reformed social security structure on all groups, including 16 to 17-year-olds. This monitoring is now in progress.

Disability Benefit

20. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the number of people receiving disability benefits has changed since 1978-79.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) earlier today.

Family Credit

21. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families in receipt of family credit reside in London; and what is the estimated number of families in that area who would be entitled to family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We plan to make information about numbers of family credit claimants in particular areas available shortly. It is not possible to estimate the eligible population in these particular areas.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing the family credit ceilings in respect of 1989-90, for each of the following *(a)* a married couple with one child under five years, *(b)* a married couple with two children under 11 years, *(c)* a married couple with two children 11 to 15 years, *(d)* a married couple with three children under 11 years, *(e)* a married couple with three children aged 11, 13 and 15 years, *(f)* a married couple with two children under 11 years and two children between 11 and 15 years and *(g)* a married couple with one child under 11 years and one child aged 11 to 15 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provided that the family has no more than £3,000 capital, family credit of 50p a week or more will be payable on net income up to the levels shown in the following table, whether the family has one parent or two. In assessing net income, child benefit and one parent benefit are disregarded.

Family	*Net income* £
(a) One child under 5 (or under 11)	112·51
(b) Two children under 11	122·94
(c) Two children over 11 but under 16	138·94
(d) Three children under 11	133·37
(e) Three children aged 11, 13 and 15 (ie over 11 but under 16)	157·37
(f) Two children under 11 and two children over 11 but under 16	159·80
(g) One child under 11 and one child over 11 but under 16	130·94

Fraud

22. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he is doing to reduce social security fraud.

Mr. Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) earlier today.

Unemployment Benefit, Coventry

23. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average period for which people claiming unemployment benefit in Coventry have received reduced benefits because their unemployment has been termed voluntary.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

Mobility Allowance

24. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he proposes to increase the age of eligibility for application for mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: This is one of the questions that we shall be considering in the light of the full results of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys disability surveys.

Social Fund

25. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Halifax have claimed, and how many have received, a crisis loan from the social fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information on the numbers by month of applications processed for social fund crisis loans together with the number and value of awards made is available in the Library.

26. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many local offices are currently running ahead of their social fund limits for the current financial year; and how many have exceeded those limits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Individual offices may from time to time exceed their anticipated expenditure for the year to date, but there are no indications that any office will be unable to manage its yearly budget allocation. No local office has exceeded its social fund allocation for 1988-89.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the expenditure to date in respect of social fund community care grants, itemised by the amount awarded under Secretary of State direction (i) 4(a)(i), (ii) 4(a)(ii), (iii) 4(a)(iii) and (iv) 4(b).

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. Information is collected

by application purpose and client group. Expenditure on community care grants at the end of December is provisionally calculated at £22·8 million of which £1·15 million was paid for travelling expenses under direction 4(b).

Relocation

27. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his reasons for relocating social security office work out of London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) and for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) earlier today.

31. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money will be saved by his Department due to relocation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are making a significant initial investment in our project to relocate some of the work from some London social security offices, but from 1992-93 we expect to save £4 million per year. The net present value of the project over 20 years is £16 million.

33. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning the future of his Department's offices in inner-city areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since we published "The Business of Service" report in June 1988, we have received about 50 representations concerning our proposals to move some work out of some London offices. Most of these, however, were based on the mistaken belief that we were planning to close offices in London. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are planning to improve our network of offices in London.

36. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for the reorganisation of the offices of his Department.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: For our plans for relocating some work from some London local social security offices, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on 16 January, at columns *44-45*.

A team of officials is considering options for moving some headquarters work out of London, and we shall make a full announcement of our conclusions in due course.

43. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many jobs will be involved in the relocation of work from social security offices in London to other parts of the United Kingdom; and when he expects the relocation to be complete.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As a direct result of the project to move some work from some London social security offices, we shall be creating 430 jobs in Glasgow, 350 in Belfast and 260 in Ashton-in-Makerfield, near Wigan. Staff savings in London will be approximately 1,200. We expect that the transfer of work involved in this project will be complete by October 1991.

44. **Mr. Robert B. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how relocation of social security office work out of London will affect his social security staff.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Relocating some work out of 21 London social security local offices is good news for staff. We are creating more than 1,000 high-quality permanent jobs in the regions; we are taking pressure off our London staff so that they will be able to offer a better face-to-face service and so get more satisfaction from their jobs; staff in London and in the new social security centres will have a better working environment; and, since the project is being phased over more than two years, we see no need whatever for staff redundancies in London.

Service to the Public

28. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he is doing to improve the service to social security claimants.

39. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has that his Department's local benefit payment offices are giving a better service to the public as a result of recent publicity.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The social security reforms which were introduced last April to make the benefit system easier to understand and to operate have led to real improvements in local office service standards. For example, the average time taken to clear income support claims in 1988-89 has been five days compared with six days the previous year, and there has been a substantial fall in average error rates from 11·6 per cent. in 1987-88 to 9·6 per cent. in the year to date. In addition, plans are in hand to tackle individual problem areas, such as some inner London offices, by relocating some of the work to parts of the country where it is easier to recruit and retain staff. In the longer term, the computerisation of social security operations will make an increasing impact in improving service delivery standards from mid-1989 onwards.

32. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he is doing to improve the efficiency of the social security system.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We are making very good progress in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the social security system. The new benefits introduced in April last year have simplified the system and made it easier to understand, both for claimants and for staff. As a result fewer people are finding it necessary to visit their local social security offices and the time taken to clear benefit claims has been reduced from a national average of six days for the last year of supplementary benefit to five days for the first six months of income support. National error rates have also improved, from 11·6 per cent. to 9·7 per cent. We recognise that further progress still needs to be made and to help with this we are setting improved targets and standards of service. For example, a comprehensive system of quality assessment of local office contacts with the public has been developed.

These changes are complemented by our huge computerisation programme which is transforming the administration of social security, bringing major benefits for the taxpayer and all who use the social security system. Following the successful computerisation of the family credit system in April, trials of the initial version of the new pensions system and the central index system are now under way in the first local offices. A new micro-computer based system has recently been brought into operation for

the retirement pension forecast service, providing a quick, personalised reply to most inquiries. The public reaction to this has been overwhelmingly favourable. More and more people are taking advantage of the facility which we are providing to have their benefits paid direct into a bank or building society account, and over 1·5 million pensioners are now paid in this way.

We are taking further steps to provide a better and more efficient service to the public by relocating some work away from some of our most hard-pressed local offices. We are considering the manner in which we organise and run our operational systems and, in particular, whether they could with advantage be run as a "Next Steps" agency or agencies. We have an active and ongoing programme of efficiency scrutinies which has yielded savings of more than £80 million and more than 4,000 posts, and we are encouraging our staff to take an active part in helping to improve efficiency through increasing use of the Department's suggestions scheme. This has saved at least £5 million this year alone.

EC (Ministerial Meeting)

30. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the European Community; and whether an agenda has been set.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no plans at present to meet our European counterparts in a European Community context. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will be attending a Council of Europe meeting on 13-14 April.

Community Care Grants, Manchester

34. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the payment of community care grants in Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Take-up of community care grants in Manchester has increased significantly in recent months. The combined expenditure of the Manchester offices at the end of October was 27·5 per cent. of their total annual budget allocation and by the end of December this had increased to 45 per cent.

The equivalent national figures were 24 per cent. and 38 per cent. respectively. Nationally, take-up of community care grants reached 77 per cent. of anticipated monthly expenditure in December.

Income Support

35. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence he has that the new income support scheme is simpler to understand than supplementary benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The early indications are encouraging. Claims for income support are being processed more quickly and accurately and a higher percentage are successful than claims for supplementary benefit. They are also generating significantly less appeals—some 34,000 between 11 April and 31 December 1988 as against 95,000 supplementary benefit appeals over a similar period. This represents a welcome improvement for claimants and staff alike and provides some indications that the new income support scheme is simpler to understand than supplementary benefit.

A lot of effort has gone into improving the design of the Department's claim forms and leaflets using specialist design consultants as well as the Department's own professional writers and designers. The integrated claim form, combining a claim form and all the information needed by a claimant to establish if he may be entitled, is one of the results. This is proving popular with the public.

All this represents a real step forward from the old supplementary benefit scheme. We will continue to press for further improvements in the service provided as staff and claimants alike become more familiar with the new scheme.

Special Needs Hostels

37. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what responses he has received to the consultation document on the funding of special needs hostels.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 23 January at columns *417-18*.

Pensioners (Benefits)

40. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he proposes to increase the take-up of housing benefit and income support by pensioner households.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In addition to our normal publicity arrangements, we shall be mounting a special campaign later this year to publicise the extra help which is being made available to pensioners through the income support and housing benefit schemes from October. As part of that campaign we shall be writing to all pensioners aged 75 and over, whose addresses we hold, to explain the changes.

Missing Persons

41. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will make a statement of his Department's co-operation with the police on missing persons investigations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is the long-standing policy of successive Governments that information held for social security purposes may be disclosed on request to the police in a case which involves a missing person under the age of 18. The information is given orally and in confidence and in respect of specific named individuals only.

Widows

42. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his best estimate of the number of widows who have had a reduction in benefits specific to themselves due to changes in circumstances, other than re-marriage, since the changes in regulations in April 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the implications for his policy on widows' pensions of the decision of the social security appeal tribunal at Walthamstow that a widow aged under 45 years is entitled to a widow's pension because changes made to the law in April 1988, which would otherwise disqualify her, are invalid; and if he will make a statement.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, in the light of the ruling of the independent social security appeal tribunal at Walthamstow on the change in the age limit for widows' pensions, he has any plans to restore the age limit to 40 instead of 45 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is for the office of the chief adjudication officer to decide whether or not to seek leave to appeal to the social security commissioner. If the adjudication officer decides not to seek leave to appeal, the tribunal's decision will be implemented in the normal way.

Housing Benefit

45. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his plans for housing benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Housing benefit will continue to be available to help those on low incomes meet their liability for rent and rates. Future expenditure plans for housing benefit are contained in the public expenditure White Paper, (Cm. 615).

School Meals

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next proposes to review the provision of free school meals to the children of people receiving benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Free school meals are available to children in families receiving income support. The Government have no plans to change these arrangements.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many benefit claimants in receipt of invalid care allowance, in each of the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88, had that benefit disallowed following the death of a husband, the award of widow's benefit and the application of the overlapping benefit regulations;

(2) how many applications for invalid care allowance were received in each of the years 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 and refused on the grounds that this allowance overlapped with widow's benefit.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available. The information which is available does not distinguish between women according to their marital status. Since June 1986 (when the allowance was extended to married and cohabiting women) 3,571 claims from women have been disallowed because they were receiving another social security benefit, equal to or higher than the weekly rate of invalid care allowance (ICA). Payments of ICA to a further group of 4,715 women have been stopped because they have become entitled to another social security benefit equal to or higher than the weekly rate of ICA.

Retirement Age

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will announce the conclusions on the reappraisal of the various options for the equality of treatment of men and women in respect of age eligibility for the state retirement pension, to which he referred on 27 November 1987, *Official Report*, column 181.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 18 January at column *246*.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will now consult his advisory committee as to whether a successful claim for an attendance allowance should be backdated to the date of the claim, as opposed to the present requirement for at least six months have passed before the allowance is paid.

Mr. Scott: Attendance allowance may be paid from the date of the claim if at that date the statutory medical conditions have been satisfied throughout the previous six months. The social security advisory committee considered the qualifying period, but did not recommend its general waiver, in its report "Benefits for Disabled People: a strategy for change" published on 29 November. The qualifying period is an aspect of the attendance allowance scheme which we shall look at when we consider the future of disability benefits in the light of the OPCS disability surveys.

Isle of Wight Benefit Office

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the Isle of Wight office to be linked to the national computer; and what steps he is taking to speed up computerisation of all benefit offices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I recently announced that we are accelerating the implementation of our computerisation programme so that all offices will be linked to the mainframe computer systems by mid-1991. Implementation of the systems in the Isle of Wight office is scheduled for the first half of 1991.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much money was allocated by the Government to the independent living fund in each of the years 1987-88 and 1988-89; and from the vote of which Government Department such allocations were made;

(2) what information he has as to what sources of income the independent living fund has secured, other than Government funding, and as to how much such alternative source amounts to;

(3) how much money will be allocated by the Government to the independent living fund in 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: The independent living fund was formally constitued on 8 June 1988. No funds were therefore made available for the year 1987-88. For 1988-89 £5 million was allocated from the miscellaneous health services and personal social services vote of the then Department of Health and Social Security. £5 million has been allocated for 1989-90. This sum will be reviewed as management information becomes available from the first year of operation.

The independent living fund is financed entirely from Government sources.

West Derby Office (Industrial Action)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the strike of

officials at the West Derby Office of his Department in Princess drive, Liverpool; and what steps he is taking to bring the dispute to a satisfactory and equitable conclusion.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A total of 44 members of staff at the Department's West Derby local office are currently taking strike action over management's proposals to transfer a small number of excess staff to neighbouring offices for temporary periods.

Discussions have taken place between regional management and the trade unions. The unions are recommending to their members that they return to work early this week.

A full public service will be restored at the office as soon as possible thereafter.

HEALTH

Health Service (Charges)

72. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will put in the Library a copy of Sir Donald Acheson's recent formal report on the implications and monitoring of charges for teeth and spectacles.

Mr. Mellor: I have received no such report.

Aluminium

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has received regarding the safe level of aluminium in baby foods; and from whom.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's independent expert medical and scientific advisory committee on toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment recently considered the results of analyses by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the aluminium content of infant formulae. The committee saw no need for action to reduce the aluminium intakes from infant formulae. However, the Department's expert advisory committees will continue to keep under regular review the results of research into the effects of aluminium intakes.

Listeria

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths there were in 1988 associated with the bacteria listeria; and in how many cases there was a food poisoning report associated with the death.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The provisional number of deaths registered in England and Wales in the first three quarters of 1988 at ages 28 days and over with underlying cause of death assigned as listeriosis (international classification of diseases 9th revision 027.0) is seven. In addition, the provisional number of neonatal deaths (at ages under 28 days, where no underlying cause of death is assigned) where listeriosis was mentioned as a condition on the death certificate is five for the same period and area. In none of these 12 deaths was there any mention of food poisoning on the death certificate.

From the reported cases of listeria known to the communicable disease surveillance centre of the Public Health Laboratory service who are also known by them to have died, none has been reported, formally or informally, as being confirmed microbiologically to have been associated with food.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a list of those National Health Service hospitals which have engaged in contractual arrangements with private hospitals and clinics during 1987 and, so far as possible, 1988.

Mr. Mellor: Contractual arrangements with private hospitals and clinics are not made by individual NHS hospitals. Contracts are usually arranged by district health authorities and occasionally by regional health authorities.

Radiotherapy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients received radiotherapy within the National Health Service in *(a)* 1983 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table. The latest year for which information is currently available is 1986.

New patients attending radiotherapy departments, NHS hospitals, England, 1983 and 1986

	In-patients	*Out-patients*
1983	35,337	93,235
1986	31,621	96,540

Ambulances

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list, for each ambulance service covering the Yorkshire and northern regions, and for each year since 1979, the number of miles covered by *(a)* emergency services, *(b)* non-emergency services, *(c)* minicabs and *(d)* volunteer drivers.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table.

Ambulance services: 1979 to 1986/87
Number of patient miles—Emergency, non-emergency and hospital car service cases

Thousands

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984/85*	*1985/86*	*1986/87*
Northern RHA								
Cleveland								
Emergency cases	184·0	219·3	231·8	237·4	269·6	249·5	215·8	227·3
Non-emergency cases	985·5	1,174·9	1,138·0	804·1	1,191·8	1,264·9	1,350·2	1,419·6
Hospital car service cases	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cumbria								
Emergency cases	161·0	195·5	131·9	107·2	215·7	245·9	239·8	242·2

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984/85	1985/86	1986/87
Non-emergency cases	1,239·8	1,572·7	1,065·2	865·2	1,739·0	1,684·3	1,738·6	1,555·0
Hospital car service cases	593·6	718·0	565·4	380·4	307·4	412·5	492·0	713·0
Durham								
Emergency cases	398·3	379·0	379·6	405·1	416·2	460·3	385·4	386·4
Non-emergency cases	1,202·5	1,497·0	1,695·3	1,773·5	1,889·3	1,924·6	2,099·6	2,036·1
Hospital car service cases	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northumbria Metropolitan								
Emergency cases	672·3	661·4	668·9	867·6	936·3	1,102·0	1,165·7	1,038·2
Non-emergency cases	3,335·9	3,785·2	3,746·5	3,499·3	3,552·1	3,311·2	3,113·5	3,380·3
Hospital car service cases	118·6	101·0	77·2	83·8	119·4	215·2	439·5	341·5
Yorkshire RHA								
Humberside								
Emergency cases	277·5	275·2	283·0	296·8	300·5	220·8	317·8	314·6
Non emergency cases	2,615·0	2,728·2	2,701·8	2,692·2	2,836·6	2,891·2	2,759·9	2,630·7
Hospital car service cases	300·6	294·9	249·0	246·1	204·8	313·6	309·6	340·9
North Yorkshire								
Emergency cases	187·8	176·5	184·6	188·1	181·5	190·5	240·2	333·6
Non-emergency cases	1,547·1	1,716·7	1,726·4	1,671·7	1,722·9	1,699·7	1,754·4	1,679·1
Hospital car service cases	23·8	51·4	48·7	64·6	134·0	185·2	262·9	193·4
West Yorkshire Metropolitan								
Emergency cases	688·3	712·0	780·7	777·0	790·3	838·7	852·1	936·3
Non-emergency cases	3,812·8	4,547·1	4,487·8	4,093·1	4,442·1	4,587·3	4,551·0	4,677·4
Hospital car service cases	564·7	691·0	570·2	649·3	783·9	716·8	1,096·0	1,465·4

Source:
1979-83 DH.
1984-85 to 1986-87 York health authority.

Notes:
1. Figures for non-emergency cases do not include hospital car service cases.
2. The 1986-87 data for emergency cases in Humberside authority includes some urgent cases.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many emergency-equipped ambulances were available on 30 September 1988 at 6 pm; and what was the equivalent for each year since 1983.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not centrally available.

Listerial Meningitis

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many cases of listerial meningitis have been recorded since 1979; and if he will give a regional breakdown of such incidence;

(2) how many fatalities have been recorded as a result of listerial meningitis since 1979; and if he will give a regional breakdown of such incidence.

Mr. Freeman: From the statistics of notifications of infectious diseases, it is not possible to identify separately the number of cases of listerial meningitis. However, the table shows, in addition to the number of deaths registered with underlying cause of death assigned as listerial meningitis, the number of notifications of other specified forms of acute meningitis, including listerial meningitis.

(R) = Number of notifications of acute meningitis, other specified organism[3] by standard region, and
(B) = Number of deaths to usual residents of standard regions with listeria meningitis[2] assigned as underlying cause
1979 to 1988

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		[1]1988	
	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)
England and Wales[4]																				
Male	280	2	434	1	282	3	64	2	61	7	85	2	102	4	121	4	134	7	157	1
Female	194	3	301	1	253	3	67	0	45	4	56	4	84	4	88	6	100	9	140	3
Wales																				
Male	46	0	35	0	16	0	10	0	5	0	6	0	3	0	7	0	10	0	17	0
Female	22	1	40	0	12	0	7	0	4	0	1	0	3	0	5	1	3	0	17	0
Standard Region																				
North																				
Male	9	0	15	0	6	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	5	1	6	1	6	0	10	0
Female	3	0	10	0	6	0	0	0	5	0	3	0	4	0	0	0	3	0	11	0
Yorkshire and Humberside																				
Male	34	0	14	0	25	0	12	0	13	1	29	0	26	0	33	0	23	0	34	0
Female	19	0	23	0	28	0	12	0	8	1	11	0	25	0	27	1	27	0	24	1
East Midlands																				
Male	13	0	10	0	12	0	12	0	5	0	2	0	2	1	6	0	8	1	11	0
Female	9	1	4	0	6	0	5	0	1	0	2	1	4	1	8	1	4	0	7	0

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		[1]1988	
	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)	(R)	(B)
East Anglia																				
Male	13	0	19	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	6	0	4	0	2	0	1	0	3	0
Female	8	0	11	0	5	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	1	2	0	3	2	3	0
South East																				
Male	85	2	162	3	124	1	17	1	18	2	15	0	16	0	21	0	38	1	28	0
Female	83	1	95	0	113	1	20	0	9	1	18	2	13	1	20	2	30	3	23	1
South West																				
Male	19	0	12	0	18	0	1	1	3	1	8	0	17	0	12	2	15	1	23	0
Female	7	0	10	0	14	0	6	0	3	1	3	0	16	1	6	0	12	0	15	1
West Midlands																				
Male	10	0	16	0	19	0	3	0	4	1	7	0	8	1	11	0	17	2	11	1
Female	9	0	17	1	14	1	6	0	8	0	7	1	6	0	5	0	10	2	15	0
North West																				
Male	51	0	151	0	60	0	7	0	11	1	12	2	21	1	23	0	16	2	20	0
Female	34	0	91	0	55	1	9	0	6	1	10	0	11	0	15	1	8	2	25	0

[1] Provisional; mortality data are for January to September registrations only.
[2] International Classification of Diseases ninth revision code 027.0 (part).
[3] Acute meningitis, other specified organism includes all specified meningitis organisms other than those in the meningococcal, pneumococcal, influenzal (haemophilus influenzae), and viral categories.
[4] Deaths to those usually resident outside England and Wales are included in the overall totals.

Note:

In 1986, neonatal deaths were no longer assigned with an underlying cause of death but mention of condition(s) present at death were given. Therefore in addition to the number of deaths shown in the table there was one neonatal death in 1986 in the South East region, and two neonatal deaths in 1987 (one in the South East region and one in the North West region) with mention of listeria meningitis on the death certificate.

Health Authority Allocations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will estimate *(a)* what the allocations would have been to each English regional health authority for 1989-90 if the same national total had been distributed on the basis of the 1988-89 allocations, *(b)* if he will estimate the difference between the figure and the actual allocation given to each region for 1989-90 and *(c)* if he will express *(c)* as a percentage of *(b)*.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is set out in the table:

	1989-90 allocations		Difference	
	Main[1] Provision	Notional[2] distribution in line with 1988-89 allocations[3]		
	£ million	£ million	£ million column (2) and (1)	Percentage column (3) and (1)
Region	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Northern	832·4	832·6	0·2	0·02
Yorkshire	937·4	939·5	2·2	0·23
Trent	1,147·2	1,143·9	−3·3	−0·29
East Anglian	497·1	495·6	−1·5	−0·30
North West Thames	912·9	918·5	5·6	0·61
North East Thames	1,137·0	1,147·3	10·3	0·90
South East Thames	1,018·3	1,019·1	0·8	−0·08
South West Thames	843·7	846·0	2·3	0·28
Wessex	699·1	695·9	−3·1	−0·45
Oxford	557·6	546·3	−11·3	−2·03
South Western	832·4	828·4	−4·0	−0·48
West Midlands	1,340·1	1,342·5	2·4	0·18
Mersey	663·8	663·9	0·2	0·02
North Wester	1,140·1	1,139·6	−0·5	−0·05
Total	1,2559·1	1,2559·1	0·0	0·00

[1] Excludes sums earmarked e.g. Supra regional services, AIDS, breast cancer screening.
[2] Total cash 1989-90 pro rata to 1988-89 initial cash limits.
[3] Excludes earmarked sums, but includes special fund of £15 million allocated to Regions who received the lowest increases under RAWP.

Sexually-related Diseases (Children)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by sex and by age the number of children aged 16 years and under who have been examined and diagnosed for a sexually related disease during the last year *(a)* in the Trent regional health authority and *(b)* by district health authority, showing the type of disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The latest available data are for Trent regional health authority in 1986 for syphilis and gonorrhoea only. These are shown in the table.

Trent Regional Health Authority

Age group—under 16	1986		
	Male	Female	Total
Primary and secondary syphilis	0	0	0
Post-pubertal gonorrhoea	8	27	35

Trent RHA

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants are currently employed by the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: On 30 September 1987, there were 1,322 consultants in post in the Trent region, of these 657 were employed by the regional health authority. This figure includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many: *(a)* speech therapists and *(b)* physiotherapists are currently employed by the Trent regional health authority;

(2) how many nurses are currently employed by the Trent regional health authority;

(3) how many midwives are currently employed by the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The table gives the number of staff in post in the Trent region for the groups mentioned:

	No. in post WTE
Speech Therapists	260
Physiotherapists	890
Nurses	35,800
Midwives	2,170

Of these only 100 (WTE) nurses are employed by Trent regional health authority itself.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hours are worked by junior doctors employed by the Trent regional health authority in an average *(a)* week and *(b)* month.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect information centrally. The hon. Member should contact the chairman of Trent regional health authority for an answer to his question.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are waiting for treatment in the following specialties in the Trent health region at the latest available date *(a)* orthopaedics, *(b)* gynaecology, *(c)* ear, nose and throat, *(d)* plastic surgery and *(e)* cardiothoracic surgery.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table.

In-patient waiting list for selected specialties, Trent Regional Health Authority, 31 March 1988

Specialty	*Number waiting*
Traumatic and Orthopaedics	13,097
Gynaecology	8,324
Ear, Nose and Throat	8,295
Plastic Surgery	3,706
Cardiothoracic Surgery	773

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in the Trent regional health authority have 250 beds or more.

Mr. Freeman: In 1986, the latest year for which we have available information, there were 37 hospitals with 250 or more average daily available beds in Trent region.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are waiting for day treatment at hospitals in the Trent health region at the latest available date; and what has been the percentage change in the last 12 months.

Mr. Mellor: There were 9,870 patients on the day case waiting list in Trent at March 1988. There is no comparable figure for March 1987 as day case waiting list statistics were not collected at that time.

Acute Beds (North Derbyshire)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many acute beds are currently available to patients in north Derbyshire.

Mr. Freeman: In the financial year 1987-88, there were an average of 579 acute beds available daily in North Derbyshire health authority.

Health Centres (North Derbyshire)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current number of health centres in north Derbyshire.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not collected centrally. I would therefore suggest that the hon. Member contact the chairman of North Derbyshire health authority for an answer to his question.

Waiting List (North Derbyshire)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been on the waiting list in north Derbyshire for over one year.

Mr. Mellor: At March 1988, 720 patients on the in-patient waiting list in north Derbyshire had been waiting over one year. This compares with 1,280 at March 1979. Provisional figures, currently being validated, indicate that the number reduced still further in the six months to September 1988.

Cancer

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the incidence of breast cancer in women aged *(a)* 50 to 64 years and *(b)* 65 years and over in each of the last 10 years;

(2) what was the incidence of cervical cancer in women aged *(a)* 50 to 64 years and *(b)* 65 years and over in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table; 1984 is the latest available data year.

Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasm of (a) *female breast* (b) *cervix uteri, and rates per 100,000 population, ages 50-64, 65 and over, England and Wales, 1975-84.*

	ICD 174 (Breast Cancer)[1]				*ICD 180 (Cervix Uteri)*[1]			
	Number		*Rate*[2]		*Number*		*Rate*[2]	
	50-64	*65+*	*50-64*	*65+*	*50-64*	*65+*	*50-64*	*65+*
1975	6,943	9,592	155	223	1,654	1,197	37	28
1976	7,146	9,419	160	217	1,604	1,150	36	26
1977	7,107	9,779	160	222	1,578	1,200	36	27
1978	7,071	9,814	161	220	1,402	1,173	32	26
1979	6,604	9,738	152	216	1,343	1,193	31	26
1980	6,928	9,846	161	216	1,347	1,203	31	26
1981	6,751	10,132	158	221	1,248	1,229	29	27
1982	7,094	10,055	166	220	1,218	1,193	29	26
1983	6,834	10,174	160	224	1,152	1,139	27	25
1984	6,979	10,100	163	223	1,124	1,158	26	26

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th Revision.
[2] Rates per 100,000 population.

Crewe DHA (Contracts)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of every private company that has entered into any contract with Crewe district health authority in the past five years, with the addresses of their registered offices and the names of their directors.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of each private company that has entered into any contract with Halton district health authority in the past five years, together with the addresses of their registered offices and the names of their directors.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold details of such arrangements centrally. The hon. Member and my hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the appropriate district health authority for the information.

Haemoglobinopathy

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to secure the delivery of specialist haemoglobinopathy services in districts where they are currently not on offer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department recently issued a questionnaire to all district health authorities on haemoglobinopathy services and is currently analysing the responses. The analysis will form the basis for decisions about action that might be needed centrally on these services.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Mellor: Department of Health Ministers and/or officials represent the United Kingdom at the world health assembly, at meetings of the World Health Organisation's regional committee for Europe and at other meetings arranged by the WHO; the United Kingdom's assessed contribution to the organisation's regular budget—amounting in the current financial year to £7·559 million—is paid by the Department of Health. Departmental officials also represent the United Kingdom at meetings of the European Pharmacopoeia Commission and of other committees concerned with public health and with rehabilitation organised by the Council of Europe, but whose membership comprises only some members of the Council of Europe; the United Kingdom's contribution to the work of these committees—amounting to £287,000 in the current financial year—is made by the Department.

Departmental Ministers and/or officials also represent the United Kingdom at meetings of a number of international organisations dealing with health and personal social service issues, to which the United Kingdom's contribution is not primarily a charge on Department of Health votes—for example, councils and working groups of the European Community, and ministerial meetings and steering groups of the Council of Europe and of the OECD.

The cost of attendance at meetings of these bodies are not separately identified.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has published guidelines or instructions regarding the costing of redundancy expenditure arising from competitive tendering.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. Most recently in executive letter EL(87)MB/1 issued in November 1987. A copy has been placed in the Library. The guidance is kept under review.

Abortion

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has yet received the final copy of the report of the study conducted by the Royal College of General Practitioners into the psychological sequelae of abortion.

Mr. Freeman: No. A large body of data is currently undergoing careful analysis. I understand the report should be available later this year.

Infant Health

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases there have been of babies who have become victims of Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Freeman: Information held centrally about Alzheimer's disease relates to those cases which received treatment in an NHS hospital. The data which are based on a 10 per cent. sample of patient discharge records, revealed no such cases in the under 15 age group. We are not aware of any cases of babies or children with Alzheimer's disease.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the effect on babies of consuming food with high levels of aluminium.

Mr. Freeman: Aluminium in the diet is not known to cause any disease in babies. In 1988 the Food and Agriculture Organisation/World Health Organisation joint expert committee on food additives set a provisional tolerable weekly intake—PTWI—for aluminium of 7 mg per kilogram bodyweight. This figure was based on the effects on laboratory animals of very much greater intakes of aluminium compounds. The aluminium intakes of babies in the United Kingdom are well below this PTWI.

Anaemia

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities employ full-time specialist sickel cell anaemia and thalassaemia counsellors.

Mr. Freeman: The Department recently issued a questionnaire to all district health authorities on screening and counselling services for sickle cell and thalassaemic diseases. Although this did not ask about the employment of full-time specialist counsellors it did ask who was responsible for counselling. The replies to the questionnaire are currently being analysed.

Hospitals (Opting Out)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, under his proposals for the National Health Service announced on 31 January, he will make it his policy to allow the local community to have a vote prior to a hospital with more than 250 beds deciding to operate on an independent basis.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The White Paper published on 31 January outlines plans for self-governing hospitals within the NHS. Proposals will be given local publicity but I see no merit in making management changes within the NHS subject to a vote by the residents of a particular locality.

Population Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has as to the number of persons ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom who have attained the age of 12 years.

Mr. Freeman: It is estimated that at 30 June 1987 there were 48,380,000 persons aged 12 and over with usual residence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the average frequency of household removal.

Mr. Freeman: Information in the form requested is not available centrally. However my hon. Friend may find the following information relating to 1986 useful.

Percentage of Heads of Households according to length of residence at current address: Great Britain

Length of residence Years	*Percentage*
Under 1	10
1 but under 3	14
3 but under 5	12
5 to 10	22
11 to 15	11
16 to 20	10
21 to 30	11
31 or more	10

Note: The information is derived from a question on length of residence of the Head of Household in the General Household Survey. (General Household Survey 1986, OPCS/SSD, Series GHS number 16, page 70, Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

AIDS

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of AIDS patients receiving treatment in London; and which eight hospitals have the most such patients.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have information in the form requested.

The total number of AIDS cases reported from district health authorities in Greater London at the end of 1988 was 1,318, of whom 671 have died. The eight health authorities which had the greatest numbers of reports were:

Riverside
Parkside
Bloomsbury
West Lambeth
Hampstead
Tower Hamlets
Wandsworth
Camberwell

NHS (Funding)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if Sonia Cabey, aged 18 years, from the dependency of Montserrat now in the Brompton hospital, London, awaiting heart surgery not available in the dependency, will be treated under the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement about the funding of this case.

Mr. Mellor: Miss Cabey is being treated privately in an NHS hospital. The Monserrat Government have undertaken that the costs will be met.

Artificial Kidney Assistants

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available to his Department about vacancies for artificial kidney assistants in the National Health Service,

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally.

Out-patients (Transport)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals charge transport costs to patients of out-patient clinics and those patients admitted after referral by their general practitioner; what is the average charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Ambulance service transport is provided free of charge for those patients considered by a clinician to be medically unfit to travel by any other means. Patients who do not have a medical need but who have difficulty in finding other means of attending hospital may also be carried by the ambulance service but a charge may be made.

Information on the level and extent of such charges is not centrally available.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of new patients prescribed benzodiazepines by doctors since January 1988.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what evidence he has on the number of road accidents caused by impaired concentration of motorists taking benzodiazepines;

(2) what evidence he has on the number of accidents *(a)* in the home and *(b)* elsewhere caused to elderly people by taking benzodiazepines;

(3) what evidence he has on the incidence of structural brain damage causesd by long-term use of benzodiazepines.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to undertake a national education campaign to warn young people about the dangers of benzodiazepine addiction.

Mr. Mellor: We have no such plans. Health, personal and social education in schools, backed by the work of drug education co-ordinators in every local education authority, covers the use and misuse of a wide range of substances, including prescribed drugs.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of people prescribed benzodiazepines since January 1988 who have taken them for longer than the period laid down by the Committee on Safety of Medicines.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the number of chronic users of benzodiazepines in the United Kingdom; and what percentage of these are addicted to the drug.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Cook-Chill Food

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to introduce regulatory provisions governing the temperature at which cook-chill foods are stored and displayed by retailers and the length of time during which such products are on sale from the time that they leave the manufacturer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* Proposed changes to the Food Hygiene Regulations 1970, including requirements for the temperature of retailed chilled food, have been the subject of consultations by my Department and discussions continue. The Food Labelling Regulations 1984 already require pre-packed perishable foods to carry a date of minimum durability.

Neomycin

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people are estimated to suffer burns or scalding accidents annually; what is the best estimate of those seriously burned or scalded and likely to have been thickly sprayed with neomycin;

(2) how many people are known to have been deafened by the use of neomycin sprays after being treated for burns or scalds; and what is the best estimate of the number at risk of being deafened in this way;

(3) when neomycin was first used in National Health Service hospitals in spray form; what Government safety health checks it had received prior to that date; for what purposes it was recommended; and what warnings of side effects were given;

(4) at what date neomycin was available to National Health Service hospitals; what Government safety health checks it had received before use within the National Health Service; for what purposes it was recommended; and what warnings of side effects were given;

(5) what is his best estimate of the number of people known to have been deafened by neomycin used in conventional form;

(6) when were the first research reports that neomycin could cause deafness; who they were by; and what action was taken by his Department to warn those using the drug;

(7) if he will set up an inquiry to investigate *(a)* the number of adults and children deafened by the use of neomycin sprays to treat burns and scalds, *(b)* the

possibility of identifying them, *(c)* the possibility of giving publicity to the fact that, in some circumstances compensation may be possible, *(d)* the difficulties that people deafened in this way have in getting access to medical records and *(e)* the effectiveness of procedures which transmit information about the side effects of drugs;

(8) what information he has as to when research first established that compounds applied to the skin could be absorbed into the bloodstream and as to what action was taken to link this information to known hazards of drugs taken intravenously; and what action was taken by his Department to ensure that this information was known by those likely to treat burns.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* Medicines containing the antibiotic substance neomycin were introduced in the early 1950s. There was then no general statutory requirement for pre-marketing approval of the type introduced by the Medicines Act 1968. It is not now possible to be precise about the date of introduction or the conditions of marketing. Reports of ototoxicity (damage to the ear, including deafness) associated with injections of neomycin led to discussion in the medical literature in the early 1960s of the risks of deafness. The injectable forms were subjected in 1966 to the Therapeutic Substances Act (TSA) 1956. TSA control was more limited than the comprehensive system under the Medicines Act 1986. Its chief objects were to ensure purity and potency. The risk of ototoxicity associated with all forms of neomycin was reported by the later 1960s.

Over the period 1963 to 1988, 14 suspected cases of neomycin-associated deafness were reported to the Committee on Safety of Medicine (CSM) and its predecessor the Committee on Safety of Drugs (CSD). These reports derive from all formulations of neomycin. It is not meaningful to extrapolate from these reports. As with all prescription-only medicines, the decision in balancing the benefit of treatment of individuals against the risk of unwanted effects is a matter for clinical judgment. I am advised that clinical use of neomycin has become progressively selective with appreciation of the risks of ototoxicity, which the licensing authority (LA) and advisory bodies have played their part in fostering. Centrally available information is held on the number of hospital in-patient cases treated for burns and scalds. The latest available figure is an estimate of 11,190 for 1985, but there is no central information as to whether they were treated with neomycin.

Medicines containing neomycin are subject to all the normal prescription-only controls. Data sheets inform doctors of the risks of ototoxicity. Moreover, in addition to the control of the products, the substance neomycin itself is controlled under the Medicines (Control of Substances for Manufacture) Orders 1971 and 1985 (SI 1971/1200 and SI 1985/1403): Individual batches are tested by the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control.

The CSM issued a warning to all doctors in 1977:

"The association of deafness with the parenteral use of neomycin is well established. The Committee on Safety of Medicines have recently received reports of deafness following topical administration of aerosol preparations containing neomycin used in the treatment of extensive skin damage resulting from burns or other causes.

The Committee urge the profession to report any case of ototoxicity which they suspect may have resulted from topical administration of aerosol or any other preparations containing neomycin or other antibiotics."

The CSM issued a reminder in 1981 in the *Current Problems* publication to all doctors:

"The Committee on Safety of Medicines wishes to remind doctors that when otitis externa is treated topically with preparations containing chlorhexidine aminoglycoside antibiotics (eg neomycin, framycetin) or polymxins in patients who have a perforation of the tympanic membrane, there is an increased risk of drug-induced deafness. It is therefore important to ensure that there is no perforation in such patients before prescription of these preparations."

The LA reviewed in 1979-80 with advice from the Committee on Review of Medicines (CRM), some medicines with neomycin which had been on the market before the Medicines Act was brought into effect; were mainly anti-diarrhoea products; generally, the result was to limit permitted indications for use and require additional warnings in product literature of the products which remained licensed.

Other neomycin products are brought under scrutiny as part of the review of all pre-Act medicines.

The independent "British National Formulary" distributed by the Department to all NHS doctors and pharmacists contains explicit warnings.

Discussions have begun with the medical profession with a view to developing voluntary means of access to medical records. It could be counterproductive to anticipate the outcome.

It is for individuals who consider that they may have been made deaf by the use of neomycin to take advice. It would be inappropriate to prejudice such advice or any proceedings which might arise by a general statement or by inquiry into numbers affected or by attempting to identify individuals, for which there is no feasible central mechanism.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is being done to meet the needs of those people unable to go into private sector nursing homes

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* Health and local authorities provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of individuals. Health authorities provide hospital in-patient care where this is appropriate, NHS nursing home provision and community nursing support for those able to live in the community, whilst local authorities provide residential domiciliary and day-care services. We encourage health and local authorities to plan and work jointly with the voluntary and private sectors, to ensure that a comprehensive range of provision is available.

A range of social security benefits is also available to help people who live in their own homes.

Continuing Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advise his Department has given to health districts for their strategic planning in relation to continuing care provision.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* The most recent advice was set out in Circular HC(88)43, which gave guidance to health authorities on preparing short-term plans for 1989-90 and making any necessary revisions to existing strategic plans.

A copy of this circular has been placed in the Library. The relevant references are in appendix 4.

Pensioners (East Cleveland)

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions have taken place with employment training agencies on the loss of hot meal services to retirement pensioners in the East Cleveland area.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* I understand that the East Cleveland employment training group luncheon clubs project has been carried forward into employment training. Loftus Employment Training has been appointed as the training manager and is actively considering ways of ensuring the project's continued future within employment training. I also understand that Training Agency officials are available to help in this process as necessary.

Pay and Price Deflator

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing the relevant figures in table 14.1 of Cm. 614 adjusted by the hospital and community health services pay and price deflator.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:*

Hospital and Community Health Services—Current Expenditure

£ millions

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Cash figures table 14.1 Cm. 614					
Gross	8,882	9,386	9,886	10,623	11,730
Net	8,628	9,120	9,607	10,320	11,402
Figures adjusted by HCHS Pay and Price deflator					
Gross	11,461	11,446	11,469	11,522	11,730
Net	11,133	11,122	11,145	11,193	11,402

The table sets out HCHS current expenditure figures from 1983-84, adjusted by the HCHS pay and price deflator for the years in which it is available. These figures do not take account of income from cash releasing cost improvements which, in the years shown, provided a significant contribution to the total resources available for service development.

Hospitals (Resource Management Initiative)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the hospitals participating in the resource management initiative and those hospitals that will join the initiative in the next two years.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* The following are the acute hospital sites that are participating in the resource management initiative:

Freeman Hospital
Royal Huddersfield Infirmary
Royal Hampshire County
Pilgrim Hospital
Guy's Hospital
Arrowe Park

The acute resource management initiative will be extended over a phased period to the main acute hospitals in England. No decision has yet been taken on which particular hospitals will join the initiative in the next two years.

CIVIL SERVICE

European Community (Reform)

71. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what changes he expects to take place in *(a)* the training of the Civil Service and *(b)* related matters as a consequence of dismantling of internal frontiers in Europe in the run up to 1992.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service has for some time been preparing for the single European market. Departments are developing their training to respond to this opportunity, including the use they make of the courses in European affairs run by the Civil Service college. Details of these courses are contained in the college brochure "European and International Affairs", a copy of which I am placing in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Clubs

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of job clubs in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: At 31 December 1988 there were 1,214 job clubs open for business. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 27 January at column *810*.

Unemployed Persons (London)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received following the publication of his Department's survey on the long-term unemployed in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend has not received any representations following the publication of the results of the two London surveys covering employers and the longer-term unemployed, in London, respectively.

There has of course been widespread interest in the research findings, which reveal that there are 150,000 job vacancies in London, at a time when almost 300,000 people are claiming benefit as unemployed.

At least one third of the vacancies require no special qualifications or experience, although many of London's longer-term unemployed do have academic or vocational qualifications, with nearly one in 10 possessing degrees. Many also have experience in management and other skilled occupations.

A quarter of the longer-term unemployed interviewed had not looked for work in the previous week. Many of those who said that they were actively looking for work used methods different from those favoured by employers in filling vacancies. Some of the London unemployed need

the opportunity to retrain in up-to-date skills, and we now have employment training for them. Others need to look more intensively for the jobs to which they are already well-suited. The surveys underline the importance of the measures which the Government are taking to ensure that benefit is drawn only by those who are genuinely unemployed.

Japanese Tourists

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to stimulate Japanese tourism to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is very aware of the tourism potential of the Japanese market.

BTA is already involved in a range of promotional activities to stimulate Japanese travel to Great Britain. BTA has also commissioned a study of the Japanese tourism market in conjunction with DTI.

YTS

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide figures for the number of filled YTS places for each year from 1984 to 1988.

Mr. Cope: The average numbers of young people in training on YTS for each year from 1984 to 1988 are as follows:

	Number
1984	263,000
1985	265,000
1986	283,000
1987	358,000
1988	396,000

YTS (Accidents)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide figures on the number of *(a)* fatal, *(b)* major and *(c)* minor accidents to YTS trainees reported to the Manpower Services Commission/Department of Employment Training Agency for each year from 1984 to 1988, giving the average age of trainees involved.

Mr. Cope: The table shows the number of *(a)* fatal *(b)* major and *(c)* minor accidents to YTS trainees for each year from 1984 to 1987. Figures for the full years of 1988 are not yet available. From the 1 April 1986 changes in legislation on the reporting of accidents were introduced which had the effect of reclassifying some accidents from minor category to the major category—for example, broken wrists and ankles.

The figures in brackets show the number of major and minor accidents under the previous reporting system. The average age of trainees involved could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

		Accidents[1]			
		Major injuries[2]		*Minor injuries*	
Year	*Fatalities*	*Riddor*	*Nador*	*Riddor*	*Nador*
1984	4[3]	—	190	—	1,725
1985	4[4]	—	201	—	1,885
1986	7[5]	305	(221)	1,624	(1,708)
1987	7[6]	427	(262)	2,466	(2,631)

[1] Training Agency accident figures for YTS are compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, agency figures will include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in educational establishments which may not have been reportable to the Executive had the individuals been employed.

[2] Up to 31 March 1986 major injuries were classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980. From 1 April 1986 major injuries have been classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurences Regulations 1985.

[3] This figure includes 2 road traffic accidents.

[4] This figure includes 1 road traffic accident.

[5] This figure includes 3 road traffic accidents.

[6] This figure includes 2 road traffic accidents.

Civil Service Appeal Board

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions in each of the last 10 years his Department has *(a)* accepted and acted upon or *(b)* not accepted or acted upon, Civil Service appeal board recommendations concerning his Department's unfair conduct in disciplinary matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Generally speaking rejection of Civil Service appeal board recommendations is not common in my Department.

Holidays (UK)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the most recent figure for the percentage of the population that take holidays in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The latest estimates show that 36 per cent. of the population of Great Britain aged 16 and over took one or more holidays of four or more nights in Great Britain in 1987.

Tourists (East Midlands)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accommodation establishments are available to tourists in the east midlands region at the latest date.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988, there were 3,016 tourist accommodation establishments in the east midlands region known to the English Tourist Board's registration unit.

Vocational Courses

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to reduce duplication between YTS, the technical and vocational education initiative, CPVE and other vocational courses.

Mr. Cope: This area is being carefully looked at and a number of lessons are emerging, including developments in records of achievement and vocational qualifications. We will continue to work towards reducing duplication to ensure progression for young people to obtain higher levels of attainment while maximising the increased choices available to young people as they move from school to work.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the Training Agency's support for equal opportunities in training and employment for members of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Cope: From 1 April 1989 the Government are to enlarge and redirect their practical help to increase equal opportunities for members of ethnic minority groups through training.

First, the Government will increase the provision within employment training for unemployed people who need training in English as a second language. There will be extra finance for supplementary grants for this kind of training; extra money for the assessment of people who need such training; and staff involved in the programme will receive training in the relevant expertise and, for the year beginning 1 April 1989, consultancy advice. These improvements to employment training will cost £1·3 million per year.

Secondly, there will be a major initiative to increase the use of open and flexible learning in English as a second language. A total of £200,000 per year will be available to identify good open learning materials, to commission new material if necessary, and to promote its use.

Thirdly, the Government are to extend the new programme "Business Growth Training" which was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 24 January (*Official Report*, 25 January, column *550*). In inner city target areas, firms receiving help under the programme for outside advice on training will be eligible for up to two-thirds of the total cost of their project, rather than the normal one-half maximum. A further £5,000—on top of the £15,000 maximum—would be available for such projects, whether or not in inner cities, to fund training which helped to increase equal opportunities for ethnic minority employees of the firm concerned. I am asking the Training Agency to ensure that each of its area offices with a concentration of ethnic minority employees in its area sets up appropriate projects of this kind. The annual cost of this extension of "Business Growth Training" would be £1 million in a full year.

These new measures will supersede the present funding of the net running costs of industrial language training units totalling £2·2 million in 1988-89. Their original purpose was to provide training in basic English for first generation immigrants in employment. But while members of ethnic minorities in the work force are employed largely by private sector firms, the proportion of private sector employers helped by the units is small. The location of units does not fully reflect the distribution of ethnic minorities in the work force. And, the units focus on people in employment, whereas those in the greatest need are unemployed.

The new arrangements announced today will create new business opportunities for the units. In order to give them time to adjust, their direct funding will therefore be extended from 31 March to 11 August 1989.

I am confident that the new arrangements will help members of the ethnic minorities more and more effectively.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1), pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on 13 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *238-39*, what is the reason for the decline in the amount of low flying taking place over southern Scotland in the first three months of 1988; and if he will provide an updated table showing the latest available figures for the numbers of movements and complaints in 1988;

(2) if the figures for low flying aircraft movements over southern Scotland in his written answer to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, 1 May 1987, *Official Report*, column *298*, and 13 July 1988, columns *238-39*, include movements in low flying area 13; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Pursuant to the reply provided by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 13 July 1988, columns *238-39*, I regret that an error was made in the calculation of the proportion of United Kingdom low flying movements over southern Scotland in the first three months of 1988. The correct figure is 7·1 per cent. The latest available figures for the numbers of movements in and complaints from southern Scotland are as follows:

	1 January to 31 October 1988
Movements in southern Scotland	17,049
Complaints from southern Scotland	285

The figures for movements in southern Scotland do not include movements in low flying area 13.

SDI (Contracts)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State of Defence how many contracts for research or development have been awarded to United Kingdom universities and other institutions of higher education under the strategic defence initiative programme; and what is their total worth.

Mr. Sainsbury: Thirty-three contracts with a total value of United States $8 million.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State of Defence how many United Kingdom universities and other institutions of higher education have so far received contracts for research or development under the United States of America strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Twenty-one.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the matters under consideration in the course of his current review of military low flying, the time-scale involved and the consideration given to possible public consultation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: There is no review of military low flying taking place. However, as part of a continuous monitoring of the United Kingdom low flying system, a programme of reviews of avoidance areas is carried out and changes made when necessary, reflecting changes on the ground,

and aimed at spreading low flying more evenly and enchancing flight safety, while at the same time reducing, where possible, the disturbance to those on the ground.

Complaints

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State of Defence, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, *Official Report*, 13 January, column *782* (1) at what level records are kept of the submissions for redress of complaint by service men; what categorisation of complaints is made; whether a report is prepared of the number of complaints made in each category; and what information is required centrally;

(2) what effort would be required to obtain from existing records the number of submissions for redress of complaint relating to racial discriminniation or abuse; what would be the cost; if he will provide as much information as is accessible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Submissions for redress of grievance are retained as permanent records on the individual's service documents. Complaints may be made orally or in writing and are normally resolved at unit level. Commanding officers have a duty to investigate all complaints seeking redress and if the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision the rules provide for the complaint to be submitted to each subsequent level in the chain of command and ultimately to the service boards. Complaints investigated by the special investigations branch are categorised according to the nature of the offence (assault, theft, etc).

Central records are kept only of cases submitted to the service boards. To obtain the information requested by the right hon. Gentleman would involve disproportionate cost, requiring individual returns from many thousands of service establishments world wide of cases settled at unit level.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table listing for *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* England, *(d)* The Federal Republic of Germany, *(e)* Cyprus and *(f)* the Falkland Islands the number of complaints received in 1988 by his Department concerning the low flying of Royal Air Force or Royal Navy planes and seeking a reduction in this activity.

Mr. Neubert: My Department does not keep central records of complaints made about low-flying aircraft other than those involving activity in the United Kingdom low flying system. The total number of complaints received in 1988 is not yet available.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the annual defence budget has been allocated to nuclear weapons design, production, maintenance and deployment in each year since 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Estimated spending on strategic nuclear forces is shown in table 2·3 of volume 2 of the 1988 statement on the Defence Estimates (Cm 344-II). Since 1979, this spending has represented the following proportions of the defence budget:

	Per cent.
1979-80	1·5
1980-81	1·5
1981-82	2·2
1982-83	2·3
1983-84	2·4
1984-85	2·3
1985-86	2·8
1986-87	3·6
1987-88	4·7
1988-89	[1]5·6

[1]Provisional estimate.

Military Construction Projects

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States military construction projects in the United Kingdom for which funding approval was given in fiscal year 1989, giving for each project its location, the nature of facilities to be constructed and an estimate of when the project will achieve operational status.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* I understand from information provided by the United States authorities that the following United States military construction projects have been funded for fiscal year 1989. Information regarding the operational status of these projects is unavailable. The dates given reflect when the facilities will be ready for occupation.

Base and facility	*Ready for occupation*
RAF Bentwaters	
Recreation centre	March 1991
Sound suppressor support	September 1989
RAF Feltwell	
Passive defence equipment store	January 1990
RAF Lakenheath	
DEB communications building	March 1990
Alter/add to composite medical facility	May 1993
Semi-hardened communications facility	May 1990
Menwith Hill station	
Expansion of operations facilities	March 1991
RAF Mildenhall	
Child development centre	July 1990
Alter/add to water storage	June 1991
Alter/add to operations facility	August 1990
RAF Upper Heyford	
Upgrade/add to vehicle maintenance facility	[1]
RAF Welford	
Fire station	September 1990
Munitions igloos	May 1990

[1] Although funding has been approved for this project, it is currently under United States Air Force review.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest information he has about United States military construction projects in the United Kingdom and its dependent territories for which funding approval is being sought for the United States fiscal years 1990 and 1991, giving for each project its location, the nature of the facilities to be constructed and an estimate of when each project will achieve operational status.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* Information on the dates these projects will achieve

operational status is not available. I understand from information provided by the United States authorities that funding approval for the following United States military construction projects is currently being sought.

1990

London
- Automotive vehicle maintenance shop
- Enlisted bachelor quarters and mess hall

Bovingdon
- Defence communications system site security

High Wycombe
- Dormitory

RAF Alconbury
- Alter/add to physical fitness facility
- Conventional munitions shop
- Squadron operations facility

RAF Barford St. John
- Physical protection

RAF Bentwaters
- Add to/upgrade fire station
- Alter munitions storage facility
- Central post office
- Chapel
- Youth centre

RAF Christmas Common
- Defence communications system site security

RAF Edzell
- Operations building annex

RAF Fairford
- Digital European backbone facility
- Jet fuel storage/hydrant refuelling system
- Upgrade water storage and distribution system

RAF Lakenheath
- Chemical warfare protection—squadron operations facility
- Storm drainage disposal

RAF Mildenhall
- Jet fuel storage
- Upgrade sewage treatment plant

RAF Upper Heyford
- Alter munitions storage facility
- Combat readiness centre
- Chemical warfare protection—squadron operations facility
- F-111 add to and alter flight simulator facility
- F-111 add to avionics maintenance shop
- F-111 add to engine shop

Department of Defence dependent schools
- Bicester elementary school
- Upwood elementary school addition

Defence medical support activity
- RAF Chessington (contingency hospital)
- RAF Lanark (fleet contingency hospital)

Ascension Island
- Naval communications utilities support upgrade

Bermuda
- Elementary school

1991

RAF Brawdy
- Electronic installation

London
- Pay and personnel support office

High Wycombe air station
- Airmen dining hall

RAF Alconbury
- Aircraft maintenance facility
- Alter dormitories
- Operations facility
- Passive defence equipment storage

RAF Bentwaters
- Fuel storage
- Passive defence equipment storage

RAF Chicksands
- Satellite communications terminal

RAF Fairford
- Add to/alter physical fitness centre
- Domitory
- Organisational maintenance and support equipment complex

RAF Greenham Common
- Fire station

RAF Lakenheath
- Alter dormitory
- Alter munitions storage facility
- Combat repair equipment storage facility
- Chemical warfare protection—squadron operations facility
- Munitions storage igloos

RAF Mildenhall
- Add to and alter physical fitness centre

RAF Upper Heyford
- Alter dormitory
- Combat repair equipment storage facility
- Dormitory

RAF Woodbridge
- Combat repair equipment storage facility

Department of defence dependent schools
- Feltwell middle school addition
- Menwith Hill middle school addition

Defence medical support activity
- RAF Arbroath (fleet hospital facility)
- RAF Locking

Bermuda
- Naval air station family housing office

ENVIRONMENT

Government Offices

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total square footage of the office estate of central Government within the boundaries of the old Inner London education authority area; and what is his estimate of the average rental which could be charged on those offices if they were available for arms length letting to the private sector.

Mr. Chope: The best information available is that for the Greater London area as a whole, approximately 2·1 million sq m of office space is held for Government use.

Water Companies

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list *(a)* the bids for control of statutory water companies which will not be affected by

his proposals for automatic referral of such bids to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and *(b)* the announced bids which are likely to be covered by the proposals, indicating in each case the shareholding known to have been acquired by the bidder, and the identity of the bidder.

Mr. Moynihan: The proposals announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 11 January will not affect a bid for control of a statutory water company which does not satisfy the £30 million size of assets test in current merger legislation. A bid for a company with assets exceeding £30 million will be subject to automatic referral if the bidder is another statutory water company with assets exceeding £30 million or a person who already controls another statutory water company with assets exceeding £30 million or a water authority.

The proposals will apply only to mergers initiated after 9 am on 11 January 1989. I am not at present aware of any bids announced since that time which fall within the scope of my right hon. Friend's proposals.

Cars (Recycling)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many tonnes of cars were recycled in each of the last five years and as to the number of sites for recycling cars; what measures he is taking to encourage car recycling; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. I understand from the British Scrap Federation that its best estimate of the weight of scrap metal derived from all types of motor vehicle is:

	Million tonnes
1984	1·73
1985	1·85
1986	2·08
1987	1·79
1988	2·20

Waste Oil

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many local authorities have facilities for the collection of waste oil.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the amount of waste oil that is unaccounted for each year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no annually compiled figures. In evidence to the 1985 House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities inquiry into disposal of waste oils (HL44, 1985-86) it was estimated that 100,000 tonnes were disposed of without re-use, from a total annual generation of 430,000 tonnes of waste oil.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to publicise *(a)* the dangers to the environment of the disposal of waste oil and *(b)* the availability of safe disposal and recycling sites; and what measures he is taking to ensure that waste oil is not used in heaters without proper pollution control equipment and to ensure sufficient safe disposal and recycling sites exist.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A workshop, under the auspices of the Department and the Department of Trade and Industry, was held last October to promote awareness of the dangers of illegal disposal of waste oils and to encourage the use of suitable disposal facilities. Most local authorities provide such facilities at civic amenity sites.

Plants which burn waste oil will be among the processes for which controls would be strengthened under the proposed revisions to air pollution legislation.

Bottle Banks

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of people per bottle bank in the United Kingdom and for other European Community countries.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand from the British Glass Manufacturers Confederation that the average density of bottle banks in the United Kingdom is one bottle bank for approximately every 14,000 people.

In 1978 there were just 17 bottle bank sites in the whole country. By 1982 there were 1,230 or one for 45,000 people. Our target is to reach one for 10,000 people in 1991.

In Europe, the average latest available (1985) figures for the provision of bottle banks are:

Austria	1 bottle bank per 1,200 people
Switzerland	1 bottle bank per 1,300 people
Netherlands	1 bottle bank per 1,400 people
France	1 bottle bank per 2,000 people
Germany	1 bottle bank per 2,000 people

Textiles (Recycling)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many local authorities have sites where textiles can be taken to be recycled.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

Plastics (Recycling)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the number of facilities available for the recycling of plastics; and what steps he is taking to ensure their wider existence;

(2) what action his Department is taking to encourage the use of environmentally benign plastics;

(3) what information he has on the long-term viability of biodegradable plastics; and what measures he is taking to encourage their development;

(4) what measures he is taking to ensure that plastics are either recycled or disposed of in a manner that enhances the environment and does not involve their dumping in land fill sites.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Recycling of plastics is carried out within the plastics industry with about 50 firms engaged in this work.

Recycling of plastics used by consumers is more difficult because of the variety of polymers used and the difficulty of separating mixed plastics accordingly.

The Government encourage recycling as an environmentally sound disposal option where it is economic to do so and held a workshop in October 1986 with industry to promote this. The Government are supporting the proposal by UK 2000 for a "Recycling City" demonstration in Sheffield later this year and are pressing the plastics and soft drinks industries to include one or more post-consumer recycling projects in the plans. The demonstration will be monitored and the results publicised to encourage other towns and cities to follow suit.

The use and development of biodegradable plastics has been the subject of research within industry and progress has been made in a number of areas. In the long term, however, market forces will determine the extent to which such materials become widely used. The Government are satisfied that controlled landfill is a safe and practicable disposal method for plastic waste that cannot be recycled.

Archaeology

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of archaeology surveys and researches that his Department is funding in the three counties of Yorkshire together with the cost to date; and if this is separate from English Heritage's input.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This is a matter for English Heritage.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effect his Department's emphasis on funding in conjunction with English Heritage and on sponsorship of archaeological sites with tourist potential has had on sites of lesser potential in the three counties of Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: English Heritage has the responsibility for deciding priorities for funding, within its overall resources.

Water Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new controls over intensive farming and sewage works his Department expects to bring into force in the light of the two new draft European Community directives putting controls on fertilisers with the aim of preventing the pollution of drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be in a position to designate vulnerable areas under the European Community directive on nitrate levels in drinking, ground and sea water.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* The European Commission has just published its draft proposal for a directive on the protection of fresh, coastal and marine waters against the pollution caused by nitrates.

It is too early to predict the form or timing of the measures needed to implement the draft directive, were the proposals to be agreed by the member states.

Acid Rain

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the contribution made to acid rain in and around the United Kingdom by car exhaust fumes; what progress is being made to reduce this proportion by the fitting of catalytic converters and other means; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of Transport is preparing regulations to apply the limits for car exhaust emissions agreed within the European Community. The means by which these limits can be reached are a matter for the motor industry. It is expected that most cars over 1400 cc sold in the United Kingdom will require catalysts to meet them. A further measure for cars below 1400 cc has recently been agreed by the European Community and it is the Government's intention to implement it. The limits are such that most cars below 1400 cc will also then require at least an oxidation catalyst to meet them. Estimates of road transport emissions of nitrogen oxides, the main acidic pollutant from vehicles, are given in the annual digest of environmental protection and water statistics. The 11th edition will be published shortly and copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Radon

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and location of the public sector buildings in England and Wales that receive a level of radon in excess of that which they were designed to withstand, and the number of milliSieverts by which that design standard is exceeded.

Mr. Chope: I can add nothing to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member on 23 January (*Official Report* column *455*).

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities where the rate support grant settlement for 1989-90 shows an increase of less than 3 per cent.; and what is the average percentage increase for all local authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The list below shows those authorities with increases in block grant of less than 3 per cent. between 1988-89 and 1989-90. The average increase for England is 8·8 per cent. The grant figures for 1988-89 have been adjusted for the transfer of higher education establishments to the polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

Authorities with increase of less than 3 per cent. in block grant between 1988-89 and 1989-90

East Cambridgeshire	Craven
Caradon	Ryedale
Erewash	Ashfield
North East Derbyshire	Gedling
Mid Devon	Vale of White Horse
North Dorset	Oswestry
Lewes	Mendip
Rother	Sedgemoor
Brentwood	Taunton Deane
Cotswold	South Somerset
East Hampshire	Tamworth
Rushmoor	Warwick
Malvern Hills	Chichester
Holderness	St. Helens
Kingston upon Hull	Barnsley
Ashford	Rotherham
Gravesham	Gateshead
Maidstone	Hounslow
Rochester upon Medway	Avon
Tunbridge Wells	Dorset
Fylde	Essex
South Ribble	Hampshire
Boston	Isle of Wight
East Lindsey	North Yorkshire
South Holland	Nottinghamshire
South Kesteven	Staffordshire
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	Suffolk
Tynedale	Wiltshire

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on what new plans he has to deal with the future disposal of chemical hazardous waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 14 December to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), *Official Report*, column *612*. Since then, we have issued a further consultation paper, on 24 January, proposing additional measures affecting the future of waste disposal control. A copy of this paper has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* initiatives taken since 1979 to deal with the problems associated with the storage of hazardous chemical waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Control of Pollution Act 1974 requires, under section 3, that any land being used for the purposes of waste disposal must be licenced by the local waste disposal authority. These licences were originally issued under the Control of Pollution (Licensing of Waste Disposal) Regulations 1976 (as amended) and subsequently by the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988.

The 1988 regulations require the licensing of premises used to store wastes (including hazardous wastes) under certain circumstances. The regulations require a licence to be issued where special wastes—as defined by the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980—are stored above certain quantities. These limits are as follows:

(a) liquid wastes in excess of 23,000 litres stored in secure containers;

(b) non-liquid wastes of a total volume greater than 80 cubic metres stored in secure containers; and

(c) non-liquid wastes of a total volume greater than 50 cubic metres stored in a secure place or places.

The licence issued by the waste disposal authority should contain all necessary conditions to ensure that the operation of the licensed facility does not give rise to a danger to public health or cause pollution to water. It is the duty of the waste disposal authority to enforce the conditions of the licence and ensure compliance.

The operators of such facilities also have responsibilities towards their workers which are covered by health and safety legislation.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those sites now designated as official storage sites for hazardous chemical waste; and when each site was last inspected by his inspectors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Control of Pollution Act 1974 requires, under section 3, that any land being used for the purposes of waste disposal must be licensed by the local waste disposal authority. Sites which store hazardous waste (specifically) special waste as defined in the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations above certain quantities have required such licences since 1976.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has records of some 126 such licensed facilities in England and Wales. As Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution does not hold copies of all waste disposal licences it would be necessary to obtain copies from the respective waste disposal authorities in order to provide full details. This would involve disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the additional requirements that a site designated as suitable for storage of hazardous chemical waste has to have before it is so designated.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Control of Pollution Act 1974 requires, under section 3, that any land being used for the purposes of waste disposal must be licenced by the

local waste disposal authority. Sites which store hazardous waste—specifically special waste as defined in the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations—above certain quantities have required such licences since 1976.

Waste disposal authorities are required to licence each waste disposal site individually taking into account all necessary measures to ensure that the facility operates in such a way as to prevent danger to public health and to avoid the pollution of water. Premises licenced to store hazardous waste are treated in exactly the same manner as any other waste disposal facility and, as such, there are no specific statutory requirements that apply solely to such facilities. Guidance on the issues that might be addressed in a licence for the storage of hazardous waste has been given by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in waste management paper No. 4.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what requests have been made to him by the Walsall metropolitan borough council regarding action over the disposal of hazardous and toxic waste; and what has been his response.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 3 February 1989]:* In the past year, the Department has responded in detailed correspondence and discussion about the council's views on the need for more controls over disposal operations and imports and about their wish to eliminate hazardous waste disposal operations from their area. Those responses have included emphasis on the need for waste disposal authorities to meet the requirements of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in planning and controlling waste disposal and explanations of the Government proposals for legislative improvements and the mechanism of the recently introduced Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* initiatives taken since 1979 to deal with the problems associated with the storage of hazardous chemical waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

My officials have taken part with the Department of the Environment in the preparation of United Kingdom waste management papers on a number of topics relevant to special wastes, including:

	Year
Wood preserving wastes	1980
Arsenic bearing wastes	1980
Pesticide wastes	1980
Special wastes	1981
Clinical wastes	1983
Cadmium bearing wastes	1984
Heat treatment cyanide wastes	1985

The Control of Pollution (Licensing of Waste Disposal) (Scotland) Regulations 1977 and the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations, made in 1980, are being reviewed.

The need for a licence covering storage of special waste is drawn to the attention of waste disposal authorities during formal visits by the hazardous waste inspectorate.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* those sites now designated as official storage sites for hazardous chemical waste; and when each site was last inspected by his inspectors.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

Waste disposal authorities are not obliged to make returns giving details of their licences. From information held centrally we have identified four facilities in Scotland which are licensed solely for the storage of certain hazardous waste. These are:—

Address of storage facility	*Waste disposal authority*
Eni-Chem Elastomers Bo'ness Road Grangemouth	Falkirk District Council
Non-Tox Limited Dalcross Industrial Estate Ardesier	Inverness District Council
Strathclyde Department of Education Auchingramont Road Hamilton	Hamilton District Council
BP Petroleum Development Limited The Vadill Sullom Voe Terminal	Shetland Islands Council

It is the duty of waste disposal authorities to supervise the operation of all licensed facilities in their area. An inspector from the hazardous waste inspectorate did however visit the Sullom Voe site in 1984.

Storage facilities exist at other sites licensed for the disposal of waste, but are not identified separately.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the additional requirements that a site designated as suitable for storage of hazardous chemical waste has to have before it is so designated.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

Waste disposal authorities are required to license each waste disposal site individually and such licences may incorporate conditions relating to storage. There are no specific statutory requirements that apply solely to storage facilities.

In setting licence conditions applicable to any site, a waste disposal authority will take account of the materials to be stored, the nature of the operation and its location. Licence conditions for each site seek to ensure that each waste facility does not present a danger to public health, cause water pollution or become seriously detrimental to the amenity of the locality.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the terms of reference given by the London Docklands Development Corporation to Research Bureau Ltd. on employment in the London Docklands; on what date it was commissioned; what was the fee paid; on what date he received a copy; and what is the likely date of publication.

Mr. Trippier: The LDDC commissioned Research Bureau Ltd. to report on the changes in employment in Docklands since the previous survey in 1985, by letters

dated 1 May and 21 July 1987. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, fees for individual consultancies are not normally disclosed. The corporation plans to release the survey results this month, and a copy will be placed in the Library. My Department will also receive a copy.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies Her Majesty's Government have commissioned on the sub-sea disposal of nuclear waste; which private companies are involved; and if he will summarise what role each has.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of the Environment commissioned research on the feasibility and safety of subseabed disposal of radio-active waste as part of an international programme co-ordinated by the nuclear energy agency of OECD. The research was completed in 1987. No private companies are now involved.

Wild Birds

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the United Kingdom has complied with the European Economic Community directive on the conservation of wild birds; which other members of the Community comply with the directive; and what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that its terms are complied with throughout the Community.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The directive's requirements are implemented by means of part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in England, Scotland and Wales and by the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Orders 1985 and Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 in Northern Ireland.

The directive is binding on all member states of the Community and requires them to introduce their own legislation to implement the directive, and to ensure that it is applied effectively. It is the responsibility of the EC Commission to check that adequate measures have been taken, and they have shown themselves willing to use their powers to refer to European courts of justice cases where, in the Commission's view, member states have failed fully to comply with the directive.

Methane Gas Escape (Denton)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions officials of his Department have had with Tameside metropolitan borough council about the escape of methane gas at the old tip in Ruby street, Denton.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: HM inspectorate of pollution has held discussions with Tameside MBC regarding the migration of landfill gas from the closed landfill at Ruby street, Denton. Inspectors have visited the site and are keeping closely in touch with progress on remedial action.

Water Authority Land

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many sites of special scientific interest lie wholly or partly on water authority land; and if he will list the sites of special scientific interest and the water authorities concerned;

(2) how many sites of scientific interest lie wholly or partly on water authority land;

(3) if he will list the sites of scientific interest which are wholly or partly owned by the Yorkshire water authority;

(4) how many sites of special scientific interest are wholly or partly owned or administered by British statutory water companies; and if he will list these sites of special scientific interest and the water companies concerned;

(5) how many sites of scientific interest are wholly or partly owned or administered by British statutory water companies; and if he will list those sites of scientific interest and the water companies concerned.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information about sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) is currently being assembled by the Nature Conservancy Council. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

I understand that the term "sites of scientific interest" refers to non-statutory designated sites and was used mainly by the former county councils of West and South Yorkshire in the context of development plans. The information about such sites may be available from the appropriate successor local authority. It can not be provided by the Department except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of *(a)* statutory public footpaths, *(b)* statutory public bridleways and *(c)* permissive footpaths lie within British statutory water companies' land holdings; and if he will list the mileage for each company in each category.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This detailed information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Warrington and Runcorn new town development corporation; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Trippier: I had a useful meeting with Professor Mercer on Monday 30 January. We discussed a wide range of matters, including progress towards the wind-up of the development corporation in September, housing, and progress with asset disposals in Warrington and Runcorn.

Environmental Awareness

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place a consultancy research contract with the countryside interpretation unit, presently based at the Open university, Milton Keynes, as part of his Department's promotion of countryside environmental awareness.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of the Environment has no immediate intentions of placing a consultancy research contract with the countryside interpretation unit. Research contracts are commissioned in keeping with the Department's research priorities and on the basis of competitive tenders, unless there are special reasons for inviting a single contractor. The Department will consider proposals for research relevant to its responsibilities in line with its established contractual procedures.

Under-used Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual cost to central and local government of preparing, publishing and updating the public registers of under-used land; how many staff have been employed on this work; and what is the additional number of acres which have been added to the registers, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Trippier: The average annual cost to my Department in recent years is calculated to have been £383,000. Details of the annual cost to local government are not held centrally. Within my Department 19 full-time equivalent staff have been employed on this work.

The table shows the gross and the net area added to the registers, in acres, in each of the last five calendar years:

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Area added (gross)	7,700	10,800	6,300	7,700	4,800
Area removed	6,800	12,300	12,200	15,500	10,900
Area added (net)	+900	−1,500	−5,900	−7,800	−6,100

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many acres of under-used land currently on the public registers are in the ownership of *(a)* the water authorities and *(b)* the electricity boards; and how many acres have been removed from the registers following the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of January 1989, the registers of unused and under-used land owned by public bodies contained details of 2,243 acres of such land owned by water authorities and 2,938 acres owned by electricity boards.

Following the privatisation of the former British Gas Corporation, 1,456 acres of land owned by that body were removed from the registers.

Future Bills

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the next Bills on *(a)* local government, *(b)* town and country planning and *(c)* housing.

Mr. Ridley: The Government's Local Government and Housing Bill was published on Thursday, 2 February. There are no proposals for a Bill on town and country planning in the present Session. I cannot anticipate the contents of legislative programmes for future years.

Rating Reform

Mr. Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would on present estimates *(a)* a ward sister and *(b)* a teacher of five years experience and living in an average three bedroom terraced house in Waveney pay under *(a)* domestic rates, *(b)* community charge and *(c)* a combination of local income tax and capital value rates.

Mr. Gummer: A ward sister earning £13,000 living in a house in Waveney worth £60,000 and with a rateable value of £200 would pay a rates bill of £422, a community charge of £194 (disregarding the transitional safety net) and £485 under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax (LIT). A teacher on a similar salary, living in an identical property, would pay the same rates and community charge bills as the ward sister, and broadly the same capital value rates/LIT bill. In both cases the capital value rates/LIT bill would vary somewhat, depending on the taxable income of the individuals.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of what a married couple with one child, and only one parent working, earning *(a)* £8,000 per annum living in a two bedroomed house valued at £65,000, *(b)* £12,000 per annum living in a three bedroomed house valued at £85,000, and *(c)* £18,000 per annum living in a three bedroomed house valued at £100,000, would pay in (i) a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80:20 and (ii) rates if they lived in Chelmsford.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* The figures are given in the table, together with the assumptions used in each case. It has been necessary to supply assumptions about rateable value and taxable incomes.

Example A
Married couple; gross income £8,000; taxable income £1,000; capital value £65,000; rateable value £175

	£
Rate bill	413
Community charge (no safety net)	[1]458
Capital value rate/LIT bill	525

[1] 2 × £229.

Example B
Married couple; gross income £12,000; taxable income £5,000; capital value £85,000; rateable value £275

	£
Rate bill	649
Community charge (no safety net)	[1]458
Capital value rate/LIT bill	730

[1] 2 × £229.

Example C
Married couple; gross income £18,000; taxable income £11,000; capital value £100,000; rateable value £375

	£
Rate bill	885
Community charge (no safety net)	[1]458
Capital value rate/LIT bill	920

[1] 2 × £229.

Sewers

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of all domestic properties are served by *(a)* sewers adopted under section 18 of the Public Health Act 1936, *(b)* sewers connected to the mains but themselves unadopted and *(c)* private sewers unconnected to the mains; and what proportion of new houses fall into these several categories.

Mr. Howard: More than 95 per cent. of the population of England and Wales are connected directly or indirectly

to the public sewer network. No comprehensive information is available on the proportion of domestic properties served by sewers adopted by water authorities under sections 17 and 18 of the Public Health Act 1936, or which remain unadopted.

Water Authorities (Finance)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the anticipated outstanding debt for each water authority, expressed in sterling, for 1989-90.

Mr. Howard: I expect the liabilities of the water authorities to pass to the successor bodies under the provisions of the Water Bill before the end of 1989. Figures for debt outstanding at the end of 1988-89 will be published in each authority's annual accounts in the usual way.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the external finance limits for each water authority, for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is set out in the table for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89. I expect the water authorities to pass to the successor bodies under the provisions of the Water Bill before the end of 1989.

Authority	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Anglian	45·7	36·0	23·5
Northumbrian	18·0	−1·0	4·0
North West	58·0	60·2	54·0
Severn Trent	7·9	−2·4	−16·5
Southern	2·2	−5·0	−13·5
South West	4·7	1·0	1·0
Thames	−82·0	−95·0	−95·0
Wessex	26·8	13·0	25·0
Yorkshire	25·8	21·5	15·0

External finance limits for the Welsh water authorities are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Rate Support Grant (Cambridgeshire)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total rate support grant to Cambridgeshire for each year from 1983-84 to 1989-90; and what it would have been if total expenditure had not exceeded Government targets in those years when that occurred.

Mr. Gummer: The table shows the latest figures for total rate support grant payable to authorities in Cambridgeshire for each year from 1983-84 to 1989-90.

In 1984-85 the grant of Cambridgeshire county council was abated by £4·152 million because its total expenditure exceeded Government targets. In 1983-84 Peterborough's grant was abated by less than £500.

Rate support grant payable to authorities in Cambridgeshire under latest supplementary report and 1989-90 settlement report

	£ million
1983-84	93·665
1984-85	92·883
1985-86	87·556
1986-87	83·195
1987-88	84·693
1988-89	78·166
1989-90	72·219

Waste Regulations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to introduce legislation to strengthen waste regulatory controls.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* Legislation will be introduced as soon as possible based on the Government's announcement of 29 June 1988 and the results of consultation exercises announced on 23 November and 24 January. Copies of the consultation papers have been placed in the Library of the House.

Inner City Programmes

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) of 30 January, *Official Report*, columns *24-28*, which are the inner cities programmes his Department is carrying out; what non-government organisations are taking part in such programmes; where each of these programmes is operating; and on what date each one was started.

Mr. Trippier: My Department's principal inner city programmes are described in the publication "DoE Inner City Programmes, 1987-88", which also gives an account of their achievements and development and contains a map of the areas in which they are operating. These programmes and the years of their inception are: urban development corporations (1981), grants for urban development (1982—now subsumed in city grant which started last year), the urban programme (1969), derelict land grant (1981 in its present form), enterprise zones (1981) and land registers (1981).

A large number of non-governmental organisations are making use of these programmes and it would not be practicable to list them.

TRANSPORT

Judicial Review

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out for the last 10 years *(a)* the number of decisions relating to motorway and other major infrastructure projects made by the Secretary of State for Transport that have been referred for judicial review, *(b)* in how many instances the High Court has found against the Secretary of State and, *(c)* in those cases where the High Court dismissed an application for judicial review, what was the cost to his Department of defending the action and his estimate of the length of delay caused to the project by such applications.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the last 10 years 16 orders made by the Secretary of State for Transport on motorway and major road projects have been challenged in the High Court. No orders made by the Secretary of State have been referred for judicial review.

Two of the challenges were successful.

We do not have details of the costs incurred in defending these cases. On all those where the application was dismissed, costs were awarded against the appellant.

Delay to the projects varied from nil to four years depending on the particular circumstances in each case.

Driver Information Systems

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were his reasons for proposing the direct licensing of personal data contained within driver information systems, as outlined in part II of the Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Bill; and how these proposals relate to the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The possible licence condition at clause 10(8)(f) of the Bill would enable the Secretary of State to require an operator of a driver information system to provide him with information from the system and to authorise him to make it available to others. This provision reflects the fact that the autoguide system will generate information on the speeds and journey times of autoguide-equipped vehicles. Such information could be of value to the Department and other highway authorities in developing traffic management strategies.

It is not our intention that part II of the Bill should provide for the licensing of personal data or that it should override any part of the Data Protection Act.

If any amendments are necessary to place that beyond doubt, we shall bring them forward.

Road Traffic Discs

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road tax discs are lost or stolen each year; and if he has any plans to seek to introduce legislation to deter theft of tax discs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On the basis of subsequent applications for refunds or duplicates, very roughly 150,000 licence discs—about 0·5 per cent. of licences issued—are lost or stolen each year.

Theft of licence discs is a crime. There is no need for further legislation.

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been carried out on theft-proof alternatives to the road tax disc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The vehicle excise licence disc includes a number of security features which make it difficult to forge or fraudulently alter, and thus make it unattractive to thieves.

Research continues into the possibility of making licences more difficult to remove from vehicle windscreens without affecting the security and other design features. They often need to be removed legitimately for refunds.

Various high-technology alternatives to tax discs have been examined. So far none of them is as cost effective as the present system.

Road Schemes (Open Space)

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria are used in the evaluation for COBA of public open space to be acquired for road schemes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In addition to the DV's valuation in COBA, the manual of environmental appraisal requires the appraisal framework to include full reference to any public open space taken by a road scheme, and the effect on those who use it.

The Department is required to provide replacement public open space, of satisfactory quality, for any taken for road schemes. The cost of this is also included in the COBA appraisal.

The Department accepts the independent valuation of the district valuer for all land and property costs used in the assessment of road schemes.

Shipping (Western Isles)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the density of shipping traffic on the Atlantic side of the Western Isles where the sea depth is 100m.

Mr. Portillo: The Department of Transport does not have this information.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many navigation lights and radar reflectors are at present deployed on the western side of the Western Isles.

Mr. Portillo: There are 13 navigation lights and one radar beacon (racon). For general navigation the Northern Lighthouse Board maintains three major lights at Barra Head, Butt of Lewis and Flannan Isles, and two minor lights at Carloway and Greinam in the Isle of Lewis. For local navigation, local bodies provide eight other minor lights. The Ministry of Defence operates a racon at Monach off North Uist.

British Rail (Staff)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what directions have been given to the British Railways Board in respect of reductions in staffing or manpower of its employees; and what efficiency targets or other targets have been given to the board which impinge on future staffing levels.

Mr. Portillo: The only formal directions given to the railways board in recent years concern accounting provision and loan repayments. The objectives which the Government wish the board to pursue were set out in a letter from the Secretary of State to the Chairman on 21 October 1986, and published in the *Official Report* of the same day (columns *772-74)*. The quality of service standards agreed between the Government and board were published in the *Official Report* on 17 July 1987 (columns *671-72)*. It is for the board to decide how best to meet those objectives, including the levels of manpower required.

British Rail (Meetings)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of British Rail on 26 January at the launch of the central London rail study.

Driving Licences

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with named bodies or persons having experience of administration of

driving licences for private drivers, public service licences, and licences for heavy goods vehicles; and if he will place responses to such consultations in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's officials have regular meetings with those involved with the operation of the ordinary and vocational licensing systems. The Department consulted widely last year about proposals for a new unified licensing system. A summary of the responses was placed in the Library.

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will specify each donation made by his Department in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Portillo: The information is:

Donation to		*£*
	1979-80 to	
Channel ferry disaster fund	1985-86	nil
King's Cross disaster fund	1986-87	[1]1,000,000
Clapham junction disaster fund	1987-88	250,000
East midlands air crash disaster fund	1988-89	250,000
		[2]150,000

[1] Repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund, which was repaid in 1987-88.
[2] The balance of the Government donation of £250,000 was met by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has as to the annual cost in each of the past 10 years of the issue of drivers' licences by the driver and vehicle licensing centre, Swansea; and if he will give the number of staff employed in each year at the centre for this purpose.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total cost of operating the driver licensing system and the staff employed in DVLCs driver licensing division in each of the last 10 years is as follows:

Financial year	*£ million*	*Licensing division staff numbers*
1978-79	12·3	1,053
1979-80	11·3	901
1980-81	12·7	919
1981-82	16·0	949
1982-83	17·6	942
1983-84	19·4	932
1984-85	20·5	915
1985-86	20·3	965
1986-87	20·4	964
1987-88	21·0	915
Total cost	171·5	

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will detail the number of driving licences issued to new drivers in each of the last 10 years, together with the total number of valid licences in each year and the percentage of the total that new drivers' licences represent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table provides the required information.

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Number of driving licences issued to new drivers	1,346,373	1,382,060	1,290,680	1,348,336	1,135,724	1,273,977	1,202,565	1,193,244	1,120,315	1,177,748
Total number of valid licences issued	6,271,974	6,622,997	6,199,578	6,665,962	6,346,080	5,666,748	5,621,893	5,621,893	6,320,371	6,656,681
Percentage of total that new drivers represent	21·47	20·87	20·82	20·23	17·90	22·48	21·39	18·88	17·89	17·69

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving licences were reissued in each of the past 10 years as a result of *(a)* a change of address, *(b)* loss, *(c)* disqualified drivers requalifying and *(d)* other causes; and what percentage of the total number of licences issued in each of these years each of these categories represent.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no statistics available about the number of driving licences issued for change of address. The driving licence form which is used for this purpose may also be used for change of name—for example, females on marriage. The statistics are therefore combined. The table shows the categories of licences issued in the last 10 years.

	(a) Change of address including names (replacements)	*per cent. of total*	*(b) Loss (duplicates)*	*per cent. of total*	*(c) Disqualification (renewal after disqualification)*	*per cent. of total*	*(d) Others*	*per cent. of total*	*Total licences issued (including first issues to new applicants)*
1979	1,434,904	22·88	201,177	3·21	61,883	0·99	3,227,637	51·46	6,271,974
1980	1,560,646	23·56	234,876	3·55	66,166	1·00	3,379,249	51·02	6,622,997
1981	1,394,394	22·49	206,631	3·33	58,422	0·94	3,249,451	52·41	6,199,578
1982	1,773,176	26·60	272,278	4·08	65,324	0·98	3,206,848	48·10	6,665,962
1983	1,955,790	30·31	271,983	4·29	59,354	0·94	2,923,229	46·06	6,346,080
1984	2,058,675	36·33	304,078	5·37	73,852	1·30	1,956,166	34·52	5,666,748
1985	2,222,845	39·54	340,650	6·06	80,857	1·44	1,775,636	31·58	5,621,893
1986	2,752,320	43·55	377,247	5·97	87,386	1·38	1,910,177	30·22	6,320,371
1987	2,796,194	44·65	396,010	6·32	89,623	1·43	1,859,915	27·70	6,262,057
1988	3,052,674	45·86	441,056	6·63	88,872	1·34	1,896,331	28·49	6,656,681

North-West (Road Building)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the road building work contracts in the north-west during 1988-89 scheduled to cost over £1 million.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following is the table:

Scheme	*Total cost excluding land*
M63 (junctions 1-3)	21·0
M63 (junctions 3-5)	21·7
M63 Portwood-Brinnington M66 Brinnington-Denton	45·5
M62 widening (junctions 21-22)	10·00
A565 Derby Road improvement	2·1
A483 Gresford-Pulford bypass	[1]4·6

[1] English section only.

In addition work has been carried out on five major motorway maintenance contracts with a value of over £1 million. Contracts on local authority roads are not included.

Noise Insulation

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of his Department's current policy regarding the provision of insulation grants and other assistance for people living adjacent to *(a)* motorways and *(b)* airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: For people living near new motorways and other new public roads, there is provision for insulation against noise in the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975 and for compensation for injurious affection in the Land Compensation Act 1973. Offers of insulation or grant are made where dwellings receive or are expected to receive noise levels which meet the criteria set out in the regulations. Claims for compensation for nuisance caused by specified physical factors arising from the use of a road can be made against the highway authority one year after the new road is opened to traffic. These provisions do not assist those who live near older roads not covered by the legislation introduced in 1973 or who have moved near a motorway since it opened.

Details of the provisions and procedures for claims are set out in the land compensation series of booklets, in particular No. 2 entitled "Your Home and Nuisance from Public Development" and No. 5 "Insulation against Traffic Noise".

The Government have designated Heathrow and Gatwick for noise insulation grant purpose and has made, by statutory instrument, various noise insulation grants schemes. The most recent schemes for these airports which provided for grants to be paid by the then British Airports Authority effectively ended in March 1985. As promised in the 1985 airports policy White Paper, these schemes were reviewed. This suggested that small areas outside the scheme boundary at each airport should be included retrospectively. BAA plc have agreed to operate and fund extensions to the schemes which will be promulgated by statutory instrument shortly. We have no plans to introduce new schemes at these airports.

We are committed to introducing a scheme at Stansted when the airport reaches 2 million passengers per annum. We understand that BAA has introduced schemes at its non-designated airports and that several other airports also pay such grants.

The Land Compensation Act 1973 provides that if there has been depreciation in value of property as a result of change in the noise climate (or other physical factor) arising from major apron and runway alterations to an existing airport, or the coming into use of a new airport then the airport operator is liable to pay compensation equal to that depreciation in value to the property. The Act does not provide for the payment of compensation for loss of property value to owners of property around airports which may be progressively affected by the intensified use of an airport. Although no powers exist to require airport owners or operators to acquire properties suffering from severe noise-blight, BAA plc introduced voluntary schemes to do this at Heathrow and Gatwick. The schemes, with boundaries based on the 65 NNI (noise and number index) contours and ownership predating 17 October 1969, closed on 31 December 1988 though applications received before then are still being processed. Similar arrangements have been made for noise-blighted properties near airports owned by local authorities.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations British Rail will be undertaking with affected individuals and communities following the publication of the four route options for the construction of a fast rail link between the Channel tunnel and London termini.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that BR will be setting out its proposals for further consultations when it announces its preferred route.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that British Rail consults fully the communities affected by any of the four Channel tunnel fast rail links options; and if he will set out his criteria for assessing the effectiveness of consultation.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is well aware of the need to consult those affected by its proposals. It will be for Parliament to judge whether those consultations have been effective if and when it considers BR's Private Bill.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to a loan guarantee scheme, underwritten by his Department, as a possible vehicle for providing extra money for British Rail to construct a Channel tunnel fast rail link from the Kent coast to London termini.

Mr. Portillo: None. Such a scheme would not affect the need for BR's investment to be commercially viable.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to use the hybrid Bill procedure to progress British Rail's proposals to build a new railway line through Kent.

Mr. Portillo: I have no plans to use the hybrid Bill procedure.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received from the proponents the costings for the proposed railway route known to its promoters as Talis.

Mr. Portillo: I have not.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to whether the private Bill procedure will be used in the event of the British Railways Board seeking legislative approval to construct a Channel tunnel high-speed fixed rail link from the Kent coast to London termini.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail has no alternative but to use the Private Bill procedure to acquire all the powers that it needs to construct and operate new railway lines.

Roads and Maintenance

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total amount spent on roads and maintenance in 1987-88 and the estimated amount for 1988-89.

Mr. Bottomley: The total amount spent on roads and maintenance in Great Britain in 1987-88 was £3,382 million. The forecast outturn in 1988-89 is £3,541 million.

Railway Safety (Survey)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will direct the chairman of British Rail to publish the survey of safety on the rail network carried out by the British Transport police at Liverpool street and Fenchurch street stations in November 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 3 February [*Official Report*, column *439*].

British Transport Police

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Transport police officers were employed in total in each of the last five years; and of the total, how many were allocated to British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: BTP figures for officers in post are in the table:

(end years)	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Total	1,961	1,817	1,834	1,846	1,830
of which allocated to British Rail	1,425	1,446	1,417	1,455	1,427

The change in the total between 1984 and 1985 reflected the termination of arrangements between Associated British Ports and the BTP.

M40 Extension

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long the first public inquiry into the M40 extension took; how many witnesses gave evidence; how many pages of evidence were taken; when the first public inquiry ended; and when the inspector presented his report of that inquiry to him.

Mr. Bottomley: The public inquiry took 117 days. There were 169 witnesses and 756 documents and 232 plans were taken in evidence. The inquiry ended on 3 June 1983. The inspectors' report was presented to the Secretary of State in March 1984.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Government first announced an intention to construct the Banbury bypass/M40 extension; when the first public inquiry into the M40 extension began; and what were the reasons for the delay between the two dates.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The first announcement about the M40 extension was made in April 1968. The first public inquiry, for the Waterstock to Warwick section, commenced in September 1982. The time between can be accounted for by public consultation, detailed design and statutory procedures on the section between the M42 and Warwick.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he announced his decision on the route of the M40 extension subsequent to receiving the inspector's report; what were the dates of court hearings for judicial review of that decision; and what is the estimated delay on the M40 extension of such hearings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport announced their decision on 14 December 1984. The orders were challenged. The court hearings were on 23 May and 20 December 1985. The estimated delay was one year.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the recent public inquiry into the M40 extension commenced; how many witnesses gave evidence; how many pages of evidence were taken; when the inquiry ended; and when the inspector submitted his report to him.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The public inquiry into the Waterstock-Wendlebury section opened on 8 September 1987 and closed on 22 January 1988. One hundred and eighty-three witnesses presented 625 documents of varying lengths. The transcripts for 63 sitting days averaged about 80 pages a day. The inspector's report was received on 28 July 1988.

Port of Dover (Improvements)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is still Government policy to ensure that improvements to the road and rail access to the ferries sailing from the port of Dover should take place in a manner consistent with enabling the ferries to compete in a fair manner with the proposed Channel tunnel after 1993.

Mr. Portillo: Yes. We are firmly committed to an even-handed approach towards the tunnel and the ferries.

A20 Folkestone—Dover

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reasons for the delay in the inspector's report on the proposed dualling of the A20 between Dover and Folkestone; and when he expects a decision to be announced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The complex issues in the inspector's report and the objections and representations, are being carefully considered. We hope to make an announcement in the summer.

A1 Morpeth

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the latest available figures for

traffic flow at peak times on the A1 road between Morpeth and the Scottish border; and if he will make a statement on the growth trend of traffic on that section of the A1 over the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's northern regional office has installed three permanent loop counting sites on the A1 north of Morpeth. Two of the sites, one north of Berwick and another north of Alnwick have been in operation for more than a year. The third site, just south of Alnwick, has been operating since October 1988.

The latest flow figures at these sites showing a seven-day average for the week ending Sunday 1 January 1989 are as follows:

	Vehicles per day (24 hours)
North of Berwick	5,650
South of Alnwick	8,200
North of Alnwick	4,850

The highest recorded flows during the past 12 months on the two sites in operation in that period were:

	Vehicles per day (24 hours)
North of Berwick	9,770
North of Alnwick	7,730

There are no figures available that would accurately reflect the traffic growth over the last ten years on this section of road. Local planning data from the Alnwick and Berwick districts indicates a growth factor of 28 per cent. over this period.

Cambridgeshire

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been total central Government expenditure on roads in Cambridgeshire for each year from 1979-80 to 1988-89, and that anticipated for 1989-90, at cash figures and at 1989 prices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information in the form requested is not readily available and may be obtainable only at a disproportionate cost. I will write to my hon. Friend.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Cyril Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on what plans London Regional Transport has to purchase additional rolling stock for the Docklands light railway.

Mr. Portillo: Ten vehicles were ordered in July 1987 from BREL. Following competitive tendering, London Regional Transport has recently awarded a contract for a further 10 vehicles costing £9·85 million to BN Ferroviares et Metalliques SA, a Belgian-based company. BN has associated with Hawker Siddeley Rail projects, which will be supplying the major sub-systems. The additional rolling stock is part of the programme for upgrading the capacity of the Docklands light railway and extending it to Bank station.

A11

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates he envisages the start of each of the various phases of dualling of the A11 between *(a)* Stumps Cross and the Newmarket bypass and *(b)* the Newmarket bypass and the Barton Mills bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Listed below are the five schemes currently being prepared in the national trunk road programme with an indication of the expected start, subject to completion of the statutory procedures. I cannot be more specific at this stage.

Scheme	*Planned start year*
Stump Cross to Four Wentways improvement	After 1991
Four Wentways Junction improvement	1991
Four Wentways to Newmarket dualling	1991
Newmarket to Red Lodge	1991
Red Lodge bypass	1990

Railway Development

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each newly constructed underground railway and substantial alteration to an existing railway which has been approved by Transport Ministers since 1959.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 January 1989]:* Following is a list of approvals by Ministers of Transport to the use of new or substantially altered underground railways during the period 1959-88, following inspection by officers of the railway inspectorate. It does not include resignalling schemes, station refurbishments or the provision or uplift of maintenance facilities.

London Underground lines

Jubilee Line:
- New underground section: Baker Street to Charing Cross.

Metropolitan Line:
- Aldersgate-Moorgate realignment.

Northern (City) Line:
- Diversion of northbound line at Highbury as part of Victoria Line scheme.

Picadilly Line:
- Diversion into Northern (City) Line station tunnel at Finsbury Park as part of Victoria Line scheme.
- Progressive extension to Hatton Cross, Heathrow Central and Terminal 4.

Victoria Line:
- Opening from Walthamstow Central to Highbury and Islington. Progressive extension to Warren Street, Victoria and Brixton.

British Rail Lines
- Opening of Merseyrail loop and link line (financed by Merseyside PTE).
- Electrification of Moorgate-Kentish Town (underground section of St. Pancras/Moorgate-Bedford scheme).
- Drayton Park to Moorgate (reconstruction and transfer to BR of former Northern (City) Underground line).
- Blackfriars-Farringdon (electrification and introduction of passenger service; sub-surface section of Thameslink line).

Passenger Transport Executive Lines

Strathclyde:
- Glasgow Underground refurbishment.

Tyne and Wear:
- Sub-surface city centre sections of Metro (Jesmond-Gateshead Stadium and St. James-Manors).

THE ARTS

"Social Trends 19"

49. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the arts content of the recently published "Social Trends 19".

Mr. Luce: I welcome the evidence of growth in public interest in and total expenditure on the arts. This is clearly shown by the Social Trends publication.

National Maritime Museum

50. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what have been the attendances at the national maritime museum since charging was introduced.

Mr. Luce: Admission charges were introduced at the national maritime museum on 2 April 1984. Attendances in 1988, at over 700,000, exceeded substantially the estimated level of attendances in 1983, the year before the introduction of admission charges, and represented an increase of 60 per cent. over 1987.

Area Museums Councils

51. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will encourage the further establishment of area museums councils.

Mr. Luce: I welcome the work of the area museums councils as regional centres of expertise and initiative in museums matters. I have seen much of their work at first hand. I recently had the pleasure of opening the new headquarters of the north of England museums service in Newcastle. I understand from the Museums and Galleries Commission that discussions are at present taking place about the feasibility of establishing an area museums service for Northern Ireland.

British Theatre Association

52. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to provide adequate funding to make the British Theatre Association library available for theatrical research.

63. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to provide adequate funding to make the British Theatre Association library available for loans to repertory theatres.

56. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to provide adequate funding to make the British Theatre Association library available for academic research.

58. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on where the library of the British Theatre Association will be moved after closure.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) earlier today.

54. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the size of the British Theatre Association library's acquisition budget in each of the past five years.

Mr. Luce: I am advised by the BTA that its acquisition budget if the past five years has been as follows:

	£
1983-84	3,337
1984-85	4,297
1985-86	3,961
1986-87	7,595
1987-88	8,641

55. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has on the photographic collection of the British Theatre Association library.

Mr. Luce: I am advised by the BTA that it does not set out to maintain a comprehensive collection but does hold several thousand photographs covering west end productions and foreign productions, dating from the 1920s.

57. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many loans of texts were made by the British Theatre Association library in each of the past five years.

Mr. Luce: I am advised by the BTA that it lends both sets of texts and single texts; a set can be up to 12 volumes. The figures for the past five years are as follows:

	Sets	*Singles*	*Totals*
1983-84	12,580	6,092	18,672
1984-85	9,040	5,889	16,929
1985-86	8,980	6,602	15,582
[1]1986-87	8,310	4,998	13,308
1987-88	8,640	6,620	15,260

[1] The library was closed for two months due to a change of premises.

61. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many first editions of theatrical texts are owned by the British Theatre Association library.

Mr. Luce: I am advised by the British Theatre Association that approximately two thirds of the stock (that is, close to 200,000 volumes) consists of first editions. This includes sets of plays (multiple copies of a single title) which are first editions.

62. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to how many *(a)* individuals, *(b)* professional theatres and *(c)* others are members of the British Theatre Association library.

Mr. Luce: I am advised by the British Theatre Association that the total membership is 2,150, divided thus:

	Per cent.
Individuals active in professional theatre	30
Other individuals	10
Professional bodies	11·5
Amateur theatre groups and educational institutions	48

The percentages are approximate.

The British Theatre Association estimates that the individuals and groups represent some 200,000 people.

64. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when the collection of the British Theatre Association was last valued.

Mr. Luce: I am advised that the British Theatre Association has never valued the collection, in view of the prohibitive costs of such a valuation.

Arts Provision (Midlands)

53. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he will next make an official visit to Derby to discuss the provision of arts in the midlands.

Mr. Luce: I hope to visit Derby before too long.

Museum of the Moving Image

59. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the figures for attendances at the museum of the moving image on the south bank.

Mr. Luce: Since it opened in mid-September 1988, the museum of the moving image has attracted over 190,000 visitors.

Business Sponsorship

60. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of business sponsorship of the arts is spent outside London and the south-east.

Mr. Luce: Figures for the total level of business sponsorship outside London and the south-east are not available. However, under the business sponsorship incentive scheme, which matches new sponsorship, 70 per cent. of awards have gone to arts organisations based outside London.

Museums Training Institute

65. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what benefits will flow from the establishment of the museums training institute.

Mr. Luce: The museums training institute will be responsible for forming a view on the museum industry's training needs, identifying standards for the occupations in the industry, reviewing the content and delivery of training, promoting the provision of training, providing training in selected areas and validating training courses.

Since publication of the Museums and Galleries Commission working party report on museums training and career structure in July 1987, there has been considerable progress made in the development of museum training. The analysis of key skills and competences, which I announced in my statement of 17 March 1988, has laid a firm foundation for constructive progress. I anticipate that the museums training institute will develop these initiatives further, improving the quality and availability of training in the museum industry.

Arts Organisations (Assistance)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to encourage greater assistance to arts organisations in rural and deprived areas through the business sponsorship investment programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Seventy per cent. of awards under the business sponsorship incentive scheme go to arts organisations outside London; rural areas such as the Borders and Outer Hebrides feature in the scheme as well as inner cities. In 1987-88, Scotland was the second most successful region under the scheme, attracting £345,938 of new sponsorship which was matched by £194,185 of Government money.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Relocation

73. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the progress of Civil Service relocation.

Mr. Brooke: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave on 16 January at column 75, to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

Privatisations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the organisations, industries and firms privatised since May 1979, giving in each case the income to Government from the sale of each, the costs of broking, underwriting and advertising of each sale, the initial share price, the present share price, and the size and current value of shareholding retained by the Government, together with the nature of any golden share or any other arrangement to restrict takeover or shareholdings in any way.

Mr Norman Lamont: The information required about income to Government, share prices and size of residual shareholdings is as follows:

	Date of sale	*Proceeds to Her Majesty's Government* £ *million*	*Initial share price*	*Share price on 25 January 1989*	*Size of Her Majesty's Government share holding million*	*Current value* £ *million*
Amersham International	1982	64	142	514	—	—
Associated British Ports	1983	46	112	483	—	—
Associated British Ports	1984	51	250	—	—	—
British Aerospace	1981	43	150	486	—	—
British Aerospace	1985	347	375	—	—	—
British Telecom	1984	3,685	130	268	2,941	7,882·0
Britoil	1982	627	215	—	—	—
Britoil	1985	426	185	—	—	—
Cable and Wireless	1981	181	168	397	—	—
Cable and Wireless	1983	263	275	—	—	—
Cable and Wireless	1985	577	587	—	—	—
National Freight Consortium	1982	6	—	—	—	—
Enterprise Oil	1984	384	185	514	—	—
British Gas	1986	5,123	135	171½	136	233·0
British Gas Debt		[3]3,011	—	—	—	—
British Airways	1987	854	125	176	10	17·5
Rolls Royce	1987	1,028	170	151½	—	—
BAA	1987	1,218	245	276	22	60·0
PBI	1987	66	—	—	—	—

	Date of sale	Proceeds to Her Majesty's Government £ million	Initial share price	Share price on 25 January 1989	Size of Her Majesty's Government share holding million	Current value £ million
Royal Ordnance	1987	185	—	—	—	—
Rover Group	1988	150	—	—	—	—
British Petroleum	1979	276	363	—	—	—
British Petroleum	1983	543	435	—	—	—
British Petroleum	1987	[3]5,310	[1]330	[1]267	[1]67·7	181·0
			[2]225	[2]164	[2]38½	63·0
British Steel	1988	1,139	[1]125	—	—	—
			[2]60	[2]69	—	—

[1] Fully paid.
[2] Partly paid.
[3] Total estimated net proceeds.

Proceeds from the following subsidiaries are retained by parent industry

	Proceeds £ million	Initial share price	Share price on 25 January 1989
Jaguar (BL)	297	165	278
Sealink (BR)	66	—	—
Wytch Farm (BGC)	82	—	—
Warship yards (BS)	54	—	—

For information about advertising costs, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 3 March 1988, at column *629*. For the costs to Government of broking and underwriting I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave today to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor).

For information about special shares held by the Government in privatised industries, I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply which I gave the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 15 December 1987 at column *427* which lists special shares held in companies privatised prior to the British Steel sale. The special share in Amersham International was redeemed on 27 July 1988 and the special share in Enterprise Oil was redeemed on 31 December 1988. There is also a special share in British Steel, the rights of which are defined in the company's articles of association.

Wines and Spirits (Duties)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the current price of wines and spirits in the European Economic Community and the levels of duty imposed on them; and what equivalent information he has for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: Information on prices of wines and spirits in the European Community member states is not readily available. Rates of excise duties and VAT in each of the member states, according to the latest information available, are set out in the table:

Country	Wine Excise duties: Table wine not exceeding 12 per cent. alcohol by volume (pence per 75 cl bottle)	Wine Excise duties: Fortified wine at 18 per cent. alcohol by volume (pence per 70 cl bottle)	Wine VAT per cent.	Spirits Excise duty: Spirits at 40 per cent. alcohol by volume (pence per 75 cl bottle)	Spirits VAT per cent.
Belgium	16	28	25	247	25
Denmark	74	129	22	[1]854	22
France	1	78	18·6	210	18·6
Germany	0	22	14	233	14
Greece	0	1	36	7	36
Ireland	125	169	25	492	25
Italy	0	6	19	43	19
Luxembourg	[2]0, 7	[3]13, 19	[4]6, 12	166	12
Netherlands	17	29	18·5	258	18·5
Portugal	0	0	[5]8, 17	39	[6]17, 30
Spain	0	0	12	81	12
United Kingdom	77	124	15	473	15

[1] Duty on spirits in Denmark consists of a specific element (£11·22 per litre of pure alcohol) and an ad valorem element (60 per cent. of taxable value).
[2] The nil rate applies to Luxembourg produced wines.
[3] The lower rate applies to Luxembourg produced wines.
[4] The lower rate applies to still wine not exceeding 13 per cent. alcohol by volume.
[5] The lower rate applies to table wine.
[6] The lower rate applies to non-aged wine brandy and grappa brandy.

Note:
Rates of exchange as at 30 January 1989.

Source:
European Community excise duty tables; VAT In Europe.

National Savings

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the reduction in administrative costs which will result from the introduction of a minimum £5 sum for deposits in national savings ordinary accounts.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated reduction in staff working on ordinary account at the National Savings Bank is 60 full-time staff. The reduction in running costs there is around £500,000 a year. There will also be savings in Post Office agency charges.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the total reduction in moneys deposited in national savings ordinary accounts which may result from the introduction of a minimum £5 deposit.

Mr. Lilley: In 1987-88 some £10 million was deposited in the ordinary account in amounts under £5. It is not possible to forecast to what extent the new minimum will lead to people accumulating sums to deposit and to what extent they will refrain from depositing such amounts in their ordinary accounts.

Local Pay Additions

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to pay local pay additions to higher executive officers and senior executive officers in London.

Mr. Brooke: Departments formulate their own plans for local pay additions, in accordance with guidelines set by the Treasury, and submit proposals to the Treasury for approval. The guidelines do not exclude payments to higher executive officers and senior executive officers. A total of 572 HEOs in the London weighting area, but no SEOs, are currently in receipt of LPAs.

Pay Agreement

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made on a long-term pay agreement with the NUCPS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Discussions on new longer term flexible pay arrangements for the grades NUCPS represent are continuing between the union and the Treasury.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the volume of private sector investment in British industry for the last year for which figures are available, excluding leased assets; what were the comparable figures for the previous 12 month period; and if he will express both figures as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Major: The information requested is as follows:

	Industrial investment[1]	
	£ million at 1985 prices	*as a percentage of GDP*[2]
1986 Q4—1987 Q3	26,357	8·1
1987 Q4—1988 Q3	30,457	9·0

[1] Investment in the manufacturing, construction, distribution and financial industries.
[2] The average measure of GDP at factor cost.
Sources:
DTI capital expenditure press notice (15 December 1988).
CSO gross domestic product press notice (19 December 1988).

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current rate of manufacturing output in the United Kingdom for the last year for which figures are available; what were the comparable figures in the previous 12 month period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Manufacturing output in the three months up to November 1988 was 7·2 per cent. higher than in the same period a year earlier. The comparable figure for the previous 12 months was 5·8 per cent. Manufacturing output reached its highest ever level during 1988. Over the last five years its annual growth rate has averaged 4 per cent. This is in stark contrast to the economy's performance between 1974 and 1979 when it fell on average by ½ per cent. a year.

Correspondence

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 11 October 1988 on behalf of Mrs. Lily Grose, of Chyvean, 31 Pennance road, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Mr. Lilley: I replied to the hon. Member's letter on 1 February.

VAT

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement about implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Justice on 21 June 1988, respecting certain of the United Kingdom's value added tax zero rates.

Mr. Lilley: I told the House on 21 June 1988 at column *957-58* that the Government would propose legislation to implement the judgment of the European Court of Justice affecting certain of the United Kingdom's VAT zero rates. As I also promised at that time, there has been an extensive consultation. The Government are very grateful to the many organisations and individuals who have responded. Some matters are still under discussion, but I am now able to announce decisions on most features of the implementing legislation which the Government will be proposing to the House as part of this year's Budget and Finance Bill. I am taking this unusual step in order to allow the maximum feasible time for technical consideration of the clauses and preparation on the part of those traders who will have to operate them, in many cases from 1 April 1989.

As I made clear in my statement to the House on 21 June, this adverse judgment is based on an interpretation of existing Community law to which the United Kingdom gave its assent in 1977. We are obliged to comply with it. This means applying VAT to a number of goods and services at present excluded. Our aim has been to implement the ruling in a way which, while respecting the terms of the judgment, minimises the burgen of tax and compliance. The Government have in large measure been

able to meet the legitimate demands of the construction and property industries, by introducing the option to tax rents and devising suitable transitional arrangements, consistently with the obligation to implement the judgment promptly. And we have had particular regard to the potential impact on charities. I regret that they cannot be wholly shielded because many of them have activities which constitute "business" for VAT purposes and therefore come within the ambit of the judgment. But we have done as much as we can to safeguard their position.

I am including several minor changes from the current provisions for construction and property in zero rate group 8 and exempt group 1 which do not flow directly from the European Court judgment. These have been inserted to rectify weaknesses in the law which have become apparent in recent years, often as a result of litigation. These changes are marked with an asterisk in the explanatory notes to the draft clauses.

The provisional draft clauses with explanatory notes on their effect are contained in Customs and Excise documents which I am placing in the Library of the House.

On non-domestic construction, most of the changes that I announced on 21 June are confirmed in the draft legislation but I am glad to say that as well as retaining zero rating for new housing it will also be retained for most new communal residential accommodation such as old people's homes, hospices and boarding accommodation at boarding schools. It will also be retained for new churches and other buildings for non-business use by charities. It has not been possible to retain zero rating for premises used for business, including private hospitals and fee paying schools, which the judgment explicitly ruled were too remote from the final consumer. The change to standard rating for buildings which cease to qualify for zero rating comes into effect from 1 April 1989, although there will be some transitional relief. As I announced last June, this will preserve zero rating for agreements entered into, in writing and for a price, before 21 June 1988. Additionally, it will allow some relief for supplies made before 21 June 1993 in connection with developments that are the subject of a binding legal obligation as a result of an agreement entered into before 21 June 1988 between a developer and a landowner or planning authority.

The option to tax rents, which comes into effect on 1 August 1989, is being extended to agricultural land. Building land will not be taxed, except in defined cases where this is necessary to ensure fair competition.

I am now able to announce decisions on the other groups affected by the judgment.

The fuel and power changes will be effective on 1 July 1990. Zero rates will continue for domestic consumers, and for charities for non-business purposes. Domestic use will include not only private dwellings, caravans, houseboats and self catering holiday accommodation but also communal residential homes, hospices, school and student boarding accommodation but not private schools and fee paying hospitals.

The water and sewerage services changes will be effective on 1 July 1990. All supplies of services of emptying cesspools, septic tanks etc to industrial users for use in connection with the carrying on of a business will be standard-rated. Similarly so will all supplies of water to industry. Industry means any activity described in divisions 1 to 5 of the standard industrial classification. All other supplies will be zero rated.

News services changes will be effective on 1 April 1989. The zero rating will be repealed, and the standard rate thus applied to all news services. This includes supplies to newspapers and individual members of the public (but the Court ruling did not extend to newspapers themselves).

Protective boots and helmets supplied to employers will become standard rated from 1 April 1989.

The estimated yield from the private sector of the proposals contained in the draft clauses will be some £55 million in 1989-90, rising to about £165 million by 1992-93. This includes some £110 million from application of the Court ruling to non-domestic construction. Without the measures to mitigate the impact, the yield from construction would have been £450 million.

Civil Service Trade Unions

Mr. Wells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest estimates for the numbers of elected representatives of Civil Service trade unions in each of the main Government Departments and of the cost of providing paid time off.

Mr. Brooke: The details for 1987-88 are shown in the following tables. Compared with the position as at 31 March 1987, the total amount of paid time off for union business shows a reduction of 75 man years (6·7 per cent.), with a consequential saving (in real terms) of £0·47 million. This reflects, for the sixth successive year, the tighter control and accountability measures introduced by the revised national facilities agreement in 1982.

Table 1

Civil Service non-industrial elected union representatives

Estimates of numbers with paid time off for industrial relations duties and trade union activities (as at 31 March 1988)

Departments	*5 per cent. and less*	*6 to 10 per cent.*	*11 to 20 per cent.*	*21 to 30 per cent.*	*31 to 40 per cent.*	*41 to 50 per cent.*	*51 to 60 per cent.*	*61 to 70 per cent.*	*71 to 80 per cent.*	*81 to 90 per cent.*	*91 to 99 per cent.*	*100 per cent.*	*Total*	*Full time equivalent*
1. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	474	44	16	1	3	0	1	0	2	1	0	4	546	19
2. Customs and Excise	632	84	41	27	13	6	5	8	5	10	8	0	839	72
3. Ministry of Defence	876	157	64	21	9	12	2	2	1	1	1	23	1,169	93
4. Department of Employment Group	1,491	276	114	39	12	7	5	5	6	1	0	15	1,971	93
5. Department of Transport/Transport ExcPSA	417	56	37	9	3	2	2	1	2	2	0	16	547	41
6. Foreign and Commonwealth Office including Overseas Development Administration	85	13	3	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	111	11
7. Department of Health and Social Security	1,323	481	216	65	23	31	18	20	29	27	21	25	2,279	301
8. Home Office including Prison Department	806	155	154	37	16	7	5	1	0	6	7	12	1,206	96
9. Department of Trade and Industry	449	31	26	4	5	6	1	2	2	0	3	6	535	28

Departments	5 per cent. and less	6 to 10 per cent.	11 to 20 per cent.	21 to 30 per cent.	31 to 40 per cent.	41 to 50 per cent.	51 to 60 per cent.	61 to 70 per cent.	71 to 80 per cent.	81 to 90 per cent.	91 to 99 per cent.	100 per cent.	Total	Full time equivalent
10. Inland Revenue	1,410	316	124	38	30	16	14	4	8	2	2	7	1,971	118
11. Lord Chancellor's Department	81	12	25	5	6	4	1	4	6	1	1	8	154	15
12. Department for National Savings	88	20	12	1	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	13	140	23
13. PSA—including Crown Suppliers	298	52	26	6	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	4	393	22
14. Scottish Office including Scottish Prisons, Scot. Rec. Office and Gen. Reg. (Scot.)	231	35	13	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	293	20
15. Other Government Departments	889	93	60	26	13	16	4	1	4	1	2	19	1,128	92
Total	9,550	1,825	931	285	137	112	63	50	65	53	46	165	13,282	1,044

Table 2
Costs of non-industrial union elected representatives

Department	Total number expressed as whole time equivalent	Cost in salaries wages and direct benefit (£ million)	Costs as percentage of wage bill	Total number of non-industrial staff at 31 March 1988
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	19	0·27	0·186	9,751
Customs and Excise	72	1·01	0·281	26,564
Ministry of Defence	93	1·08	0·085	88,626
Department of Employment Group	93	1·26	0·186	62,575
Department of Environment/Transport (exc PSA)	41	0·56	0·198	20,118
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (inc Overseas Development Administration)	11	0·15	0·110	9,378
DHSS	301	3·31	0·310	101,185
Home Office (including Prison Department)	96	1·28	0·229	37,641
Department of Trade and Industry	28	0·43	0·230	12,525
Inland Revenue	118	1·58	0·185	66,592
Lord Chancellor's Department	15	0·25	0·250	10,281
Department for National Savings	23	0·23	0·325	7,306
PSA (including Crown Suppliers)	22	0·31	0·157	15,665
Scottish Office (including General Register Office Scotland, Scottish Record Office and Scottish Prison Service	20	0·24	0·150	9,514
Other Government Departments	92	1·12	0·213	38,798
TOTAL	1,044	13·08	0·199	516,519

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the cost would be of increasing mortgage income tax relief from its present level of £30,000 to *(a)* £35,000 and *(b)* £40,000; and how much would go to those earning over £20,000 per annum.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* The direct revenue cost, at 1988-89 levels, of increases in the ceiling of mortgage interest relief are given in the table. These estimates make no allowance for any consequential changes to the distribution of outstanding mortgages.

Ceiling £	Cost £ milion	Cost attributable to tax units with earned income over £20,000 in 1988-89 £ million
35,000	230	100
40,000	390	180

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the mortgage tax relief limit was raised to £30,000; what the additional annual cost to the Exchequer would be if it was raised to £35,000 and £40,000 respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* The ceiling for mortgage interest relief was raised to £30,000 in 1983-84. The direct revenue cost, at 1988-89 levels, of increases in the ceiling of mortgage interest relief are given in the table. These estimates make no allowance for any consequential changes to the distribution of outstanding mortgages.

Ceiling £	Cost £ million
35,000	230
40,000	390

Inflation

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing for each of the last complete financial years *(a)* the forecast rate of general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator in the Autumn Statement published immediately prior to each financial year and *(b)* the actual rate of inflation in each financial year as measured by the gross domestic product deflator and *(c)* the actual rate of inflation in each financial year as measured by the retail price index.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* The information requested by my right hon. Friend is shown in the table:

Percentage change on a year earlier

For the year	Gross domestic product at market prices: Autumn Statement forecast[1]	Gross domestic product at market prices: Outturn[2]	Retail price index[3]
1983-84	5	4·6	4·7
1984-85	5	5·0	5·1
1985-86	4¼	5·5	5·9
1986-87	4¼	3·4	3·2
1987-88	3¾	5·2	4·0

[1] Forecast in the Autumn Statement published immediately prior to the coming financial year.
[2] Latest outturn data.
[3] Change in the average value of the retail price index on the preceding financial year.

Company Cars

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his latest estimate of the proportion of the benefit to an individual taxpayer of company car capital, running and maintenace costs which are taxed under present arrangements; and how much additional tax revenue would be received by the Government if that proportion were increased to 100 per cent. of such costs;

(2) what is the amount of additional tax revenue that would be raised by charging employees' and employers' national insurance contributions on the full benefit obtained by individual taxpayers from company cars.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* The benefit of company cars provided to directors and higher paid employees is taxed by reference to a set of scale charges. The results of independent studies are consistent with the Government's view that the value to typical employees of being able to use their company cars privately exceeds the present scale charges. But the value to any particular employee depends on a wide range of factors. It is not possible, therefore, to provide an estimate of the aggregate extent to which the private use of company cars is undertaxed, nor of the additional revenue which would arise if the full value to the employee was used in computing income tax or national insurance contributions.

Private Schools

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many private schools in Scotland benefit from financial concessions as a result of having charitable status; and if he will estimate the loss of Exchequer revenue as a result of such concessions for the most recent year for which information is available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* Comprehensive information in the form requested is not available. Inland Revenue records of bodies in Scotland which are eligible for income tax relief identify 75 schools with charitable status. This includes some special schools for handicapped children or for pupils with behavioural problems.

Company Privatisation

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been the costs of privatisation of companies, both by private sale and public flotation, for each company privatised since 1979, and for each year since 1979, including separate figures for *(a)* underwriting, selling and broking, *(b)* commission, *(c)* bank costs, *(d)* marketing, *(e)* fees to advisers, *(f)* bonus shares, *(g)* bill vouchers and *(h)* any other costs.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 19 January 1989]:* The total costs to the Government of each privatisation since 1979 are in the table. Estimated costs of underwriting, selling and broking commission, receiving bank costs, marketing, advisers' fees and incentives in respect of all primary share sales from British Telecom onwards are given in the following reports presented to the House by the Comptroller and Auditor General:

Session 1984-85
Department of Trade and Industry: Sale of Government Shareholdings in British Telecommunications plc HC 495

Session 1987-88
Department of Energy: Sale of Government Shareholding in British Gas plc HC 22
Department of Transport: Sale of Government Shareholding in British Airways plc HC 37
Department of Trade and Industry: Sale of Government Shareholding in Rolls-Royce plc HC 243
Department of Transport: Sale of Government Shareholding in BAA plc HC 312

Figures given in the reports for customer bill vouchers and bonus shares relate to the maximum value assuming all incentives will be taken up by shareholders. Final figures will depend on the number of eligible shareholders at the end of the qualifying periods. The value of bonus shares distributed for Britoil in 1986 was £3 million.

For residual share sales, and for primary share sales prior to British Telecom, the information requested is available only at disproportionate cost. The Department of Trade and Industry expects to able to report the costs of the British Steel flotation shortly.

Table A
Total costs of sale to Her Majesty's Government including VAT, excluding incentives

Company name	Year	£ thousands
British Aerospace	1981	5,600
Cable and Wireless	1981	8,900
Amersham International	1982	2,900
Britoil	1982	12,600
National Freight Corporation	1982	300
Associated British Ports	1983	2,600
British Petroleum	1983	22,760
Cable and Wireless	1983	12,500
Associated British Ports	1984	1,400
Enterprise Oil	1984	10,700
Jaguar	1984	[1]n/a
Sealink	1984	100
Wytch Farm	1984	98
British Telecom	1984	183,000
British Aerospace	1985	17,800
Britoil	1985	23,300
Cable and Wireless	1985	21,400
British Gas	1986	[2]175,000
British Shipbuilding warship yards	1986	55,500
British Airways	1987	33,900
Rolls Royce	1987	[3]41,600
Plant Breeding Institute	1987	[4]822
Royal Ordnance	1987	[5]1,900
BAA	1987	45,200
Rover Group	1987	1,800
British Petroleum	1987	[6]48,299

[1] The sale of Jaguar plc was conducted by BL plc and details of the appointments and the total cost are a matter for the company. Only one firm was appointed to advise the Government; it is not the practice to disclose fees paid to individual firms.
[2] Excluding Stamp Duty.
[3] Expenditure incurred to date, excluding subscription for new shares.

[4] Exluding VAT.
[5] Expenditure incurred after 1 January 1985.
[6] Expenditure incurred to date.

SCOTLAND

Drinking Water

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those water supplies in Scotland which fail to meet the standards set out in the European Economic Community directives on the quality of drinking water and whether or not these are the subject of derogations; how and when it is proposed for each of these water supplies to meet the standards laid down; and what the latest estimated cost of complying with the standards is in each case.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The EC drinking water directive allows departure from its standards either by delay under article 20 or by derogation under article 9. Scottish public water supplies subject to application for delay and those subject to derogations are set out in the tables. Improvement programmes, with timetables, for supplies subject to delay have been submitted to the European Commission. Most are in progress and a significant number are virtually complete.

Recent review has indicated further supplies which do not meet the standards. These are not included in the tables pending consideration by Scottish Development Department of appropriate action.

Up-to-date detailed cost figures for individual supplies are not available, but recent estimates by Scottish water authorities suggested that the overall cost of fully complying with the standards might approach £700 million.

Table 1
Supplies subject to delay

Authority	*Supply*
Borders Region	Carlops
	Wantonwells
	Ettrickbridge
	Galashiels
	Rawburn
	Roberton
Central Region	Gartcarron
	Jellyholm
	Longhill
	Sauchie
	Woodburn
Dumfries and Galloway Region	Carsphairn
	Areeming
	Auchneel
	Barclye
	Euchan
	Killylour
	Lochinvar
	Penwhirn
	New Abbey
	Winterhope
	Landheads
	Palnure
	Loch Roan
	Two unnamed supplies
	Black Esk
	Langholm
	Moffat
	Creetown
	Newton Stewart
	Wanlockhead
Grampian Region	Herricks
	Rochomie
	Forres
	Kinloss
	Lossiemouth
	Drummuir, Portgordon
	Aberlour, Dufftown, Tomintoul
	Inverurie
	Strathdon, Strathbogie
	Upper Deeside
	Banff
	Macduff, Gardenstown
	Fraserburgh
	Peterhead
	Cullen
Highland Region	Glenurquhart
	Assynt
	Kyle of Lochalsh
	Loch Carron
	Culnakirk
	Wick
	Lairg
	Bonar Bridge
	North Speyside
	South Speyside
	Thurso
	Helmsdale
	Inverness
	Ardnamurchan
	Fort William
	Lochaber
	Corpach/Caol
Lothian Region	Edinburgh (part)
Strathclyde Region	Ardrishaig
	Carradale
	Clachan
	Furnace
	Inveraray
	Muasdale
	Port Charlotte
	Tarbert
	Tighnabruaich
	Tiree
	Tobermory
	Torra
	Afton
	Amlaird
	Spallander
	Crosbie
	Dhu Loch
	Glendrissaigh
	Greenhead Mount
	Mill Glen
	Penwhapple
	Pundeavon
	Skelmorlie Upper
	Skelmorlie Low
	Douglichill
	Garshake
	Kaim
	Kelly
	Larkfield
	Maukinhill
	Milngavie
	Muirdykes
	Overton Low
	Picketlaw
	Prospecthill
	South Moorhouse

Authority	Supply
	Stanley High
	Whinhill
	Bradan
	Craignure
	Lochdonhead
	Knock Tank
	Overton High
	Elsrickle
	Dolphinton
	Carnwath
	Catacol
	Whiting Bay
	King's Cross
	Pirnmill
	Peden
	Camps
	Daer
	Loch Lomond (bulk supply)
	Camphill
	Lock Eck
	Corsehouse
	Loch Ascog
	Luss
	Loch Lomond (local)
	Crosbie/Fairlie
	Overton (Leven)
	Loch Sloy
Tayside Region	Burnhead
	Lintrathen
	Alyth
	Clash
	Grandtully
	Aberfeldy
	Camserney
	Acharn
	Kenmore
	Kinloch Rannoch

Table 2
Supplies subject to derogations

Authority	Supply
Borders Region	Wakefield W Linton
	Yarrowford
Central Region	Killin
	Callander
Dumfries and Galloway Region	Carsphairn
	Barclye
	Euchan
	Glengap
	Lochfoot
	Lochinvar
	Penwhirn
	Sandyford
	Sanquhar
	Creetown
	Bardrochwood
	Wanlockhead
	Loch Roan
Grampian Region	Glenlatterach
	Invercannie
	Wrack
	Newbigging
	Aberlour
Highland Region	Beauly Firth Area
	Broadford
	Fort Augustus
	Glenurquhart
	Mallaig
	Onich
	Clunas
	Kyle of Lochalsh
	Loch Carron
	Culnakirk
	Caen/Ord
	Kinlochbervie
Orkney Islands	Kirkbister
	Wideford
	Boardhouse
	Stromness
	Heldale
	Westray
	Bea
Shetland Islands	Unst
	Cullivoe
	Fetlar
	Skerries
	Bressay
	Northmavine
	Walls
	Sandness
	Reawick and Skeld
	Nebister
	Voe and Vidlin
	Fair Isle
	West Burrafirth
Strathclyde Region	Ardrishaig
	Auchalochy
	Carradale
	Clachan
	Furnace
	Muasdale
	Tarbert
	Tighnabruaich
	Tiree
	Afton
	Castlehill
	L. Spallander
	Holehouse
	Knockjarder
	Millport
	Muirkirk
	Pundeavon
	Glassford
	Roughrigg
	Asker
	Belmore
	Bowling
	Burncrooks
	Coulport
	Craigielinn
	Garshake
	Kelly
	Larkfield
	Loch Sloy
	Muirdykes
	Stanley High
	Lamlash
	Bradan
	Passford
	Kilmory
	Carrick Castle
	Leanach
	Cairnbaan
	Kilmichael
	Tayvallich
	Saddell
	Tayinloan
	Whitehouse
	Ballygrant
	Portnahaven
	Gigha
	Luing
	Bunessan
	Lochdonhead
	Iona
	Ross of Mull
	Loudonhill
	Catacol
	Lochranza

Authority	Supply
	Tullochgorm
	Kilberry
	Claddich
	Arinagour (Coll)
	Nerabolls
Tayside Region	Camserney
	Kinlock Rannoch
	Acharn
Western Isles	Benbecula
	Berneray
	Castlebay
	Eriskay
	Howmore
	Leverburgh
	Lochboisdale
	Lochmaddy
	North Bay
	Northton
	Rodel
	Scalpay
	Sollas
	Tarbert
	Balallan
	Leurbost
	Tolsta Glen
	Shior Thomas
	Seilibost
	Maaruig
	Ardvourlie
	10 unnamed supplies
	Stornoway (augmentation)
	Cliasmol
	Meavaig

Lennox Castle Hospital

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the management structure at Lennox Castle hospital in November 1988; how many persons were in each post; and if he will indicate the length of service of each person in the most senior posts;

(2) when the management structure at Lennox Castle hospital was last reviewed by Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The senior management structure at Lennox Castle on 1 November 1988 comprised a sector administrator, a physician superintendent and a director of nursing services. The post holders had been in post for six months, one month and six years respectively.

This has now been superseded by new arrangements which were the subject of discussion by Greater Glasgow health board on 24 January 1989. The new management structure gives overall responsibility for all services in the mental handicap sector to a single person, the sector manager. He leads a management team of support services manager, nursing services manager and clinical services manager. That team will be supported by a development officer, personnel manager and management accountant. Of these seven posts, five appointments have now been made, including that of sector manager.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the principal findings of the Mental Welfare Commission report on conditions at Lennox Castle hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following a visit to four of the wards at Lennox Castle hospital on 9 December, the commission informed Greater Glasgow health board of a number of points of concern. Details of these concerns are matters between the commission and the health board and have been the subject of discussion between them.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received over the past five years from Greater Glasgow health board asking for substantial additional expenditure to be spent on Lennox Castle hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The board has included bids for expenditure at Lennox Castle in its annual capital plans since 1986 and made a separate representation in 1986 for additional resources. As a result upgrading of wards and other works have taken place at a cost of £3·8 million including a new 24-bed intensive care unit opened in June 1988. Moreover, I announced on 23 January 1989 my approval to the board's plans to spend £4·56 million on the redevelopment of Lennox Castle hospital.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which committee or sub-committee of Greater Glasgow health board has a direct responsibility for oversight of Lennox Castle hospital.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Overall responsibility for the planning and quality of service provided in all the hospitals administered by Greater Glasgow health board rests with the board's policy and planning committee. Direct responsibility for oversight of the hospital rests with the management of the mental health unit.

Nursing

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the total number of appeals following the regrading exercise, the number completed and the number decided in favour of the nurse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions he has given to health boards on a date for the completion of *(a)* informal appeals and *(b)* formal appeals on nurse regrading; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards have been asked to complete initial reviews of appeals by the end of February. There is no deadline for completing formal appeal hearings, but boards are expected to deal with appeals quickly as well as fairly.

Local Government Staff

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of local government staff in Scotland for each year since 1975.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Quarterly figures for local authority manpower have been published jointly by the Scottish Office and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities since 1976 and are available in the Library.

Prisons

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are currently being held in each prison, and in total; and how many prison officers are currently in each prison, and in total.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested by the hon. Member is set out in the table.

Establishment	*Inmates (at 27 January 1989)*	*Prison officers (at 27 January 1989)*
Aberdeen	144	98
Barlinnie	956	446
Barlinnie Special Unit	6	14
Castle Huntly	111	50
Cornton Vale	145	166
Dumfries	111	109
Dungavel	114	51
Edinburgh	641	361
Friarton	75	48
Glenochil	362	330
Greenock	171	145
Inverness	89	91
Longriggend	214	147
Low Moss	344	110
Noranside	97	50
Penninghame	67	27
Perth	454	291
Peterhead	129	244
Polmont	368	225
Shotts	427	286
Total	5,020	3,289

Note: The prison officers referred to in the table cover all uniformed discipline and specialist staff.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of jobs lost in manufacturing and in the service section in Greenock and Port Glasgow in each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The information set out in the table relates to the number of redundancies involving 10 or more workers confirmed to the Training Agency as occurring in the Greenock travel-to-work-area, which includes Port Glasgow, in each year from 1984 to 1988.

Confirmed redundancies in the Greenock travel-to-work-area, 1984-88

	Manufacturing	*Services*
1984	2,466	22
1985	1,593	92
1986	973	90
1987	352	39
1988[1]	72	3

[1] Figures for 1988 are provisional.

Sand Eels (Conservation)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what basis his Department will decide on the appropriateness of conservation measures for the Shetland sand eel fishery if it proves difficult both to estimate the maximum sustainable yield and to advise on an appropriate total allowable catch for the Shetland sand eel stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The health of the Shetland sand eel stocks depends to a very large extent on the levels of recruitment of juvenile fish, which fluctuate because of natural factors, as well as the level of the fishery. Below a certain level of stock size recruitment levels are likely to be affected by the abundance of spawning fish and the prime objective, so far as possible, will be to maintain the spawning stock above the critical level. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland will be discussing with industry representatives possible conservation measures.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the percentage of O and 1 group sand eels in catches from Shetland waters in each month of each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the table.

Percentage of 0- and 1- Group Sand Eels by weight

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
March					
0-group	—	—	—	—	
1-group	—	—	—	94·8	11·1
April					
0-group	—	—	—	—	—
1-group	42·7	69·1	27·2	64·4	2·1
May					
0-group	—	—	—	—	—
1-group	28·6	37·7	18·6	65·7	6·1
June					
0-group	17·0	2·7	13·3	1·3	6·2
1-group	34·2	38·7	20·8	61·3	5·3
July					
0-group	50·6	23·6	62·4	27·3	93·6
1-group	29·5	21·5	32·4	49·5	0·5
August					
0-group	75·4	55·9	45·8	40·3	64·3
1-group	13·2	25·1	18·8	32·2	5·0
September					
0-group	87·3	84·3	92·1	78·5	86·6
1-group	9·5	8·9	4·6	9·0	4·6
October					
0-group	[1]—	[1]—	97·7	2·6	[1]—
1-group	[1]—	[1]—	22·3	22·8	[1]—

[1]—No sampling—catches very small.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in 1988 catches of fishing vessels attempting to land sand eels from Shetland waters were found to exceed 25 per cent. by weight of fish of less than 3in long; what was the percentage of small sand eels in any such catches; what was the method of disposal for these catches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Of the 42 samples examined during 1988, two contained more than 25 per cent. by weight of sand eels less than 7·5cm; the percentage of small sand eels was 26·5 and 37·9 respectively; and both catches were sent for reduction to meal and oil. Sampling data are not, however, comprehensive. The level of incidence of small sand eels in catches may depend on recruitment levels, the effects of the voluntary restrictions on catches of small sand eels, or both.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the steps taken by his Department to monitor the voluntary measures taken by Shetland fishermen to reduce the catches of the youngest sand eels in Shetland waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Regular samples are provided voluntarily to scientists of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. The number of landings sampled each month since the voluntary restrictions were introduced are as follows:

	1987	1988
March	1	1
April	14	4
May	9	16
June	9	11
July	11	2
August	6	4
September	1	4
October	1	—

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the level of recruitment of sand eels to *(a)* the Shetland population, *(b)* the northern North sea, north of 56°30'N, and *(c)* the southern North sea in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the table.

Thousand millions of O-group sand eels at 1 July

	Shetland		Northern North sea north of 56°30'N	Southern North sea
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(1)
1984	21	29	47	148
1985	10	21	255	653
1986	36	19	202	138
1987	—	2	—	—
1988	—	21	—	—

Source:
(1) International Council for the Exploration of the Seas.
(2) Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland (new assessments); figures for 1987 and 1988 are provisional.

The very low figure for Shetland for 1987 reflects the incidence of the poorest year class since the fishery began in 1974. The 1988 year class is also thought to be below the average over the period 1974-86. Scientific assessment indicates that recruitment is affected primarily by natural factors affecting the first six months of sand eel life, and that the decline in stocks has not been caused primarily by the commercial fishery.

Rating Reform

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* those medical sources from which he sought advice over the desirability of including Alzheimer's disease in the list of exempted conditions for poll tax purposes; what is the medical definiton of the "fluctuating nature" to which he referred in the *Official Report*, 1 February, column 281; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend receives medical advice from the chief medical officer, Scottish Home and Health Department, and his staff. People with degenerative mental disorders such as Alzheimer's disease have a gradual onset of their condition leading to a progressive decline in all aspects of mental functioning. Fluctuations in the level of mental functioning may occur during the natural progression of the degenerative condition and may also occur if the person develops an additional illness.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest estimates of the cost of collecting the community charge for each one of the regions in Scotland; and what is the present cost of collecting the rates.

Mr. Lang: All regional councils in Scotland will have included an estimate of the cost of collecting the community charge in the budgets which they have now set for 1989-90. Full details of their budgets have not yet been submitted to the Scottish Office.

The latest estimate of the cost to each regional council of collecting the rates are contained in their budgets for 1988-89 and are set out in the table.

	£ million
Borders	0·669
Central	1·155
Dumfries and Galloway	0·743
Fife	1·279
Grampian	[1]2·146
Highland	0·936
Lothian	6·258
Strathclyde	10·005
Tayside	2·767

[1] Excludes lands valuation, for which Grampian did not make a separate estimate.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the latest available breakdown of the hectarage planted, approved for planting and awaiting approval for planting under the woodland grant scheme for each of the Forestry Commission's conservancies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information—covering the period from 15 June 1988, when the woodland grant scheme was first opened to applications, to 31 December 1988—is as follows:

Hectares

Conservancy	Planting[1] for which grants have been paid[2]	Area approved for planting[1]	Area awaiting approval for planting[1]
North England	—	550	1,570
East England	—	829	4,373
West England	—	577	1,300
Wales	—	505	905
North Scotland	53	2,828	9,744
Mid Scotland	11	1,489	2,635
South Scotland	1	1,561	3,265
Total	65	8,339	23,792

[1] Including replanting.
[2] These figures do not include planting that had taken place but on which grants had not been paid by 31 December 1988, since this information is not readily available.

Farm Workers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers were employed in each county in Scotland in June 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As a result of local government reform, counties ceased to be used for agricultural statistics purposes after 1975. My noble Friend wrote to the hon. Member last December to provide him with information about the numbers of farmers and farm workers employed in each region in Scotland in June 1988.

New Towns

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the responses received on the consultation document, "The Scottish New Towns—Maintaining the Momentum."

Mr. Lang: No. I made clear at the meeting with representatives of SLANT (Scottish Local Authorities with New Towns) and those members representing Scottish new towns, held on 1 February 1989, that copies of the responses received would be available in each of the new towns towards the end of February.

Neilston Primary School

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the case for an extension to Neilston primary school; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have considered carefully the representations made by my hon. Friend and the parents and community representatives following the meeting which he kindly arranged about the need for an extension to Neilston primary school. Strathclyde regional council has recently requested that provision be made for a four-classroom extension in its capital allocation for 1989-90, and I expect this request to be considered sympathetically. Authorities should be informed shortly of their capital allocations for next year.

Road Accidents

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many accidents involving death or injury have occurred per vehicle mile on the A74 for each year since 1980;

(2) how many accidents involving death and injury have occurred per vehicle mile on the A96 for each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 January 1989]:* The accident rate is expressed as the number of injury (including fatal) accidents per million vehicle kilometers. The figures for the A74 trunk (south) and the A96 trunk in each year since 1982 are as follows:

	A74 trunk (south)	*A96 trunk*
1982	0·156	0·517
1983	0·135	0·523
1984	0·145	0·484
1985	0·125	0·442
1986	0·144	0·432
1987	0·135	0·453

In comparing these figures it should be remembered that the A74 is a dual carriageway and the A96 is an almost entirely single carriageway road. The annual traffic levels are estimates based on limited samples and are subject to a fairly wide margin of error. The A74 trunk (south) is south of the M74. Accident rates are not available for 1980 and 1981 or for other parts of the A74 and A96.

Mr. Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured on the A74 for each year since 1980;

(2) how many people have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured on the A96 for each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 January]:* The information requested, along with additional information to clarify this answer and answers to related questions, is as follows.

	A74 trunk (north)	*A74 trunk (south)*	*A74 total*	*A96 trunk*	*A96 total*
(a) Number of fatal casualties					
1980	—	4	8	19	21
1981	—	12	17	14	15
1982	—	11	15	15	16
1983	—	11	13	11	12
1984	1	7	14	5	6
1985	1	10	18	12	14
1986	—	18	23	15	15
1987	—	17	19	8	9
(b) Number of serious and slight casualties					
1980	26	184	312	334	388
1981	21	126	261	325	379
1982	23	137	298	349	411
1983	30	130	271	339	380
1984	21	148	281	330	389
1985	30	146	321	295	332
1986	38	188	305	320	372
1987	53	164	271	289	326

The A74 trunk (north), length 5·3 km, is north of the M74; and the A74 trunk (south), length 93 km, is south of the M74. The A74 and A96 totals include non-trunk sections of road. In comparing the figures for the A74 and A96, it should be remembered that the A74 is a dual carriageway and the A96 is a 166 km, almost entirely single carriageway, road.

House Building

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses were built to be rented in the public sector in each year since 1979 in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 January 1989]:* The information set out in the table is for houses completed by local authorities, new towns, Scottish Special Housing Association and Government Departments for the years in question. These figures could contain some houses built for sale.

Public Sector (Excluding Housing Associations)
New houses completed

Year	*Inverclyde*	*Strathclyde*	*Scotland*
1979	64	3,377	8,063
1980	8	2,518	7,488
1981	—	3,419	7,066
1982	26	1,426	3,733
1983	—	1,035	3,492
1984	—	840	2,647
1985	30	928	2,828
1986	—	609	2,301
1987	81	518	2,630
[1]1988	—	657	[2]2,138

[1] January-September.
[2] Returns outstanding from 10 districts.

NHS Hospitals (Glasgow)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all the National Health Service Greater Glasgow hospitals and the latest figures for the waiting lists in each of them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The latest waiting list figures for all National Health

Service hospitals in Greater Glasgow are set out in the table. The mean waiting time for in-patients in 1987 was 73·7 days and for day cases was 47·8 days.

NHS Hospitals in Greater Glasgow HB: Patients waiting at 31 March 1988[1]

Hospital	*Inpatients*	*Day Cases*
Beatson Oncology Centre	—	—
Belvidere Hospital	61	—
Birdston Hospital	—	—
Blawarthill Hospital	—	—
Broomhill and Lanfine Hospital	—	—
Canniesburn Hospital	1,999	—
Childrens Home Hospital	—	—
Cowglen Hospital	126	—
Darnley Hospital	3	—
Drumchapel Hospital	—	—
Duke St. Hospital	2	—
Duntocher Hospital	—	—
Gartloch Hospital	56	—
Gartnavel General Hospital	1,203	26
Gartnaval Royal Hospital	47	—
Glasgow Dental Hospital and School	—	—
Glasgow Eye Infirmary	—	—
Glasgow Homeopathic Hospital	20	—
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	4,650	—
Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital	—	—
Glasgow Western Infirmary	1,515	—
Knightswood Hospital	10	—
Lennox Castle Hospital	6	—
Lenzie Hospital—Beechwood Extension	—	—
Leverndale Hospital	9	—
Lightburn Hospital	96	—
Mearnskirk General Hospital	—	—
Parkhead Hospital	—	—
Philipshill Hospital	534	—
Queen Mother's Hospital	—	—
RHSC Drumchapel	—	—
Royal Beatson Memorial Hospital	—	—
Royal Hospital for Sick Children	1,407	—
Royal Samaritan Hospital	358	—
Ruchill Hospital	—	—
Rutherglen Maternity Hospital	—	—
Southern General Hospital	1,807	69
Southern General Psychiatric Unit	—	—
Stobhill Hospital	2,124	—
Stoneyetts Hospital	—	—
Victoria Infirmary	1,239	127
Waverley Park Hospital	—	—
Woodilee Hospital	113	—
Greater Glasgow Health Board Total	17,385	222

[1] The alerted statistical system on which these figures are collected is explained in ISD statistical bulletin 1/88.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission the Scottish universities research and reactor centre to undertake aerial surveys, similar to that just undertaken in West Cumbria, for all areas in Scotland near to nuclear establishments or where there has been radioactive fall out.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Radioactivity in the environment near nuclear establishments is intensively monitored by the site operators as a condition of their authorisations to discharge radioactivity. The Scottish Development Department checks each operator's results and undertakes additional independent monitoring to confirm them. Aerial surveys would not contribute materially to the normal monitoring process. However, the Scottish Office is interested in the possible use in emergencies of the aerial surveillance system developed and deployed by the Scottish universities research and reactor centre and will be discussing this with the centre.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest available information on levels of radioactivity in *(a)* fish in lochs *(b)* hares and rabbits and *(c)* other animals in south-west Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Information on the level of radioactivity in fish and animals in Scotland resulting from the Chernobyl accident is published on a regular basis by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. For the south-west of Scotland the latest measured levels for fish range from 15 bq/kg to 737 bq/kg, for hare from 165 bq/kg to 4,530 bq/kg and for rabbits from 20 bq/kg to 155 bq/kg. Monitoring of hare and rabbit was discontinued in 1987 as the reading in these animals, which form a relatively small part of most people's diet, gave no cause for concern. Levels in deer range from 2 bq/kg to 2,740 bq/kg.

Chemical Hazardous Waste

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new plans he has to deal with the future disposal of chemical hazardous waste.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* We have recently consulted widely on proposals to strengthen controls on waste disposal in Scotland, and will announce our conclusions shortly. We expect to issue two further consultation papers on aspects of waste disposal within the next few weeks. We are also reviewing the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 and the Control of Pollution (Licensing of Waste Disposal) (Scotland) Regulations 1977.

A96

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fatal road accidents have occurred on the A96 trunk road between Aberdeen and Inverness in each of the past five years and in 1989 to date, indicating the number of fatalities in each accident.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* The information requested for the A96 trunk road is as follows:

	Total fatal accidents	*Number of fatal accidents by number of fatal casualties in each accident*				*Total fatal casualties*
		1	2	3	4	
1983	10	9	1	—	—	11
1984	4	3	1	—	—	5
1985	12	12	—	—	—	12
1986	12	11	—	—	1	15
1987	8	8	—	—	—	8
[1]1988	10	10	—	—	—	10

[1] To August.

Statistics on accidents are available centrally only to August 1988.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his survey on accident blackspots on the A96; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* The Scottish Development Department will provide both Highland and Grampian regional councils with a detailed brief next month in order that they may carry forward studies of the A96. This work will include examination of the route as a whole to determine where accident remedial schemes should be introduced. It is not possible to say precisely when the studies will be completed but they may take a year or so. The hon. Member will, however, wish to know that road safety measures will shortly be completed between Oyne Fork and Pitcaple which was previously identified as the worst accident spot on the route.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what budget allocation he has set aside for improvements to the A96 in each of the next five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* Last December, I met members and officials of Highland and Grampian regional councils to discuss their request for improvements to the A96 trunk road. As a result of that meeting studies of the A96 are being extended to identify, along the entire route, possible accident remedial schemes and schemes to improve overtaking opportunities. When this work, to be carried out by both regional councils as the Secretary of State's agents for the trunk road, is complete I will be able to formulate an overall strategy and consider expenditure provision.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* his letter of 11 August 1988 informing the Agriculture and Food Research Council of his decision to terminate the research work being undertaken into salmonella at Bristol.

Mr. Ryder: I did not write to the Agriculture and Food Research Council Institute of Food Research on 11 August 1988, but a member of my staff did and the hon. Member may be aware of the contents of that letter.

The letter recorded agreement by my Department and the institute to phase out support for four research projects.

The first is a project on the manipulation of the microbial flora of the gut of young chickens in order to control salmonella in broiler hens. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary explained the reasons for terminating the funding of this project in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on 15 December, *Official Report*, column *653*. The second project relates to bacteria on meat and food-borne illnesses. This was a basic research project, the short-term objectives of which were completed. The longer term objectives have been incorporated into a revised programme of microbiological research in the Institute of Food Research.

The third project related to the development of methods for determining authenticity, adulteration and origin of food and beverages. This was terminated because of the slow progress and the ability of other contractors to carry forward the work. The final project referred to in the letter related to the processing of potato tubers and was terminated in line with the institute's commitment to reduce efforts in commodity-led research and in the light of the fact that the Ministry was pursuing related research at other centres.

The decisions reached on these four projects need to be viewed in the context of the decision to increase the funding of the institute's programme on food safety from £740,000 this year to £849,000 in the next financial year.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the protein processing plants that were found to be contaminated with salmonella in 1987 and 1988 were allowed to continue selling feedstuffs within the time limits imposed upon them for producing a salmonella-free product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Until recently, statutory provisions did not exist to prevent the supply of processed animal protein from premises where salmonella had been detected by testing samples of the product. An amendment order to the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) Order 1981 came into operation on 2 February and provides Ministry inspectors with such powers.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of incidents of salmonella duldin in cattle in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of incidents of salmonella duldin in cattle in each of the last 10 years is as follows:

	Number
1979	566
1980	498
1981	435
1982	556
1983	586
1984	424
1985	511
1986	463
1987	544
1988	[1]502

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his decision to withdraw research funds from the work at the Institute of Food Research on competitive exclusion as a method of controlling salmonella in poultry.

Mr. MacGregor: Work on competitive exclusion at Bristol, which has been in progress for more than a decade, has reached the point where successful trials have been carried out in commercial production units. Following appraisal by representatives of MAFF and AFRC, it was recognised that the principle of competitive exclusion has been established as a method of control relevant to salmonella in poultry. It was concluded that the technique

was ready for adoption by industry under appropriate circumstances and with suitable safeguards to prevent the introduction or spread of disease. Major poultry firms are aware of this work at Bristol. It is for industry to decide whether to adopt the technique for commercial application.

I have now received the report of a joint MAFF, DoH and British Egg Industry Council working group report on salmonella and eggs dealing with research into this area and am considering its recommendations urgently. I have placed a copy in the Library of the House.

We are already funding an extensive programme of research relevant to control of salmonella in poultry as follows:

Current Work on Salmonella SPP

Title

Risk and Hazard Analysis in Egg Infections
Thermal Destruction of *Salmonella enteritidis* Phase Type 4 in the Domestic Cooking of Food Containing Eggs
Manipulation of the Microbial Flora of the Gut of Young Chicks to Control Salmonellas in Broilers
Survival and Growth of Salmonellae and *Bacillus subtilis* in Baking Ingredients
Salmonella Shedding in Poultry
Serological Diagnosis of *Salmonella enteritidis* Infection
Plasmid Profile Analysis of *Salmonella enteritidis*
Development of a Salmonella enteritidis Vaccine to Prevent Salmonella Infections in Chickens
Salmonella Service: Bacteria Typing, Surveillance and Work Under the Protein Processing Order
Work being carried out under the Zoonosis Order and in Collaboration with PHLS
Development of Immunoassays for the Rapid Detection of Food Poisoning Organisms
Growth Characteristics of Food Poisoning Organisms at Sub-lethal Temperatures
Microbial Antagonism to Increase the Safety and Stability of Chilled Foods
Low Sodium Chloride Foods/Microbiological Safety and Technological Characteristics
Modes of Action and Interaction of Preservatives on Micro-organisms
Detection of Sub-lethal Injury in Micro-organisms
Use of Non-radioactive DNA Probes for the Detection of Pathogenic Bacteria in Food
Enzyme-linked Immunological Biosensors for Detection and Identification of Pathogenic Bacteria in Food
Bacteria and Hygiene in Abattoirs
Bacteria on Meat and Food-borne Illness
Define Factors Controlling Microbial Growth and Develop Predictive Models
Microbiological Safety of Chilled Foods Including Salads
Microbiological Hazards in Domestic and Institutional Handling of Food
Determination of Food Constituents and Contaminants by ELISA
Electron Transfer Coupling as a Rapid Method for Assessment of Bacterial Contamination
Factors Determining Intestinal Colonisation by Salmonella
Investigating the Basis of Virulance of the Salmonella Genus
Variation in Virulence of Salmonellas, Host Responses to Infection, Novel Vaccines and Strategies for Use
Salmonellosis in Cattle—To determine the epidemiology in order that methods to minimise the spread and effects of infection can be formulated and applied
Heat Induced Thermotolerance in Food Poisoning Organisms
Survey of Bacteriological Quality of Goats Milk
Lysozyme Destruction of Gram Negative Organisms in Chicken and Red Meat
Bacteriological Hazards of Large Meat Roasts in Catering and Long Storage of Chilled Foods in Catering
Effects of Heat, Cold, Drying, Radiation on Bacteria and their Recovery and Growth
Food Safety by Predicting Microbial Growth
The Microbiology of Meat and Fish Packaged for Retail Sale
Development of Direct Epifluorescent Filter Techniques (DEFT)

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence there is as to whether deer carry Aujeszky's disease.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Aujeszky's disease affects primarily pigs and rodents but occurs incidentally in most other species. Man, however, is not considered to be susceptible to infection. In deer the disease, if it occurs, results in death soon after infection with no significant transmission to other animals. Aujeszky's disease has been recorded in deer in other countries but available evidence suggests that its occurrence is rare in this species.

Aluminium

Mr. Holland: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish the comparative figures for aluminium levels in the various brands of cow and soya baby milk formulae; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I repeat the undertaking given to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) as to publication of the results of the Ministry's survey (*Official Report*, columns *608-9*). It is not my policy, however, to disclose information by brand name.

Mr. Holland: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to ensure the withdrawal of brands of cow and soya baby milk formulae with high levels of aluminium in the light of recent research by the Medical Research Council and Dr. Mary McGraw of Southmead hospital.

Mr. Ryder: I am aware of the research mentioned. In addition, my own Department has recently completed a survey of infant formulae.

I shall take any necessary action when the results have been assessed by my Department with the Department of Health.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the outside experts consulted by his Department on the effect on babies of food containing high levels of aluminium;

(2) on what date his Department first received information that some popular brands of baby milk contain high levels of aluminium;

(3) what urgent steps his Department has taken in order to stop baby milk with high levels of aluminium being sold in shops.

Mr. Ryder: There have been a number of reports about aluminium in baby milk, dating back to 1985. As a result of these, my Department carried out a study on the levels of aluminium in infant formulae which has now been completed. The results of this survey have been referred to the Department of Health's independent medical and scientific advisory committee on toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment and I will take their advice into account in deciding whether and what action is needed.

Fisheries Byelaw Applications

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the fisheries byelaw applications that are currently awaiting his Department's approval, indicating in each case when the application for approval was first submitted to him.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information is as follows:

Byelaw-making authority	*Number of byelaws awaiting confirmation*	*Date submitted for confirmation*
North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee	7	11 November 1988
Devon SFC	1	8 December 1988
Kent and Essex SFC	1	10 January 1989
Southern SFC	2	20 January 1989

There are no byelaws awaiting confirmation which have been submitted to us by water authorities pursuant to the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975.

Letter

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne may expect a reply to his letter of 24 October 1988 to his Department on matters raised by constituency branches of the National Farmers' Union; and why there has been a delay.

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend raised a number of important points which required careful consideration by officials in different parts of my Department. I regret that this, together with pressures of other work, delayed the reply to my hon. Friend which has now been sent.

Bovine Somatotropin

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice or recommendations he has received from his Veterinary Products committee on the safety implications for *(a)* animals and *(b)* humans of bovine somatotropin which have emerged as a result of the operation of the experimental farm trials by Monsanto into the use of bovine somatotropin in cows.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am unable to comment on the progress of individual applications for product licences but, as I explained to the hon. Member in the answer that I gave him on 31 January, field trials are authorised only after the veterinary products committee is satisfied as to the safety of both humans and animals.

Minced Meat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether his Food Standards Committee is investigating the content and labelling of minced meat; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what powers he has to control the content and labelling of minced meat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The food standards committee (the predecessor of the Food Advisory Committee) recommended the introduction of statutory controls on the composition and labelling of minced meat. Last year my colleagues decided not to introduce specific controls on the ground that there were already adequate controls afforded by the Food Act 1984 and the Food Labelling Regulations 1984.

Meat (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers his veterinary staff have to monitor radioactivity levels in meat in slaughterhouses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Powers to monitor levels of radioactivity in meat in slaughterhouses derive from section 4 of part I of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Eurostat

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has access to Eurostat information.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has access to the publications of Eurostat, a range of its on-line electronic information services and working documents relating to the activities of certain committees.

Beef Production

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of *(a)* the beef production of the European Community and *(b)* intervention buying of beef comes from Great Britain, for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The total production of beef and veal in 1988 in the European Community is estimated by the European Commission as 7,660,000 tonnes. The provisional figures for United Kingdom production in 1988 is 965,000 tonnes (12·6 per cent.). In 1988 391,000 tonnes of beef were bought into intervention in the Community, of which 39,000 tonnes (9·9 per cent.) were purchased in the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Establishments

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of times his Ministry has reassessed habit surveys of members of the public around each nuclear establishment in each of the last 10 years, with the aim of identifying the most exposed members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The habit surveys around nuclear establishments carried out by my Ministry in each of the past 10 years were as follows:

1979—Nine Surveys
Berkeley/Oldbury, Hunterston, Sellafield (Four surveys), Springfields, Winfrith, Whitehaven
1980—One Survey
Bradwell
1981—Four Surveys
Sellafield, Trawsfynydd, Sizewell, Wylfa
1982—Four Surveys
Chapelcross, Sellafield (Three surveys), Springfields
1983—Three Surveys
Heysham, Sellafield, Springfields
1984—Four Surveys
Hartlepool, Sellafield, Springfields, Torness
1985—Four Surveys
Dounreay, Sellafield, Springfields, Winfrith

1986—Seven Surveys
Cardiff, Dounreay, Dungeness, Hinkley Point, Sellafield (Two surveys), Springfields
1987—Six Surveys
Trawsfynydd, Hunterston, Sellafield (Four surveys)
1988—10 Surveys
Wylfa, Rosyth, Sellafield (Five surveys), Springfields, Loch Dee, Winfrith

Environmental exposure pathways and their significance are liable to change and the habit survey programme is therefore kept under continual review. Surveys are repeated at intervals, the frequency depending on the level of radiation exposure involved and possible changes in habits.

Radioactivity

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans there are to deal with contamination in excess of generalised derived limits as set by the National Radiological Protection Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: My Ministry has well established plans to deal with the occurrence of radioactive contamination in excess of the generalised derived limits recommended by the National Radiological Protection Board. If restrictions on the harvesting, movement and sale of contaminated livestock and foodstuffs are necessary, they would be imposed using the powers contained in part 1 of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to publish the results of his aerial survey of radioactivity in Cumbria.

Mr. Ryder: We expect to receive copies of the final report of this survey from the Scottish universities research and reactor centre in the near future. Publication will then follow immediately.

Farm Workers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farmworkers were employed in each county in England in June 1988.

Mr. Ryder: I regret that information for June 1988 is not available. I will send these statistics to the hon. Member as soon as they come to hand.

North Venture Ltd.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects his Department to complete the preliminary examination of the licence application by North Venture Ltd. for the deep sea disposal of certain categories of waste.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The application is being considered urgently and I wish to make a decision as soon as possible.

Poultry Meat Inspection

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of man years of his staff involved in poultry meat inspection in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Meat inspection is the responsibility of local authorities. Officers from my Department visit all slaughter premises to advise on hygiene and welfare standards. The manpower involved for poultry slaughter premises, in the years for which figures are available, was of the order of:

	Man years
1983-84	8·5
1984-85	8·5
1985-86	9·1
1986-87	7·7
1987-88	7·1

Information for earlier years was not recorded.

Slaughterhouses

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the criteria that slaughterhouses have to meet for approval for exporting meat to other European Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: For the requirements applying to red meat slaughterhouses I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on Wednesday 1 February (*Official Report*, columns *240-41*) to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins).

All licensed poultry slaughterhouses must comply with the provisions of the Poultry Meat (Hygiene) Regulations 1976, as amended. The regulations implement EC directive 71/118, as amended, on health problems affecting trade in fresh poultry meat. Plants which engage in intra-Community trade may not take advantage of certain derogations permitted by the regulations and the directive for plants producing for the domestic market only.

Bottled Water

Mr. Paice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider introducing the appropriate legislation to require purveyors of bottled waters to state on the label the mineral, bacterial and chemical contents of the water.

Mr. Ryder: Legislation on the exploitation and marketing of natural mineral waters is harmonised throughout the European Community and our implementing regulations (the Natural Mineral Waters Regulations 1985) require certain chemcial and microbiological criteria to be met. Labels on natural mineral waters are required to bear a statement of the analytical composition giving its characteristic constituents or bear the words "composition in accordance with the results of the officially recognised analysis of ... (date of analysis)". I am currently considering the need for specific statutory controls on other bottled waters.

Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now make a statement about the new farm and conservation grant scheme.

Mr. MacGregor: With the agreement of the Secretaries of State for Wales, for Northern Ireland and for Scotland, I announced on 28 November my intention to introduce a

new capital grant scheme giving greater priority to the control of pollution and support for conservation. After consultations with the EC Commission orders were laid before Parliament on 2 February which if approved will introduce the farm and conservation grant scheme on 20 February.

In my earlier statement I said that I had agreed with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury a provision of up to £50 million over the next three years on grants for pollution control. This means that we are now able to set a grant rate of 50 per cent. for this type of investment. In the lowlands where, because of the predominance of dairy farms, the potential for pollution is particularly acute, this will be the highest rate of grant ever offered for effluent facilities. We understand that it is also the highest rate in Europe. This substantial increase in the lowland grant rate underlines the Government's commitment to dealing with on-farm pollution and will strengthen the case for heavy penalties against those who continue to pollute.

The farm and conservation grant scheme also includes new conservation grants for heather, native woodlands and traditional barns. Farmers will receive grants of 50 per cent. in the LFA and 40 per cent. elsewhere for fencing stock out of heather moors and woodlands for a period in order to promote regeneration. In time the result will be better grazing and shelter as well as the restoration of important environmental features. Grants for the repair and reinstatement of agricultural buildings made of materials traditional in the locality, will be available at 35 per cent. provided that the farmer undertakes to keep the buildings in agricultural use.

At the same time, we are increasing the grant rates for heather burning and bracken control from 15 to 40 per cent. in the lowlands and from 30 to 50 per cent. in the LFA. These new rates will also apply to other familiar conservation grants on hedges, stone walls, shelter belts, stiles and footbridges. All told, these changes give a greater priority to conservation than ever before.

Support for agricultural improvements under the new scheme will be confined to those investments which keep existing farmland in good condition without increasing surplus production. Grants will not be available for new buildings and roads. Drainage will be aided only where it is necessary to renew existing facilities on previously drained land. Grants for this and for fencing, reseeding and regeneration, lime and fertiliser, energy-saving facilities and flood protection will be provided at 25 per cent. in the LFA and 15 per cent. elsewhere.

In retaining these grants, we have been particularly conscious of their importance to farmers in hill and upland areas. The Government's commitment to agriculture in these areas is reflected both in the scope of the scheme and in the fact that grant rates in the LFA will continue to be higher than elsewhere for all items except waste handling and traditional buildings.

In the horticulture sector we intend to reintroduce grants for orchard replanting at up to 35 per cent. Rates of 40 and 35 per cent. will be available for the replacement of heated glasshouses and installation of heating systems from 1 December 1989 when the current rates under the agriculture improvement scheme come to an end. The closing dates for horticultural claims will be 31 March 1994 for orchard replanting and 31 December 1993 for the two other grants.

As under the agriculture improvement scheme grants for agricultural improvements will be available only under an improvement plan. Grants for other types of investment will also be available without a plan but subject to prior notification in the case of waste facilities and traditional buildings.

Public expenditure provision for the new scheme is reflected in chapter 4 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 604). The cost is forecast to reach around £55 million a year.

Leaflets and forms for the new scheme will be available from local Ministry offices on 20 February.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 7 February 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the discussions with the Department of Health on the future research programme into child sexual abuse to be concluded; and if he will make an announcement.

Mr. John Patten: Discussions are in progress with the Department of Health on that part of the Home Office research and planning unit's programme of research for the financial year 1989-90, which concerns child sexual abuse. The details of the research projects on this topic which the Home Office will undertake will be published in the summer in the Home Office research and planning unit's programme of research. Copies of this publication will be placed in the Library.

Football

Mr. John L. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how often police have used the power given under the Public Order Act 1986 to impose a limit on the number of people attending a football match.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware that the Public Order Act has been used for this purpose.

Mr. John L. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many exclusion orders have been imposed on football supporters under the Public Order Act 1986.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1 August 1987, 1,417 orders have been recorded by the Football Association.

Haringey Police (Complaints)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the level of complaints against the Haringey police from the Asian community; what steps are being taken to investigate these and improve police-community relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the statistics of complaints are extracted from individual files when action on the complaint is complete. He further tells me that in 1987 action was completed on three complaints against the Haringey police involving Asian complainants. Action on six such complaints was completed in 1988.

All complaints against officers of the Metropolitan police are investigated in accordance with the procedures laid down in part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the associated regulations.

The commissioner places the highest importance on good relations between his force and all sections of the community. His force is committed to a range of policies designed to this end.

Rapes (Suffolk)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of rapes reported to the police in the administrative county of Suffolk during each of the years 1979 to 1988 and the number of convictions obtained after prosecutions.

Mr. John Patten: The number of offences of rape recorded by the police in each police force area is published annually in table S3.1 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 3", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The number of offences of rape recorded by the Suffolk constabulary in January to September 1988 was 37. Information held centrally, which may be incomplete, shows five persons convicted of rape in 1979, three in 1983 and three in 1987; provision of corresponding figures for other years would involve disproportionate cost.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Hurd: My Department is represented at meetings arranged under the auspices of the following organisations:

Anglo-French Policing and Frontier Controls Working Group
Council of Europe
Commonwealth
Comité Technique Internationale de Prévention et d'Extinction du Feu
Conference Permanente Européenne de la Probation
European Committee on Standards
European Community
European Group on DNA Integration
European Civil Aviation Conference
IATA Working Group on Inadmissible Passengers
Intergovernmental Commission on Channel Tunnel
International Civil Aviation Organisation Facilitation Committee
International Maritime Organisation Facilitation Committee
International Standards Organisation
International Penal and Penitentiary Foundation
International Prison Chaplains' Association
Internationale de Métrologie Légale
Interpol
NATO
United Nations
Western European Union

In the financial year 1987-88 my Department's subscription to Interpol was £440,000, to the Major Donors' group of the United Nations fund for drug abuse control £162,000 and to the Council of Europe's co-operation group to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs (the Pompidou group) £34,000. The cost of other commitments could be estimated only at disproportionate cost.

Data Protection

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to extend the Data Protection Act to cover paper and card indexes held by the Economic League and similar bodies.

Mr. Renton: No.

Voting Rights

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the disqualification of the residents of Caldey Island, Pembrokeshire, from parliamentary and European elections; and what action he proposes to ensure that the residents are refranchised in time to vote in the European elections in June.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Caldey Island is not within the district of south Pembrokeshire. Since 1983 parliamentary constituencies, and hence European parliamentary constituencies, in Wales have been defined by districts and district wards. The jurisdiction of electoral registration officers is also determined by district. It has recently come to light that this removes the right of the residents of the island to be included on the electoral register We are discussing with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who is responsible for local government areas in Wales, how best to restore the franchise to the residents of Caldey Island.

Herald of Free Enterprise

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to what stage has been reached in police investigations in relation to the Herald of Free Enterprise incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Kent that the police investigation is nearly complete and that a final report will then be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to lay a code of practice under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 before Parliament.

Mr Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has today laid before the House, under section 21 of the Act, a code of practice for the housing and care of animals used in scientific procedures which will be published tomorrow.

This code is based upon guidelines published in 1987 jointly by the Royal Society and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare. It is a tribute to the excellent and thorough work done by these bodies that little amendment has been needed to convert their guidelines into a code of practice which should command widespread support.

Political Bodies (Funding)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide that bodies acting solely as channels for contributions to political bodies shall be disbarred from charitable status.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* No organisation that acted solely as a channel for contributions to political bodies could lawfully be a charity.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) of 25 January, *Official Report*, column *575*, access to European Investment Bank loans for Cyprus will be permissible for applications deriving directly fron the area known as the Turkish republic of north Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: EIB loans require Government guarantees. Direct access to European Investment bank loans from the Turkish area of Cyprus would therefore not be possible.

John McCarthy

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent developments have taken place in efforts to secure the release of John McCarthy.

Mr. Waldegrave: Despite recent rumours of the imminent release of one or more British hostages, and the efforts made, particularly by Her Majesty's ambassador in Beirut, to follow up these reports, I regret that there have been no substantive developments. We continue to follow up all available information.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the final treaty on chemical weapons disarmament and verification, currently being negotiated in Geneva, will require that all old burial and destruction sites of chemical warfare agents will need to be indentified for the purposes of verification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The question of old chemical weapon burial and destruction sites has been raised in the Geneva negotiations and their coverage under a comprehensive chemical weapons convention is still under discussion. There is general agreement in the negotiations that upon entry into force of such a convention, states would be required to declare their existing chemical weapon stockpiles, accept on-site inspection of such stockpiles and destroy them within 10 years. Production of chemical weapons would cease immediately and production facilities would be dismantled over the 10-year period. Chemical weapon destruction facilities would be declared and progress in the destruction of stocks monitored.

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify each donation which his Department has made in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Eggar: We can find no trace in our records of any donation made by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (diplomatic wing) since 1979 in response to public appeals.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the sources of information on which he bases his assessment that the Soviet Union has continued without any break in its nuclear weapons modernisation programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not our policy to comment on sources of information obtained on subjects of this nature.

"Death on the Rock"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the inaccuracies identified by his Department in the Thames Television programme "Death on the Rock."

Mr. Waldegrave: Our concerns over the broadcast of the programme "Death on the Rock", and the serious and damaging inaccuracies it contains, are set out in a Government press statement of 26 January, and the attached correspondence from officials to Lord Windlesham, which my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces has laid in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Power (China)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on new plans under study by the People's Republic of China to build more nuclear power plants in Guandong, near Hong Kong, in addition to the Daya Bay Plant under construction.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of no such plans.

COMECON (Travel)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since 1979 permission for emigration to, or travel within, the Soviet Union or other COMECON eastern bloc countries has been denied to applicants formerly employed at the Government communication headquarters at Cheltenham.

Mr. Eggar: We have nothing to add to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 26 January at column 704.

Permanent Representative (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total number of people employed in the offices of the United Kingdom permanent representative to the European Communities; and what is the total annual cost, including salaries, rent, rates, equipment, depreciation, allowances, training, and expenses, for 1988.

Mrs. Chalker: The total number of people employed in the offices of the United Kingdom permanent representative to the European Communities is 84, including locally engaged staff.

The total cost for the financial year 1987-88 was £5·5 million. This is the latest figure available.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the cost to public funds of the Falkland Islands Government for the latest year for which figures are available, per capita for the permanent population of the islands.

Mr. Eggar: For the financial year 1987-88, our public expenditure in the Falkland Islands was as follows:

Development aid:	£6,780,000
Garrison costs:	£118,000,000
Total:	£124,780,000

For the financial year ending 30 June 1988, public expenditure by the Falkland Islands Government was £15,541,731.

Human Rights (Turkey)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the Turkish authorities regarding continuing reports of systematic and widespread use of torture in places of detention;

(2) if he will make representations to the Turkish Government urging them *(a)* to repeal those laws which criminalise the non-violent expression of opinion, *(b)* to abolish the use of military courts when trying civilians, *(c)* to conform to international standards of justice in the proceedings of civil courts and *(d)* to abolish the use of the death penalty; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend raised the continuing allegations of breaches of human rights when the Turkish ambassador paid an introductory call on him on 1 February. I also did so during his call on me on 2 February. He assured us that his Government were aware that there were areas where further improvement was necessary and were acting to eliminate shortcomings. We welcome that assurance.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Turkish authorities regarding the case of Ibraham Acan.

Mrs. Chalker: We are aware of the circumstances of Mr. Acan's case. We urge the Turkish Government to ensure that they respect and abide by the terms and conditions of the human rights agreements to which they are signatories.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Turkish authorities on breaches of the European convention for the prevention of torture and request them to make known the steps being taken to end the use of practices condemned therein.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have both recently made the Turkish ambassador aware of our concern about allegations of breaches of human rights in Turkey. Through him we have reminded the Turkish Government of the need to abide by the international conventions to which they are signatories.

Rates Arrears

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries which have been asked to pay rates arrears for diplomatic properties in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are seeking payment of rates arrears for diplomatic properties in London from the following states:

Burkina	Libya
Costa Rica	Morocco
France	Nigeria
Grenada	Paraguay
Iran	Somalia
Iraq	Sudan
Laos	Uganda

We regularly approach missions which are in arrears to urge them to make payment.

Mr. Ian Richter

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to secure the release of Mr. Ian Richter from imprisonment in Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The continuing imprisonment of Mr. Richter remains a source of grave concern to the Government. The sentence passed on him is severe, and we have made numerous appeals for clemency to the Iraqi authorities. We note that Mr. Richter is now the only remaining long-term western prisoner in Iraq. His early release would remove a major obstacle to the improvement of Anglo-Iraqi relations.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General if he is satisfied that the Crown Prosecution service is able to undertake prosecutions involving extensive technical detail, such as serious fraud cases and health and safety at work prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution service is able to undertake prosecutions involving extensive technical detail. In general the most serious fraud cases are conducted by the serious fraud office and health and safety at work prosecutions are conducted by inspectors appointed under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

THE ARTS

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will specify each donation made by his Department in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Luce: Since 1983 when the Office of Arts and Libraries was established, grants have been made to the bodies it sponsors and to many other institutions and projects. Examples of donations to specific appeals include £500,000 to the Royal Academy trust appeal fund launched in 1982, £25,000 to the Dulwich picture gallery appeal in 1985, and £150,000 in response to an appeal by the Carnegie (United Kingdom) trust for the improvement of arts venues for the benefit of disabled people in 1988.

Arts Administration Inquiry

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he will publish a table of *(a)* the places which and *(b)* the dates when Mr. Richard Wilding will be visiting to take evidence for his inquiry into the structure of arts administration.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* Full details of Mr. Wilding's visits have not yet been finalised, but he will be visiting all the English regional arts associations during the course of the review; the dates of those visits are as follows:

Date	*Place*
2-3 February	South West Arts
16 February	Merseyside Arts
20 February	Yorkshire Arts
21-22 February	Northern Arts
27 February	Southern Arts
1-2 March	East Midland Arts
2-3 March	Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts
7-8 March	North West Arts
9-10 March	West Midland Arts
14 March	Merseyside Arts (second visit)
20 March	South East Arts
21 March	Eastern Arts

PRIME MINISTER

Bradford, South

Q44. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when next she expects to pay an official visit to Bradford, South.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Stretton on Dansmoore

Q104. **Mr. James Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Stretton on Dansmoore, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Government Departments (Value for Money)

Q156. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister what progress is being made in achieving greater value for money within Government Departments; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government attach very high priority to getting better value for money from public expenditure and good progress is being made. Efficiency scrutinies have saved over £1·4 billion on a cumulative basis; and in the current year Departments aim to achieve value-for-money improvements in purchasing and supply totalling some £340 million, while market testing and contracting out is now saving some £40 million a year. The recent Public Expenditure White Paper provides many more examples of value-for-money improvements. Beyond this, we are creating agencies to improve efficiency in Executive activities on which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office announced

progress on 1 February, at column *237-239*. Finally, we are continuing to improve output and performance measurement so that all Departments and managers can be set targets and be judged on the results that they achieve.

Libya

Q159. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Libya.

The Prime Minister: No.

Freedom of Information Rally

Q164. **Mr Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to accept any invitation issued to address the freedom of information and official secrets rally at the Albert hall, Nottingham on 8 February.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

Mr. Key: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 7 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others including the Spanish Foreign Minister. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today including one with the Soviet Deputy Prime Minister. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

NATIONAL FINANCE

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Brooke: Subscriptions were made during 1987-88 to the following international organisations at a total cost of £18,700:

Plan Econ
Institute of International Finance
Data Resources Incorporated
Wharton
International Council for Automatic Data Processing in Government Administration

London Docklands

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the total allowance in cash terms which the developers of the Canary wharf scheme in London's docklands will be eligible to claim under the scheme for 100 per cent. allowances on the capital amount, assuming the scheme is built to completion as set out in the master building agreement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Bow and Popular (Ms. Gordon) on 20 January at column *348*.

EC (Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the report of the court of auditors in relation to the use of accountancy and other devices by the European Economic Community to deal with their overspending in relation to budgetary controls agreed by the European Council; and what steps he will take to prevent such devices being used in the future in the light of the further increase in Community resources agreed in February 1988.

Mr. Brooke: I share the concern of the court of auditors about the use of accountancy devices which camouflage the underlying trend of Community expenditure. The new budget discipline arrangements put in place following the February 1988 Brussels European Council, and especially the legally binding controls on agricultural expenditure, address the fundamental problems which prompted the use of such devices in the past.

Incomes, Profits and Rents

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of *(a)* personal incomes, *(b)* company profits, *(c)* dividends and interest payments and *(d)* rents for each year since 1975; and what has been the percentage increase in each during each of these years.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* This information appears in the 1988 edition of the Central Statistical Office publication "United Kingdom National Accounts" which may be found in the House of Commons Library. The information may also be obtained from the CSO databank which is a collection of macroeconomic time series in computer readable form to which the House of Commons Library has direct access. This databank includes the latest versions of all series on it.

WALES

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current in-patient waiting lists for *(a)* West Glamorgan and *(b)* Neath and Port Talbot for (i) urgent and (ii) non-urgent cases.

Mr. Grist: Waiting list information is collected on the basis of the number of people waiting for admission to a particular hospital. Information on waiting lists as at 31 March 1988, the latest available, is given in the following table:

	In-patient Waiting List	
	Urgent	*Non-Urgent*
West Glamorgan	172	5,151
Neath and Port Talbot Hospitals	43	1,344

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the current waiting lists for first time out-patient appointments, specialty by specialty, in *(a)* West Glamorgan, and *(b)* Neath and Port Talbot; and what are the average waiting periods for each specialty.

Mr. Grist: Waiting list information is collected on the basis of the number of people waiting for a first time appointment at a particular hospital or clinic. Information on waiting lists as at 31 March 1988 is given in the following table.

Information on the average waiting period for appointments is not available centrally. However the notional waiting time to clear out-patient waiting lists is presented in the following table for comparison:

	West Glamorgan		*Neath and Port Talbot Hospitals*	
	Waiting list	*Notional waiting time*[1] *(days)*	*Waiting list*	*Notional waiting time*[1] *(days)*
General Medicine	266	20	100	27
Paediatrics	156	30	73	44
Chest Diseases	29	25	10	46
Dermatology	1,578	133	445	126
Neurology	476	115	82	146
Physical Medicine/Rehabilitation	29	26	—	—
Rheumatology	392	145	101	171
General Surgery	1,679	73	399	37
Ear, Nose and Throat	2,969	187	1,430	287
Traumatic and Orthopaedic Surgery	1,871	58	709	59
Ophthalmology	1,766	125	462	171
Radiotherapy	4	1	—	—
Urology	1,153	481	—	—
Dental Surgery	52	6	49	40
Orthodontics	114	36	—	—
Neurosurgery	37	35	—	—
Gynaecology	653	43	62	14
Psychiatric Children	23	23	—	—
Mental Illness	45	13	—	—
Haematology	16	4	—	—

[1] The notional time to clear a waiting list (given in days) is obtained by dividing the total waiting list at 31 March by the average daily number of new out-patients seen during the previous twelve months.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* *(a)* the total extent, in hectares, of each environmentally sensitive area, *(b)* the extent of agricultural land within each environmentally sensitive area, *(c)* the number of farmers eligible to enter into management agreements in each environmentally sensitive area, *(d)* the number of agreements concluded with farmers in each environmentally sensitive area and, *(e)* the total area of land covered by agreements in each environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is as follows:

	Cambrian mountains (designated 1 March 1987)	*Cambrian mountains extension (designated 1 January 1988)*	*Lleyn peninsula (designated 1 January 1988)*
(a)	72,800 hectares	80,200 hectares	39,750 hectares
(b)[1]	53,900 hectares	58,050 hectares	39,280 hectares
(c)[2]	200	350	960
(d)[3]	108	51	97
(e)[3]	13,179·40 hectares	1,777·20 hectares	4,439·31 hectares

Notes:

[1] Figures cover semi-natural rough grazings and improved agricultural land but exclude woodlands.

[2] Estimated.

[3] As at 3 February 1989.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what opportunities he foresees for *(a)* Wales and *(b)* west Wales as a result of the construction of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* The Government have revitalised the economy of Wales: industry is now more diverse and competitive and overall economic performance and activity have improved. Wales is thus well placed to take full advantage of the trading opportunities which the tunnel will afford in terms of better access to Europe.

West Wales will share in these benefits and, in particular, the improved facilities at Milford Haven and Pembroke dock put the area in a strong position to take advantage of all the opportunities for increased levels of trade with Europe.

Welsh industry is already involved with the construction phase of the tunnel. To date several Welsh firms have been successful in attracting work worth over £7 million. I am sure that Welsh concerns will continue to play a valuable role during construction.

ENVIRONMENT

Drinking Water (Quality)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those water supplies in England which currently fail to meet the standards set out in the European Economic Community directives on the quality of drinking water and whether or not these are subject to derogations; how and when it is proposed for each of these water supplies to meet the standards laid down; and what the latest estimated cost of complying with the standards is in each case.

Mr. Moynihan: Drinking water supplies to the following areas in England regularly exceed one or more of the standards set in the EC drinking water directive. Under the terms of the directive the Department has granted derogations (exemptions) for non-toxic parameters provided that the situation is due to the nature and structure of the ground and there is no public health risk. We have also applied to the Commission under article 20 for a longer period in which to meet the directive in certain cases and have submitted programmes of improvement. Implementation of the remedial programmes would mean that most supplies should comply with the directive by 1990. Most of the derogated supplies should comply by 1995.

Anglian Water Authority Area

Bucklesham

Braintree

Braintree—Northern Rural

Braintree—Kelvedon and Tiptree

Colchester—Lexden

Colchester—Greenstead

Colchester—South

Colchester—West Bergholt

Colchester—North

Bures

Baylham—Kirby Rise

Baylham—Winston

Belstead

Heigham—Kirby Cane

Mattishall

Mundesley

Raydon, Belstead, Alton, Great Wenham

Rushall—Bunwell

Harwich Peninsula (S)

Harwich Peninsula (U)

Alford—Driby

Elkesley

Elkesley—Grove—Newton—Ordsall Road

Everton (Lincoln Division)

Gainborough

Grove—Ordsall Road

Ordsall Road

Scarle

Winterton Holmes

Winterton Holmes—Barrow

Mumby—Fordington

Driby—Fordington

Parts of Huntingdon and South Cambridgeshire districts (Kingston pumping station)

Parts of Huntingdon and South Cambridgeshire districts (Lords Bridge pumping station)

Parts of Cambridgeshire district—Croydon pumping station

Sandhouse—Battlesdon

Heacham and Hunstanton

Docking

Grafham—Huntingdon

Birchmoor (Cambridge division)

Pulloxhill (Cambridge division)

Meppershall (Cambridge division)

Dunton—Newspring (Cambridge division)

Foxcote—Grafham (Cambridge division)

Pitsford East (Oundle division)

Pitsford West

Ravensthorpe

Part of Havering—Dagenham Well

Part of Redbridge—Seven Kings Well

Part of Redbridge—Roding Well

Colchester—Lexden (Colchester division)

Maltby le Marsh

Welton le Marsh—Candlesby—Fordington

Waddingham—Glentham—Ulceby

North West Authority Area

Chester CBC: Ashton and Moldsworth

Chester CBC: Malpas

Congleton DC: Congleton Town Area

Southport

Formby

High Peak District Glossop

Stockport MB: excluding Reddish, Heaton Mersey, Heaton

Moor

Bolton MB: excluding West Loughton, Lostock Areas

Tameside MB: Ashton, Stalybridge, Dukinfield, Mossley

Oldham BN: excluding Royton and Chadderton

Rochdale MB: excluding Middleton

Rossendale Borough, Bury MB, Ramsbottom, Walmersley, Tottington

Burnley Borough

Hyndburn Borough; South and East Accrington

Carlisle District, excluding city area and the parishes of Burgh by Sands Orton, Dalston, Beaumont, Cummersdale

Eden District: parishes of Matterdale, Hutton, Dacre, Greystoke, Threlkeld, Mungrisedale

South Lakeland District: Parish of Dent

South Lakeland; Township of Ulverston parishes of Pennington, Osmotherly, Mansriggs, Egton with Newland, Urswick

Barrow in Furness district

Lancaster Borough, Lancaster City Area and parishes of Slyne with Hest and Boston le Sands

Lancaster Borough, Village of Lowgill in parish of Tatham

Ribble Valley District; parishes of Longridge, Hothersall, Ribchester, Dutton

Fylde DC, Blackpool BC; Preston BC; South Ribble DC; Wyre DC; Fleetwood; Thornton Cleveleys; Preston le Fylde

Northumbrian Water Authority Area
Tyne and Wear—Districts of Sunderland and South Tyneside
Durham—Districts of Chester le Street and Easington

Tunstall

Duddo—Berwick on Tweed

Tyne and Wear—Durham

Borough of Hartlepool

Tyne and Wear—Districts of Sunderland and South Tyneside, Durham, district of Chester le Street

Holy Island—Berwick upon Tweed

Stanhope—Crawleyside

Severn Trent Water Authority Aren
Parts of Warwick DC area—(Leek Wootton source)

Parts of North West Leicestershire DC area—(Acresford source)

Parts of Melton DC area—(Bottesford source)

Parts of Staffordshire Moorlands, Stoke on Trent and Newcastle under Lyme DC/BC areas—(Ladderedge Service reservoir)

Parts of South Staffordshire and Bridgnorth DC—(Neachley source)

Parts of North Warwickshire DC, Coventry and Nuneaton (Whitacre and Frankley waterworks)

Parts of North Shropshire DC—(Kinsall source)

Parts of Wrekin DC area—(Rudway source)

Parts of West Derbyshire DC—(Yeldersley source)

Rural distribution system East of Leek in Staffordshire Moorlands DC area

Hanley Distribution system, Stoke-on-Trent

Cauldon Distribution system

Part of Charnwood and Hinkley and Bosworth DC areas

Part of Stroud DC

Parts of Radnor, Leominster, South Shropshire, Bridgnorth and Wyre Forest DC areas

Parts of Birmingham, Solihull and surrounding areas

Heath Street, Smethwick; Sandwell Metro BC industrial

Parts of Burton on Trent in East Staffordshire and South Derbyshire DC areas

Parts of Burton on Trent, Cannock area and parts of Walsall and Sutton Coldfield

Parts of South Derbyshire, parts of Lichfield DC

Parts of Walsall and Sandwell Met areas

Parts of Dudley Met Borough

Parts of Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay in South Staffordshire DC area

Those areas supplied directly from the treatment works at Bamford

Parts of Bridgnorth DC area

Bulk supply from the Slade Heath source of the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company to the Essington area of South Staffordshire DC

Bulk supply from the Hampton Loade works of the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company to large parts of Wolverhampton BC and parts of Walsall BC

Part of Montgomery DC area

Parts of North Warwickshire DC, Lichfield DC, South Derbyshire DC and East Staffordshire DC

Southern Water Authority Area
River Medway Scheme Supply area (part of Tonbridge and Malling BC area)

Bewl Bridge supply zone (parts of Ashford and Rother DC and Tunbridge Wells BC areas)

Part of Crowborough Town, Village of Eridge, Groombridge, Withyham from Groombridge Treatment works

Village at Ditchling, East Sussex, from Ditchling source Weirwood Reservoir Weirwood

South West Water Authority Area
Parishes of Seaton and Beer Littleham

Parishes from Tottiford water treatment works

Parishes from Prewley water treatment works

Parish of Parkham

Bideford

College supply zone—Falmouth and Penryn

Watercombe supply zone part of Nybridge—Devon and Noss Mayo Devon

Boscathnoe supply zone—higher parts of Penzance Cornwall

Bastreet supply zone—Launceston and Callington areas of Cornwall

De Zank supply zone—Bodmin and Wadebridge areas of Cornwall

Princetown WTW supply zone—Princetown Devon

Belstone supply area including Chagford, Crediton Hamlets, South Veal, Sticklepath, South Tawton

Dunkeswell Broadhembury Kentisbeare Luppit Sheldon

Bryher Island

Tamar WTW supply zone parishes in Devon/North Cornwall

St. Mary's Island

Thames Water Authority Area
Part of Croydon and Tonbridge—supplies from Kenley works

Parts of Mole Valley, Elmbridge Guildford and Reigate and Banstead—supplies from Elmer works

Yorkshire Water Authority Area
Ewden treatment works supply system

West Barnsley and rural area to west of town (Ingbirchworth works)

Loxley Treatment works supply system

South Western area of Sheffield

West Barnsley and rural area to west of town (Royd Moor works)

Part of Leeds, West Yorkshire (Eccup Supply)

Parts of Pontefract and Knottingley

Part of Leeds, West Yorkshire

Wakefield, West Yorkshire

Rural area to East of Thirsk, North Yorkshire

Stalling, Busk Village, Yorkshire Dales

Villages of Mickley and North Stanley North West of Ripon

Harlow Hill—Irongate Bridge treatment works supply area, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

Countersett Village, Yorkshire Dales

Filey, North Yorkshire

Rural area to north of Richmond, North Yorkshire

Rural area in Upper Wensleydale, North Yorkshire

Marsett Village, Yorkshire Dales

Hawes Village

Elingstring Village

Addingham, West Yorkshire

High Bentham Village

Dewsbury, Mirfield and Huddersfield, West Yorkshire

Burnsall Village, Wharfedale, North Yorkshire

Baildon area, North Bradford, West Yorkshire

Parts of Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Wakefield, West Yorkshire

Rural area in Ribblesdale

Huddersfield/Holmbridge, Holmstyes area

Holmfirth area

Parts of Huddersfield

Rural area of Keighley

Rombalds area

Otley, West Yorkshire

West Bradford

Rural area to West and South of Halifax (Haugh Top)

Rural area to West and South of Halifax (Withens Clough)

Northern area of Halifax

Low Bentham Village

Ingleton Village

Measton Area

West Huddersfield

South East, Huddersfield

Part of the parish of Escrick in the district of Selby

Remedial programmes have been prepared to achieve compliance with the nitrate standard in the directive in the following areas:

Water Authority Area and Area of Supply

Anglian
Barrow
Dersingham and Snettisham
Docking
Heacham and Hunstanton
Moulton and Kennet
Wisbech
Harbrough—part of Lincolnshire
Aswarby—Saltersford—part of Lincolnshire
Binbrook—part of Lincolnshire
Bully Hill—Barnoldby—part of Lincolnshire
Bully Hill—Otby—part of Lincolnshire
Clay Hill—Drove Lane, Sleaford
Sleaford—Drove Lane
Potterhanworth—part of Lincolnshire
Saltersford
Waneham Bridge—Saltersford
Ely and Littleport
Harbrough—Coveham, part of Cleethorpes
Bowthorpe, part of Norwich
Heigham—Thorpe part of Norwich
Otby
Otby—Waddingham
Little London
Winterton Holmes—Barrow
Branston Booths
Waddingham—Glentham—Ulceby

Severn Trent
Parts of Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick and Stratford DC

Parts of South Derbyshire DC
Part of Stourbridge, Dudley MBC (Coalbournbrook Source)
Malvern Hills and Wyre Forest DC
Parts of Wrekin DC (Lillehall source)
Part of South Shropshire DC
Part of Wrekin DC (Puleston Bridge source)
Parts of Newark DC (Farnsfield source)
Parts of Nottingham CC area (primarily Hucknall)

South Staffs Waterworks Co.
Parts of Lichfield DC Sutton Coldfield Area
North Warwickshire CC and Walsale Met area

South West
St. Mary's Island

Thames
Lee Valley Water Co.
Part of Luton

In addition, a number of other supplies occasionally fail to meet one or more of the standards set in the directive. We have asked water authorities to identify these supplies and where we cannot grant derogations under article 9 of the EC directive, programmes of improvement are being prepared.

Water undertakers are preparing estimates of the cost of improving drinking water quality. It would be difficult to distinguish precisely that part required to meet the standards set in the directive from investment to meet other requirements of quality and reliability.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the waste disposal authorities and sites for which copies of site licences under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 have been requested by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and not supplied.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has not asked waste disposal authorities to provide copies of all their waste disposal licences. The inspectorate has employed consultants to assemble basic information, from the registers of waste disposal licences maintained by the waste disposal authorities, and to form it into a computer data base. This is periodically up-dated.

Waste disposal authorities have occasionally been requested by HMIP to provide copies of specific licences or samples of licences. In general such requests have been met. There have been a few occasions when such a request has not been acted on. Without a search of all correspondence files it is not possible to give a list of such occasions.

Yorkshire Water Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley and for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 12 December 1988, *Official Report*, columns *402-3*, in which locations the 1987 sediment monitoring results by Yorkshire water authority show an increase of mercury concentration and the 1986 sediment monitoring results by Yorkshire water authority show an increase of cadmium over the previous year.

Mr. Moynihan: The two locations are the river Humber at Stone creek in respect of mercury, and the river Rother at Canklow in respect of cadmium.

Water

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), *Official Report*, 12 January, column 742, if he will make a statement on the performance targets set for the chairman of Yorkshire water authority in 1987-88, and if he will specify the annual bonus received by the chairman of the Yorkshire water authority in each of the last four years.

Mr. Moynihan: Information about Government controls on the Yorkshire water authority, including performance aims and achievement against them, is set out in the authority's annual report and accounts for 1987-88 on pages 59-62. A copy is available in the Library.

Water authority chairmen and executive board members were first eligible for performance bonuses in respect of 1986-87. The chairman of the Yorkshire water authority received a bonus of 11·5 per cent. of his annual salary for that year and 13 per cent. for 1987-88.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines he proposes to issue in respect of the poll tax to women who have no independent source of income; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. Nor does it plan to issue guidelines to individuals on this aspect of the community charge. Anyone with no independent source of income may have a spouse or partner who is jointly liable for the community charge. Where this is not the case, and the person has no income or capital, he or she is likely to be eligible for both income support and community charge benefit.

Defective Houses

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authorities have Spooner style houses; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations his Department has received regarding Spooner houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Eighteen local authorities in England have reported ownership of Spooner houses built between 1945 and 1951; and six have reported ownership of the later, and different, Spooner-Caspon house. My Department has received some inquiries about both house types, and has explained that on the evidence available, designation under the housing defects legislation is unlikely to be appropriate.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those types of properties covered by the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. Trippier: The following property types are designated nationally in England, under the housing defects legislation:

Airey
Boot
Boswell
Cornish Unit
Dorran
Dyke
Gergory
Myton

Newland
Orlit
Parkinson
Reema Hollow Panel
Schindler and Hawksley SGS
Smith
Stent
Stonecrete
Tarran
Underdown
Unity and Butterley
Waller
Wates
Wessex
Winget
Woolaway

Local designations are in force for Smith-type houses with additional foundation defects at Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell and Nuneaton and Bedworth; and also for certain other properties in Dudley with a foundation defect.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those types of properties for which proposals for designation under the Housing Defects Act have been submitted but which have not been so designated.

Mr. Trippier: My Department receives various inquiries concerning designation under the housing defects legislation. Since 1984, formal requests for designation in England have been considered, but not accepted, in respect of the following types:

National designation:
Duo-Slab
Truscon RD27
Certain properties in West Bletchley (with "Finlock Gutters" etc.)

Local designation:
Bison (Hounslow and Reading)
"Cornes" properties (Congleton)
"Czechoslovakian" Timber properties (South Derbyshire)
Duo-Slab (Mark I and II) (Leeds)
Hawksley Aluminium Bungalows (Taunton)
Certain properties in Gillingham (plaster problems)
Certain properties in Wolverhampton (foundation problems)

Top Hill Low Reservoir, Yorkshire

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the facilities for studying wildlife which have been provided at Top Hill Low reservoir in north Yorkshire will be maintained should privatisation take place; why a permit charge has recently been levied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I understand that Yorkshire water authority has no plans to reduce the facilities at Tophill reservoir now or after privatisation. Facilities at the reservoir are controlled by the Tophill wildlife group which, since 1 January 1988, has paid a nominal annual permit fee of £25 to the authority for the facilities. I understand that the group levies a charge on members to cover the permit fee and to give them a working income.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the membership and remuneration of the board of the Warrington and Runcorn new town development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: The membership and remuneration of the board of Warrington and Runcorn development corporation is as follows:

	Annual salary with effect from 1 October 1988 £
Professor A. Mercer (Chairman) MA PhD	16,354
Mr. A. Dean Smith (Deputy Chairman) FRICS JP	7,432
Members:	
Councillor J. H. Collins OBE BSc JP DL Councillor S. H. Cussons FCA Mr. J. E. H. Davies Councillor J. S. Gartside BSc B.Phil JP Mrs. P. M. Gillet BA AIMSW Mrs. R. Gorton Mr. R. N. Hodge B.Eng Mr. M. Macaskill MA ACIS FCBSI Mr. N. J. Macleod FCIB Councillor D. A. Nunn C.Eng MI Mech E	3,355

Repossessions

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total number of repossessions by building societies in each year from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) on 2 February at column *353*.

Radioactive Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what quantities of radioactive barium sulphate residues remain at Amersham International sites; what is their total curie content; and what present plans exist for the final disposal of these radioactive wastes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 1·5 gigabequerels (approximately 40 millicuries) of radioactive barium sulphate residues remain at the Amersham International site at Amersham. No such residues are stored on any other Amersham International site.

The residues are sludges contaminated with radium-226 resulting from the treatment of radioactive effluent prior to discharge from the site. Residues are stored safely in the site effluent treatment plant. When the plant is de-commissioned, the waste sludges will be disposed of safely under the terms of an authorisation issued by HMIP.

Some radioactive barium sulphate residues arising from work on radium-226 in the 1940s and 1950s were at that time buried on the Amersham site. These burials were excavated in the late 1960s and the radioactive waste was disposed of by burial at the British Nuclear Fuels disposal site at Drigg in Cumbria.

Council Houses

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to offer council houses free to tenants who have lived in them for many years.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will publish tables showing *(a)* the planning applications for out of town retail developments which have been referred to him on appeal in each of the past five years, *(b)* their date of referral, *(c)* their size in square feet, *(d)* the outcome of each appeal, and *(e)* the local planning authority concerned;

(2) whether he will publish tables showing *(a)* the planning applications for city centre retail developments which have been referred to him on appeal in each of the past five years, *(b)* their date of referral, *(c)* their size in square feet, *(d)* the outcome of each appeal and *(e)* the local planning authority concerned.

Mr. Chope: Information on appeals involving retail development is not readily available in the form requested. It could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish tables showing *(a)* the planning applications for leisure development which have been referred to him on appeal in each of the last five years, *(b)* the date of referral, *(c)* the local planning authority concerned, *(d)* their size in square feet and *(e)* the outcome of each appeal.

Mr. Chope: Since 1985-86, 1,473 appeals of this type have been determined of which 742 were allowed. The size and nature of the proposals varies widely. I regret that the other details requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to ensure that as far as is reasonably possible the caterers chosen to supply food for the conference sponsored by Her Majesty's Government to be held in March on the depletion of the ozone layer and chlorofluorocarbons will be using *(a)* refrigerant units not needing chlorouorocarbons and *(b)* food packaging not including chlorofluorocarbons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said on 25 January at col *567-68*, Government Departments have been asked to review their policies, specifications and practices with a view to reducing the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and halons to the maximum possible extent. In addition, the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre and the Government hospitality fund, which will be catering for the conference, have been specifically asked to ensure that use of products and equipment containing CFCs is avoided as far as possible.

Industrial Estates

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy on the sale of local authority freeholds to industrial leasehold tenants on local authority industrial estates.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for each local authority to adopt its own policy on this question. In general we consider that, where industrial estates are sold, the tenants should have a fair chance to purchase the freehold.

Structure Plans

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he proposes to complete his review of the process by which the structure plans are prepared;

(2) what role he is planning to give county councils in preparing future structure plans.

Mr. Chope: A White Paper on the future of development plans (CM 569) was published on Monday 30 January. The White Paper proposes the abolition of structure plans, but envisages that county councils should continue to have a key role in the planning process, both in relation to the preparation of regional planning guidance, and in the formulation of planning policies on issues which need to be considered on a county-wide basis. Each county will be required to prepare a statement of county planning policies on a defined range of subjects. They will also be required to prepare a separate minerals development plan. In England, development control responsibility for minerals and waste disposal will remain with the county councils.

Rubbish Tips

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to place a statutory ban on building closer than 250 m to dangerous tips in respect of the methane gas hazard associated with rubbish tips; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No, but it is proposed to issue to local authorities shortly a circular about the use of their planning powers in relation to landfill sites which may generate methane gas, and this will refer to the circumstances of development near such sites. A draft of the circular was issued for comment on 12 December.

Dumps

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for the financing of safety measures at former dumps; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Such measures are the responsibility of those, including local authorities, with relevant rights to the land.

Local authorities will assess the requirements in the light of surveys currently being conducted and will determine their priorities accordingly. Capital allocations for 1989-90 allow for such work, with a sum of £5 million held in reserve for urgent work on landfill gas remedial measures for which no other resources are available.

Derelict Land

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources are being made available under the derelict land programme in 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The resources available for derelict land reclamation under the derelict land programme will be £67·182 million in 1989-90, we expect that about 900 hectares of land will be reclaimed by the programme in 1989-90 thus maintaining the momentum of the programme which, since 1979, has funded the reclamation

of more than 11,000 hectares of derelict land. In addition, urban development corporations are now tackling some of the most extensive areas of dereliction and city grant is also helping redevelop derelict sites in inner city areas.

As in previous years more than 90 per cent. of derelict land grant will be spent in the northern and midlands regions. We have given particular priority to Yorkshire and Humberside and the west midlands. We are providing £12 million to the Yorkshire and Humberside region to increase the attack on persistent dereliction. £13 million is allocated to the west midlands and of this £6 million is intended to continue the investigative and remedial work on old limestone workings in the black country. Overall the allocations include more than £12 million for coal mining and related dereliction, a further increase on last year's record expenditure.

We are approving a new rolling programme for the joint local authority initiative in the Dearne valley in south Yorkshire. Existing rolling programme status for the lower Don valley (Sheffield) and Preston docks is to cease. We are also introducing triennial reviews for all rolling programmes and major projects and under these arrangements the present programmes in Wigan, north-east Lancashire, Wirral, Normanby park, Corby and the black country will be examined with the local authorities in the course of 1989 and targets set for completion of their work. Total expenditure on the 13 local authority rolling programmes approved for 1989-90 will be nearly £19 million.

The allocations will permit completion of work on the major reclamation of the Consett steelworks and the 1990 Gateshead garden festival site. Progress will be maintained in Corby, Wigan and the black country and on the exciting private sector Meadowhall development in Sheffield. A start should be made on the BICC site in Knowsley.

In general, priorities for derelict land reclamation remain as set out in the department's circular 28/85, "Reclamation and Reuse of Derelict Land". This stressed the importance of schemes designed to reclaim urban, especially inner city, land for housing and industrial and commercial uses. These priorities will be reflected in the schemes that will be supported in 1989-90.

However, as I announced on 20 July 1988, I have undertaken to review priorities for derelict land reclamation in the light of the findings of the 1988 derelict land survey. In doing so we shall also have regard to the recent report of the National Audit Office on derelict land grant and to the forthcoming report of the Public Accounts Committee. Officials are already engaged on the review with terms of reference

"to review the causes and incidence of derelict land and the measures needed to deal with it and to prevent dereliction in future having regard to value for money."

If changes are proposed to policies or procedures for the reclamation of derelict land then a consultation paper will be published before firm decisions are taken.

Endangered Species

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to publish the results of his monitoring of progress in the implementation of the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1985.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 3 February at column *43*.

Pesticides

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and location of breaches of the maximum admissible concentration of single and mixed pesticides in water reported by the Anglian water authority.

Mr. Moynihan: Last year sample analyses indicated that there had been some breaches of the precautionary standard for pesticides in drinking water in some supplies provided by the Anglian water authority. However, all were within levels considered acceptable by medical advisers.

Correspondence

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to reply to the letter of 22 December 1988 from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury relating to clause 7(5) of the Water Bill.

Mr. Moynihan: I have sent the hon. Member a reply today.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural and Food Research Council

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, following the recommendations of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, he will amend the method of funding of the Agricultural and Food Research Council so as to distinguish between the funding of food research in the public interest and work of direct benefit to industry; and if he will direct the Agricultural and Food Research Council to ensure that its Bristol laboratory remains open and intact.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have made their position clear on the removal of public support for near market research and that is already reflected in the commissions which my Department places with the Agriculture and Food Research Council. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is responsible in this House for matters directly affecting the research councils.

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will specify each donation made by his Department in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. MacGregor: It is not usual for my Ministry to make donations to public appeals for financial aid but the Ministry has on occasion been prepared to sponsor projects within the purview of such appeals. The most recent example has been a £50K sponsorship of a project within the ambit of the British Food and Farming 1989 appeal. Identification of examples for the period back to 1979-80 could be undertaken only at disproportionate cost.

Nutritional Labelling

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has made to proposals by the European Commission for revised nutritional labelling; and if he will make it his policy to resist any extension of the four principal nutrients now recommended for use in the United Kingdom and specified in *Codex Alimentarious*.

Mr. Ryder: The European Commission's proposals on nutrition labelling are currently under discussion at Council working group level. I am aware of the food industry's view that nutrition labelling should be restricted to energy, protein, carbohydrate and fat with optional declarations of other nutrients, as recommended by the *Codex Alimentarius*.

Potato Marketing

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to complete his review of potato marketing policy; and if he will ensure that in relation to any proposals he makes for change in the existing arrangements, producers, users and consumers will be brought together to develop a strategy which ensures that the market need is met.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is now considering and evaluating the responses to the consultation document in September 1988, including comments on the suggestion that non-producer interests should be represented in market management decisions. We are not yet in a position to say when this process will be completed, but a decision will not be unduly delayed.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give, for each year since its introduction *(a)* the total amount of conservation grants paid under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme and *(b)* the total amount of funding received from the European Economic Community for conservation grants under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme.

Mr. Ryder: In the financial year 1987-88 the payments made under the ESA schemes in England amounted to £2·944 million. Our estimate of expenditure in the current financial year is £8·3 million. Information on funding received from the European Economic Community towards the ESA expenditure in 1987 is not yet available.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* *(a)* the total extent in hectares, of each environmentally sensitive area, *(b)* the extent of agricultural land within each environmentally sensitive area, *(c)* the number of farmers eligible to enter into management agreements on each environmentally sensitive areas, *(d)* of the number of agreements concluded with farmers in each environmentally sensitive area and *(e)* the total area of land covered by agreements in each environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Ryder: The total area in hectares of each environmentally sensitive area in England is as follows:

	Hectares
Broads	29,870
Somerset Levels and Moors	26,970
South Downs	53,340
Pennine Dales	15,900
West Penwith	7,210
Breckland	94,030
North Peak	50,250
Suffolk River Valleys	32,150
Shropshire Borders	21,000
Test Valley	2,690

The figures are provisional and subject to minor amendment when final measurement and checking has been completed. The extent of agricultural land in each environmentally sensitive area is still being measured. Information on the number of farmers eligible to enter the environmentally sensitive area scheme in each area is not available.

The number of agreements concluded in 1987 and total area of land covered in each environmentally sensitive area together with applications and agreements for 1988 are as follows:

Area	*Agreements 1987*		*Applications and agreements 1988*	
	Number	*Area hectares*	*Number*	*Area hectares*
Broads	389	6,735	239	5,627
Somerset Levels	523	7,709	148	1,437
South Downs	58	3,104	65	2,743
Pennine Dales	218	8,130	39	1,175
West Penwith	139	5,552	10	314
Breckland	—	—	86	3,933
North Peak	—	—	77	35,911
Shropshire Borders	—	—	184	13,747
Suffolk River Valleys	—	—	287	7,191
Test Valley	—	—	15	373

The last five environmentally sensitive areas (and the South Downs Western extension) were not open for applications until 1988.

Soil Erosion (Norfolk)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated annual rate of soil loss by erosion in Norfolk.

Mr. Ryder: While information is available in respect of areas known to be particularly susceptible, this is not representative of the whole country. Figures are not available for individual counties. The basic principles of soil erosion and measures to minimise its risk are well understood and have been incorporated in ADAS advice to farmers for many years. ADAS has published advisory leaflets on water erosion and on wind erosion and will advise farmers on techniques to minimise erosion risks.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Charitable Donations (VAT)

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information his Department has about the role, in France, of the Fondation de la France in routing corporate charitable donations to schools and higher education institutions, thereby exempting such donations from value added tax under the 6th directive on value added tax and whether he has plans to encourage donations in the United Kingdom by such a method.

Mr. Butcher: The Department has no information on the Fondation de la France or its methods of routing

charitable donations. We welcome charitable donations to schools and higher education institutions but their United Kingdom tax treatment is and must remain in line with the 6th directive.

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information his Department has about the effect on the LINK programme of charging value added tax on the value of donations of computer equipment, software and services made by companies to schools and higher education institutions.

Mr. Butcher: None. LINK provides a framework for collaborative research involving industry and the science base; donations play no part in the funding arrangements.

Mr. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has had consultations on seeking a method of removing from companies wishing to make donations in kind to schools and higher education institutions the disincentive of having value added tax levied on the value of such donations.

Mr. Butcher: The arrangements for value added tax are a matter for HM Customs and Excise. I understand that there are no plans to change the present arrangements which are in line with the EC 6th directive on VAT.

Student and Pupil Records

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to issue the consultative document on the keeping and disclosure of further education student records and to make the regulations on the keeping and disclosure of pupil records.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend hopes to do so within the next few months.

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will specify each donation made by his Department in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not readily available.

Business and Commercial Subjects

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current position with regard to the extent to which business and commercial subjects are taught in schools, the extent to which such subjects were taught in schools five and 10 years previously and the extent to which he envisages such subjects being taught in schools over the next 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Estimates from the 1977 and 1984 secondary school staffing surveys show the following:

Tuition in business studies (1) as a percentage of all tuition received in maintained secondary schools

	1977 (England and Wales)	*1984 (England)*
Year groups 1-3	*	*
4-5	3·7	3·3
6th form	4·6	4·7
All year groups	1·7	1·6

*less than 0·1 per cent.
(1)Business studies includes commerce, accounts, bookkeeping, typing and shorthand.

Further information will be provided by the 1988 secondary school staffing survey, the results of which are expected to be available in the spring.

Zidovudine

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, pursuant to the reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, on 25 January, *Official Report*, column *596*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the protocol of the medical research trial on the benefits of zidovudine for healthy people who are HIV positive; how many people are involved; and when the results of the trial will be available.

Mr. Jackson: Planned numbers to be involved in the trial are 1,000 in the United Kingdom and 1,000 in France, as set out in the relevant MRC press notice earlier placed in the Library. Results are expected to be available by the end of 1992, and will be published as soon as is practicable after that. The protocol is extremely lengthy and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the report of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay; when it will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have asked the interim advisory committee to submit its report by mid-February at the latest. I will be arranging for its early publication.

Natural Environment Research Council

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of the total Natural Environment Research Council budget was allocated by that council to *(a)* the Institute of Terrestial Ecology research station at Bangor and *(b)* the research vessel support service at Barry in each of the years 1979 to 1988; and what figure is projected for 1989 in each case.

Mr. Jackson: The information is as follows:

Year from 1 April	*(a) Bangor per cent.*	*(b) Barry per cent.*
1979	0·69	7·44
1980	0·59	7·10
1981	0·55	7·78
1982	0·59	8·20
1983	0·59	6·32
1984	0·64	7·02
1985	0·66	6·57
1986	0·62	8·05
1987	0·69	8·24
1988	0·54	5·88
1989-90	[1]	5·31

[1] Not yet available.

Figures are gross proportion of NERC gross total expenditure.

Environmental Research Vessels

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the projected costs of

creating facilities at Southampton in the event of moving the environmental research vessel support base from Barry.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the Natural Environment Research Council estimates the capital cost of creating the relevant new facilities in Southampton for the research vessel services from Barry and the Deacon laboratory from Wormley at about £21 million over four years at 1988-89 prices. Offsetting savings from land sale receipts and expenditure on work otherwise needing to be committed will total some £11 million.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what budget his Department has allocated in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* adjusted to 1989 prices to the research vessels support service base at Barry for each of the years 1979 to 1988; and what figure is projected for 1989.

Mr. Jackson: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many jobs he estimates will be shed at Natural Environment Research Council establishments and vessels during 1989; where these job losses will be located; where any new posts are to be located; and how many of the deleted posts he estimates will be vacated by *(a)* redundancy and *(b)* relocation.

Mr. Jackson: The Natural Environment Research Council identified 160 posts, the majority of which were in marine sciences, to be shed during the financial year to 31 March 1989. In consequence, 38 staff will be made compulsorily redundant, the remainder of the posts having been shed through voluntary redundancy. I understand that in 1989-90 further posts will have to be lost; it is hoped to limit these to 60, through voluntary redundancy. The locations of the posts concerned are not yet known.

Science Budget

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the distribution of the science budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have considered the recommendations of the advisory board for the research councils and have decided that the science budget for 1989-90 should, subject to approval by parliament of the Estimates in due course, be allocated as follows:

	£ million
Agricultural and Food Research Council	74·57
Economic and Social Research Council	32·02
Medical Research Council	176·34
Natural Environment Research Council	123·46
Science and Engineering Research Council	404·96
The Royal Society	11·64
The Fellowship of Engineering	0·97
Science Policy Studies (ABRC)	0·22
Centre for Exploitation of Science and Technology	0·08

I am publishing the board's advice today. Copies are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

ENERGY

Margam Pit

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whose consent is required for the commencement of work on Margam pit; and whether British Coal has sufficient capital available for the work in 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Decisions on particular investments are a matter for British Coal. However, there are long-standing arrangements under which major projects are the subject of prior consultation with the Secretary of State. British Coal's capital allocation for each of the years 1989-90 to 1991-92 has been reduced by £25 million from the figures originally set out in Cm 606. Within these capital allocations, it is for British Coal to determine the priority to be given to specific projects.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Statistics

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will express the difference as a plus or minus figure for the latest available year against 1979 in the level of net flows from the United Kingdom to developing countries, at 1979 prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: The difference between the level of net flows from the United Kingdom to developing countries in 1979 and 1987, at 1979 prices, is minus £5,584 million. The 1979 figures is dominated by an exceptionally high level of bank lending fuelled by the recycling of petro-dollars.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will express the difference as a plus or minus figure for the latest available year against 1979 in the level of *(a)* public expenditure on aid, *(b)* the aid programme and *(c)* official development assistance, at 1979 prices.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest year for which information is available is 1987. The information is:

Gross public expenditure on aid	: minus £208 million.
Net aid programme	: minus £228 million.
Net official development assistance	: minus £388 million.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the value at 1980 prices of net private flows from the United Kingdom to developing countries, for the latest available year, expressed in percentage terms of its value in 1979.

Mr. Chris Patten: The value at 1980 prices of net private flows from the United Kingdom to developing countries in 1987 expressed in percentage terms of its value in 1979 was 1·5 per cent.

Christian Aid (Report)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he plans to make to the report from Christian Aid "British Overseas Aid 1975-87", a copy of which was sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: This report was sent to me for information. I do not intend to make a statement on it.

Ethiopia

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the aid to Ethiopia, expressed per capita of the population of that country, for the latest year for which the figures are available.

Mr. Chris Patten: Gross British bilateral aid to Ethiopia in 1987 was the equivalent of 19p per head of the population of that country.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the security of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The recent incident in which a journalist gained entry to the construction site will doubtless require those responsible to review and improve their procedures. It would not be appropriate for me to make a statement on the details of the security arrangements.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities and other interested parties about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Manchester; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Glasgow; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Liverpool; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Newcastle; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Leeds; and if he will make a statement;

(7) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Plymouth; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Birmingham; and if he will make a statement;

(9) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Southampton; and if he will make a statement;

(10) what consultation has taken place between his Department, British Rail, the appropriate authorities, and other interested parties, about the route for a high speed rail link between the Channel tunnel and Bristol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No consultations involving my Department have taken place about trains beyond London. British Rail is carrying out widespread regional consultations in preparation for the plan which it is required to publish by the end of 1989, in accordance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, setting out its proposals for Channel tunnel rail services serving various parts of the United Kingdom.

Radioactive Materials

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will update to include 1988 his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), *Official Report*, 27 July 1988, columns *247-48*, about the number of incidents involving the loss of radioactive materials in transit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 15 December at column 660.

On 26 September 1988 the Antigua-registered vessel Ardlough sank off the North Wales coast. A small quantity (50MBq) of Californium 252 was lost. There were no significant radiological consequences.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, 24 January, column *466*, to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, he will set out the form in which consignors of radioactive materials by air must satisfy in advance his Department that the arrangements comply with international regulations; and if he will list any instances when permission has been declined.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consignors whose package designs require approval must submit detailed safety reports to the Department of Transport for assessment against the provisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations. They are notified of any shortcomings and given the opportunity to remedy them before resubmitting their case for reassessment. A copy of the Department's "Guide to Applications for Competent Authority Approval of Package Designs, Shipments and Special Form Material" has been sent to the hon. Member for information.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, *Official Report*, 24 January, column *466*, the International Atomic Energy Agency special review of international nuclear materials transport was begun; what evidence, and in what form, has been submitted by the United Kingdom; and when he expects the special review to be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The review began in March 1988. The United Kingdom is represented on the review committee and the recently published report by the Advisory Committee on the Safe Transport of Radioactive Material on the transport of plutonium by air was submitted to a technical meeting in December 1988. The recommendations and the need for further work will be considered by the standing advisory group of the International Atomic Energy Agency in April 1989.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what transport licence arrangements exist to cover the transport of *(a)* nuclear materials from atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston to atomic energy research establishment Harwell for processing and *(b)* nuclear materials from atomic energy research establishment Harwell to atomic weapons establishment Aldermaston for processing; and what liaison arrangements exist between his Department and the international safeguards authorities at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and EURATOM in Luxembourg over such transport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The safety procedures observed by the Ministry of Defence in the transport of nuclear materials are no less stringent than those required of civil operators.

They comply with the internationally agreed standards set by the IAEA. Liaison arrangements concerning international safeguards are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy.

Newly Qualified Drivers

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will consider introducing a scheme requiring the display of probationer plates for newly qualified drivers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of schemes were introduced in other countries during the 1960s, so they have been in operation for some time. So far, none has been successfully evaluated. There is no evidence that they help to reduce casualty rates. In New Zealand, for instance they have been withdrawn upon introduction of enforcement systems more similar to our own.

A comparable P plate system is in use in Northern Ireland, where the legal system for enforcement of road traffic law is different. Using the only comparative data available, the relevant figures are:

Comparison of casualty rates for Great Britain and Northern Ireland: 1961-1987

Year	Casualty rate per 1,000 vehicles	
	Great Britain	Northern Ireland
1961	35·0	23·5
1966	29·5	21·3
1971	22·7	20·8
1976	19·1	18·9
1981	16·7	17·8
1983	15·3	16·0
1984	15·7	17·3
1985	15·0	18·4
1986	14·8	20·0
1987	14·0	20·5

British Rail (Rolling Stock)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will approve British Rail's proposal to order new rolling stock for the lines from Marylebone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend today gave approval for the first of a new generation of inner suburban diesel vehicles for Network SouthEast services out of Marylebone. A total of 77 new class 165 Networker Turbo vehicles will be ordered at a cost of £39 million. Services on the lines currently employ late 1950's vintage stock, all of which will be replaced. Delivery of the first new stock is expected in October 1990.

These new vehicles will bring great benefits to the increasing number of passengers who travel into Marylebone. The new vehicles will be faster, more comfortable, and offer greater reliability than those that they replace.

Dial-A-Ride

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether a decision has been made on funding of dial-a-ride for next year.

Mr. Portillo: I am pleased to announce that the grant to London dial-a-ride services for 1989-90 will be £7·27 million. That is an increase of £1 million on 1988-89 and will facilitate a substantial expansion of the service. After four successive annual increases dial-a-ride funding in 1989-90 will be over 70 per cent. higher than it was when London Regional Transport took over responsibility for funding from the GLC.

EMPLOYMENT

Energy Grants

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many energy grants have been paid in each month since April.

Mr. Nicholls *[pursuant to his reply 11 January 1989]:* I regret that there was an error in the reply I gave on Wednesday 11 January at column *711* concerning the number of energy grants that had been paid in each month since April 1988.

The correct information is provided in the following table:

	Number
1988	
April	16,828
May	16,463
June	7,049
July	9,389
August	9,475
September	24,562
October	17,202
November	8,867
TOTAL	109,835

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department participates, where appropriate, in the work of all the international organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member, when employment and related issues are under consideration. The cost of commitments to these organisations is not generally met by the Department of Employment except in the case of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The United Kingdom contribution to the ILO in 1987-88 was £3,813,000.

Product Clearance

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice the Health and Safety Executive is giving to new applicants for the clearance of products.

Mr. Nicholls: People who contact the Health and Safety Executive's pesticide registration section for information about obtaining approvals are sent an information package which includes application forms and an explanatory booklet. The section issues a regular newsletter which includes an up-to-date estimate of how long approvals are likely to take.

HSE (Scientific Staff)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions have been given to scientific staff at the Health and Safety Executive as to the times of day at which to answer telephone inquiries.

Mr. Nicholls: Telephone inquiries to the Health and Safety Executive can be made at any time of the day. To reduce delays in processing applications for approvals scientists in the pesticide registration section organise their work so that normally mornings are dedicated to dealing with applications and time is set aside in the afternoon to phone back those applicants who wish to have direct scientific advice. Pesticide approval holders and relevant trades associations have been told of these arrangements in the January issue of the section's newsletter.

Restart

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will examine the working of restart in connection with those who are on the redundant mineworkers pension scheme; and if he will make a statement on the regulations as they are currently being applied by his Department.

Mr. Lee: People who receive payments under the redundant mineworkers payment scheme (RMPS) are required to sign on at unemployment benefit offices and to satisfy the conditions for receipt of benefit. This will bring them within the restart programme and they are offered interviews in the same way as every other member of the restart client group. The RMPS is the responsibility of the Department of Energy. Officials from my Department and the Department of Energy are examining the RMPS regulations and benefit procedures which bring those on the RMPS within the coverage of the restart programme.

Construction (Fatalities)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the total number of fatalities in the construction industry reported by the Health and Safety Executive for each year between 1960 and 1987 and *(b)* the total number of fatalities in the construction industry reported by the Health and Safety executive as a percentage of the combined employed and self-employed work force for each year between 1960 and 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: The table shows the available information. Fatalities to the self-employed and members of the public were not reportable until 1 January 1981. The few voluntary reports collected between 1978 and 1980 are included with employees. Fatal injuries to the self-employed working on their own have never been reportable.

The relative incidence of injuries between employees and the self-employed will be affected by differences in the range of activities in which they are engaged and by differences in the propensity to report injuries.

Reported[1] fatalities in the construction industry[2]

Year	Employees			Self-employed			Employees and self-employed		
	Fatalities	Number[3] (thousands)	Incidence rate per 100,000	Fatalities	Number[3] (thousands)	Incidence rate per 100,000	Fatalities	Number[3] (thousands)	Incidence rate per 100,000
1960	278	1,393	20·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1961	272	1,446	18·8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1962	281	1,480	19·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1963	247	1,506	16·4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1964	271	1,543	17·6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1965	230	1,580	14·6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1966	292	1,604	18·2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1967	204	1,515	13·5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1968	240	1,476	16·3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1969	268	1,415	18·9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1970	204	1,294	15·8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1971	201	1,159	17·3	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1972	190	1,193	15·9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1973	231	1,269	18·2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1974	166	1,223	13·6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1975	182	1,207	15·1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1976	156	1,203	13·0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1977	130	1,167	11·1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1978	153	1,161	13·2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1979	149	1,201	12·4	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1980	165	1,206	13·7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1981	105	1,102	9·5	11	388	2·8	116	1,490	7·8
1982	100	1,038	9·6	18	398	4·5	118	1,436	8·2
1983	118	1,015	11·6	21	409	5·1	139	1,424	9·8
1984	100	1,010	9·9	17	464	3·7	117	1,474	7·9
1985	104	996	10·4	22	470	4·7	126	1,466	8·6
1986 Q1[4]	24	n.a.	n.a.	2	n.a.	n.a.	26	n.a.	n.a.
1986-87[5]	99	967	10·2	26	487	5·3	125	1,454	8·6
1987-88[5,6]	100	984	10·2	41	542	7·6	141	1,526	9·2

n.a. not available.

[1] Reported to Her Majesty's factory and agricultural inspectorate and all other relevant enforcing authorities under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980 (NADOR) for 1981 to March 1986, and the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) for 1986-87 onwards. Fatalities between 1960 and 1980 are limited to those reported to Her Majesty's factory inspectorate.

[2] The construction industry is defined as in the standard industrial classification (SIC) 1968 (order XX) for employment data up to 1970 and injury data up to 1980. From 1971 for employment data and 1981 for injury data, it is as defined in SIC 1980 (division 5).

[3] As at June each year.

[4] First quarter (January to March).

[5] Year commencing 1 April.

[6] Provisional.

Curriculum and TVEI

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are employed in the Training Commission dealing with the curriculum in schools and the extension of the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Cope: At 1 February 1989, 163 permanent officials and 14 casual staff were employed to administer the technical and vocational education initiative, of whom five were part-time. In addition, 40 educational advisers were employed on short-term contracts.

Catrine Unemployment Office

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the figures for use of the Catrine unemployment office for *(a)* advice, *(b)* signing on and *(c)* other services for each month since June 1979.

Mr. Lee: Full information is not available. Details of the number of people using Catrine part-time unemployment benefit office to sign as unemployed since 1985 can be supplied and are given in the table.

	1985	1986	1987	1988
January	481	502	503	487
February	497	503	506	449
March	480	479	493	439
April	474	468	502	426
May	454	428	483	405
June	N/K	431	477	355
July	522	431	512	430
August	509	457	502	414
September	519	451	512	N/K
October	498	N/K	490	362
November	501	N/K	486	363
December	474	446	464	350

Genetic Engineering

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made on proposals for legislation to control the release of genetically engineered organisms into the environment to replace the current system of voluntary guidelines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There is already legislation which controls in various ways the planned release of genetically manipulated organisms into the environment. This includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and a number of other Acts, the administration of which falls to

several Government Departments but prior notification is often voluntary. I am informed by the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission that further to publication of a consultative document in 1987, he expects to submit to my right hon. Friend legislative proposals to make it compulsory in all cases by the middle of this year.

The United Kingdom is also participating in negotiations on a European Community directive on this subject.

Employment Training Scheme

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Derbyshire are currently participating in the Government's employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* At 27 January 1989 there were 2,044 trainees on employment training in Derbyshire.

Coalmining (Women)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received in respect of proposals to permit women to be employed underground in the coalmining industry; how many were generally in favour and how many were unfavourable; if he will publish his response to any such representations.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* Fourteen representations were received in respect of proposals to permit women to be employed underground in mines in response to the consultative document "Restrictions on Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation". Of these 10 were generally in favour and four were against.

Economic League

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the implications for his employment policies of the activities of the Economic League.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* Over the last 12 months my Department has received 30 letters about the activities of the Economic League.

Industrial Death Grants

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he proposes to introduce to replace industrial death grants following their abolition on 11 April 1988; when the standard rate of £52 for single parent and £78 for two parents, as applied to YTS fatalities was first introduced; how the level of those awards was varied throughout their lifetime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* All payments made under the analogous industrial injuries scheme run by the Training Agency and its predecessors are exactly the same as those available to employed earners from the Department of Social Security's statutory industrial injuries' scheme. Under the statutory scheme industrial death grant payments were abolished on 11 April 1988. The rates of industrial death grant remained the same from the introduction of the statutory scheme in 1948, until they were abolished. The question of any replacement of the death grant is for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Security.

East Midlands Tourist Board

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of expenditure provided by his Department to the East Midlands tourist board in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* My Department provides general grant-in-aid funding towards the costs of all English tourist board (ETB) activities. The ETB has made the following total payments to the East Midlands tourist board:

Financial Year	*Total Payments* £
1984-85	112,000
1985-86	124,000
1986-87	191,000
1987-88	216,000
1988-89	218,000

Training (East Anglia)

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide the latest available figures for *(a)* the number of places and *(b)* the number of trainees in place in employment training for each training agency area in East Anglia.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* It is planned to have about 5,000 places available in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire by April 1989. At 27 January 1989, there were already over 2,900 trainees on the programme.

Coal Mines (Sanitation)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce specific statutory requirements for the provision of sanitation in deep coal mines.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* Specific statutory requirements for the provision of sanitation in all coal mines already exist. They are section 94 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Coal and Other Mines (Sanitary Conveniences) Regulations 1956.

These provisions are being reviewed and will be updated as part of the Health and Safety Commission's programme for the renewal of mining safety legislation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC Internal Market Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report* the nature and purpose of amendmens he proposes to make to Acts of Parliament so as to comply with the common position adopted by the Internal Market Council of the European Economic Communities at their meeting on 21 December 1988 in respect of draft directives and amendments relating to the harmonisation of national legislation concerning safety of machinery.

Mr. Maude: The draft directive is still under negotiation. A common position was agreed at the internal market council on 21 December. Under the co-operation procedure, the European Parliament now has an opportunity to consider the common position, before the directive can be finally adopted by the council. It is therefore too soon to give a definitive assessment of the impact on United Kingdom legislation.

However, several United Kingdom laws may need to be amended. The most relevant are the Health and Safety at Work, etc, Act 1974 and the Consumer Protection Act 1987. More specific requirements dealing with hazards arising out of the use of machinery in particular industries are contained in various other statutory provisions; the most important of these are the Factories Act 1961 and numerous sets of regulations made under it.

Broadcasting and Film

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into trade unionism within the broadcasting and film industries.

Mr. Maude: Questions as to possible restrictive labour practices in television broadcasting and film protection were jointly referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on 28 March 1988 by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Employment, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The Commission has not yet submitted its report to Ministers. Once it has done so, it will be published as soon as is practicable.

1992 Hotline

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many calls have been received to date by his Department's 1992 hotline.

Mr. Maude: DTI's 1992 hotline has received over 113,000 calls since it opened on 18 March 1988.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Clay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what is now his estimate for the deficit on the balance of payments for 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: The deficit on the current account of the balance of payments for 1988 is provisionally estimated to be £14·3 billion.

Cars

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, how much of the increase in 1988 in the demand for cars was met by production in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988 of the 2,215,574 new cars registered in the United Kingdom, 965,883 were manufactured in the United Kingdom. The comparable figures for 1987 were 2,013,693 and 972,968.

Further Education

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, if he will list the separate schemes under the support for further education programme of his Department; and what are the total sums expended on them since 1983.

Mr. Forth: My Department has supported further education with a number of schemes at various times since 1983. £3·2 million has been expended on the further education scheme for IT skills updating, £5·1 million was expended on the CNC machine tools scheme and £2·5 million on the scheme for computer aided design.

The further education sector also benefited from a number of schemes which also applied to higher education, schools and management education. Separate figures for futher education are not available.

Capital Projects

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what information he has on the average rate of return currently being obtained by the private sector in the United Kingdom for new capital projects.

Mr. Atkins: No information is available on rates of return obtained on new capital projects. Real rates of return on capital employed for industrial and commercial companies are calculated from national accounts statistics and published in *British Business*, most recently on 30 September 1988. The net real rate of return on capital employed for industrial and commercial companies excluding North sea activities in 1987 was estimated at 10 per cent. the highest since 1969.

Balance of Payments Deficit

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate for the balance of payments deficit for 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The deficit on the current account of the balance of payments for 1988 is provisionally estimated to have been in deficit by £14·3 billion.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest statement of the balance of trade in manufactured goods.

Mr. Alan Clark: The balance of trade in manufactured goods in 1988 is provisionally estimated to have been in deficit by £14·3 billion.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member countries have shown a greater increase in industrial investment since 1979 than the United Kingdom

Mr. Atkins: Comparable statistics for industrial investment are available only up to 1986 and do not cover all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries. Of the countries for which comparisons are available, the following have shown a greater increase between 1979 and 1986 than the United Kingdom:

United States of America
Denmark

Finland
Iceland
Netherlands
Norway
Sweden

However, United Kingdom industrial investment in 1986 may have been adversely affected by the phasing out of some capital allowances. Since 1986 industrial investment has increased substantially and the latest Department of Trade and Industry's investment intentions survey indicated that this strong growth will continue in 1989 and 1990.

Amateur Radio

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he is to take any further powers to control interference to television and telephone communications arising from equipment used by amateur radio operators.

Mr. Atkins: Yes. The European Community directive on electro-magnetic compatibility will require all electrical apparatus, including radio transmitters placed on the market, not to cause interference to other apparatus, and for such apparatus, including television and telephones to be adequately immune from interference.

I anticipate the directive entering into force on 1 January 1992. Irrespective of legal requirements, the responsible use of amateur radio apparatus depends upon licensees co-operating with their neighbours on interference problems: I am glad to say that the vast majority of radio amateurs exercise that responsibility.

Cinema Industry

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has for each year since 1975, on the annual contribution of public funds to the cinema industry in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* I have no annual information on the contribution of public funds to the cinema exhibition industries in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Sweden for each year since 1975. In the United Kingdom there has been no public funding of the cinema exhibition industry over the same period.

Manchester (EC Aid)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide details of grants made from the European Economic Community regional and social fund to *(a)* the city of Manchester and *(b)* the Trafford district of greater Manchester in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* Commitments made from the European regional development fund to *(a)* the City of Manchester and *(b)* the Trafford district of Greater Manchester were:

	(a) £	*(b)* £
Infrastructure projects		
1984	1,014,750	nil
1985	49,500	237,500
1986	145,000	nil
1987	3,228,000	nil
1988	470,000	nil
Industry projects		
1984	nil	nil
1985	nil	nil
1986	445,000	nil
1987	112,000	nil
1988	237,000	49,000

Toyota Motor Company

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether, should the Toyota motor company decide to build an assembly plant in the United Kingdom, any possibility of Government financial aid towards start-up costs would be subject to EEC Commission restriction or rejection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* If the Toyota motor corporation were to apply for financial assistance for establishment of a motor vehicle assembly plant in the United Kingdom, and if the Government were to decide to make an offer of aid, then the European Community procedures described in my other answer today to my hon. Friend would apply. The company is aware of the position.

Motor Industry (Aid)

Mr. Madel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any proposal by the Government to give financial aid to the motor vehicle sector must be notified to the EEC Commission in advance of any actual financial aid given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* Using its powers under the state aids provisions of the EEC Treaty, the Commission has recently introduced a Community framework for state aids to the vehicle sector. From 1 January 1989 any proposal by Governments or other public authorities to give financial assistance to a manufacturer of motor vehicles or motor vehicle engines must be prenotified for clearance by the Commission if the cost of the project exceeds 12 million ecu (about £8 million).

English Folk Dance and Song Society (Elections)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) whether he has received the report of the Electoral Reform Society on the conduct of the recent elections to the national executive committee of the English Folk Dance and Song Society; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will set up an inquiry into allegations of malpractice in the recent elections to the national executive committee of the English Folk Dance and Song Society;

(3) what representations he has received about allegations of irregularity in the recent elections to the national executive committee of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* I have not received a report by the Electoral Reform Society into the conduct of the recent elections of the national executive committee of the English Folk Dance and Song

Society, but my Department has considered a request from another quarter for an investigation into alleged malpractices in relation to those elections. Companies Act powers are not appropriate for the investigation of these matters.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Water Standards

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all those water supplies in Northern Ireland which fail to meet the standards set out in the European Economic Community directives on the quality of drinking water and whether or not these are the subject of derogations; how and when it is proposed for each of these water supplies to meet the standards laid down; and what the latest estimated cost of complying with the standards is in each case.

Mr. Needham: There are 114 water supply areas in Northern Ireland of which 13 are subject to derogations made under the EC drinking water directive. Requests for seven delays under the directive were made in 1985; subsequent remedial works enabled three to be withdrawn. A programme of works to enable the remaining four delays to be also withdrawn should be completed by 1992.

Where derogations or delays apply, a small number of directive parameter values for non-toxic substances may be exceeded on a regular basis. In the supply areas for which there are no derogations or delays there are occasions when a value for a non-toxic substance is exceeded for a short time. The directive values for toxic substances are not exceeded. A programme of works over 10 to 12 years has been identified to ensure compliance with the directive. The estimated cost is £200 million.

Rate Demands

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will take steps to ensure that the notice of rate demands in Northern Ireland shows a more detailed breakdown of the application of expenditure on a similar basis as prevails in Great Britain.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information provided with the rates demand note in Northern Ireland is in accordance with that prescribed by the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. The order, unlike the relevant legislation in Great Britain, does not require the provision of the information referred to on or with the rates demand note. This recognises the essential differences between the local government and rating systems in Northern Ireland and Great Britain, in particular the existence in Northern Ireland of a local district rate and an overall regional rate, both of which are collected together by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. I have no plans to change this legislation.

A free leaflet explaining how the regional rate is struck is available each year from local rating, social security or Housing Executive offices.

Census Questionnaire

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Northern Ireland hon. Members will be given an opportunity to comment on the draft census questionnaire being formulated before it is published; and if he will ensure that irrelevant questions are not included in the census document when published.

Mr. Needham: The Government will prepare a draft census order and lay it before Parliament in accordance with the Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969. The order will provide for the taking of a census of population in Northern Ireland in 1991, and among other things, will set out the particulars to be stated in the census returns. At a later stage, census regulations will make detailed provision for the conduct of the census and contain specimens of the forms to be used. All the questions asked will be relevant.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the draft census questionnaire includes a question about the respondent's knowledge of Irish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Government propose to include in the 1991 census of Northern Ireland a question of knowledge of Irish language in parallel with the language questions to be included in the censuses for Wales and Scotland.

Schools

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to increase the category A expenditure admitted for each of the voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland for the current school year and the last two school years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Grant on category A expenditure by each voluntary grammar school in any school year is directly related to the number of approved teaching posts in the school.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to the Department of Education to indicate the level of funding to any given secondary school in Northern Ireland or the pattern of funding among those schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: As voluntary grammar schools are funded direct, the Department has detailed information about the level of funding to individual schools. In the case of other secondary schools non-teaching costs are funded by education and library boards and teaching costs by the Department of Education, but total funding levels to individual schools are at present not available centrally.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners (Income)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to collect statistically reliable estimates of pensioners' income.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We believe that the statistics that we collect are reliable. I refer the hon. Member to an article published in the May 1987 issue of the *Employment Gazette*, a copy of which is in the Library, which sets out the statistical basis of the pensioners' income figures used by the Department. We will be publishing an updated version of that article in the near future.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department is an affiliated member of the International Social Security Association. The 1989 membership subscriptions will be approximately £112,000. In addition the Department participates in the work of all international organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member, whenever social security issues arise. It is impossible to apportion the overall United Kingdom contribution to each organisation between social security and other activities.

Deductions from Benefit

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he has given any advice to levying authorities about the legislative basis upon which they can make deductions from benefits if an individual fails to pay his or her poll tax;

(2) what guidance has been sought by, and what advice he has given to, Strathclyde regional council on deduction of unpaid poll tax from those on welfare benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When community charges are introduced in Scotland, the Government's intention is to provide that, where a person on income support has failed to pay his community charge, and where the local authority has obtained a court order in respect of an amount of personal community charge that he is owing, the local authority may ask this Department to recover the amount specified in the order by deductions from his income support payments. The regulations that will provide for this are being prepared and will be laid before Parliament shortly. Advice will then be issued to local authorities, including Strathclyde regional council, on both the interpretation of the legislation and the operational aspects of the regulations.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the numbers of 16 to 17-year-olds claiming supplementary benefit who had no parents or were estranged or living away from their parents, at each annual claimant count from 1980.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Social Fund

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the needs of clothing and footwear for men and boys, and for women and girls, are estimated for purposes of the social fund.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Social fund officers consider each application on its merits when determining the extent of such awards.

One-parent Families

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single parents received community care grants to assist them with rehousing after their marital relationship broke down in each of the years for which there are figures in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Maternity Payments

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average single payment for maternity needs in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom in the last year in which such payments were available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Single payments for maternity needs were abolished in April 1987. The May 1987 annual statistical inquiry gives information relating to single payments made in Great Britain in the 12 months preceding the date of the inquiry. This shows that the average single payment for maternity needs in that year was £104·10. Information for Scotland could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information for Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single parents with dependent children were in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit in the last year in which it was available and *(b)* income support in each year it has been available for (i) Scotland and (ii) the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

	Great Britain	*Scotland*
Supplementary benefit—lone parents	659,000	76,000
Income support—lone parents	684,010	78,938

Note:
The figures supplied are for Great Britain. Information relating to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
Source:
The annual statistical inquiry May 1987.
Income support quarterly statistical inquiry 31 May 1988.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much community charge rebate a working single parent with two young children and a net income of £124·60 a week would qualify for.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Assuming that both children are under the age of 11 and that no members of the family are disabled, and also assuming an annual personal community charge of £280 a year (the average charge in Scotland, weighted by population), no rebate would be payable.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much community charge rebate a single mother with two young children and in receipt of £64·75 income support a week would qualify for.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Anyone getting income support, however large or small the amount, will qualify for the maximum rebate of 80 per cent. of his or her personal community charge. An amount reflecting the estimated

average 20 per cent. community charge liability which income support claimants will have to pay has been included in the levels of income support from 1 April 1989.

Benefits (Cost)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each social security benefit how much extra would be spent if all those entitled to claim that benefit, according to his Department's own estimates, did so.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* No precise estimates of total unclaimed benefits can be provided and those figures which the Department does publish give no more than the broadest orders of magnitude. I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 21 to 25 and table 15.17 on pages 272 to 273 of Cm. 288 (the 1988 public expenditure White Paper) for details of the latest available take-up estimates for the main income-related benefits. Take-up estimates for 1985 should be available shortly.

HEALTH

Resources

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state for each English regional health authority the value of resources available for service development in each year including the current year since 1983, expressed in cash terms, and as a percentage of total resources both including and excluding the effects of the cost improvement programme.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in the table. Figures for 1988-89 are not yet available.

Trends in actual current expenditure on hospital and community health services

		1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*[1]
Northern							
Net spending	(£ million)	518·3	550·7	583·0	617·4	661·8	723·5
Charges	(£ million)	2·6	3·3	3·9	2·7	2·8	2·9
Total spending	(£ million)	520·8	554·0	586·9	620·1	664·6	726·4
Increase	(per cent.)	—	6·4	5·9	5·7	7·2	9·3
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	1·2	0·1	0·4	0·3	0·7
	(£ million)	—	6·7	0·7	2·7	1·7	5·3
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	1·7	0·8	0·2	3·7	3·8
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	4·0	5·2	8·9	9·1
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	4·0	9·1	17·4	27·1
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	0·7	0·9	1·4	1·3
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	1·2	0·8	1·3	1·7	2·0
	(£ million)	—	6·7	4·8	8·3	11·1	14·9
Yorkshire							
Net spending	(£ million)	578·5	613·6	651·1	694·3	742·9	811·8
Charges	(£ million)	4·9	6·0	6·5	5·3	5·2	5·6
Total spending	(£ million)	583·4	619·6	657·6	699·5	748·1	817·4
Increase	(per cent.)	—	6·2	6·1	6·4	6·9	9·3
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	1·0	0·3	1·1	0·0	0·7
	(£ million)	—	6·5	2·1	7·8	0·3	5·7
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	1·6	1·0	0·9	3·5	3·8
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	7·1	10·0	11·8	10·5
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	7·1	15·3	28·1	40·6
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·1	1·5	1·6	1·3
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	1·0	1·4	2·6	1·6	2·0
	(£ million)	—	6·5	9·3	18·5	12·3	16·4
Trent							
Net spending	(£ million)	691·7	737·2	789·8	839·2	910·1	1,004·7
Charges	(£ million)	5·0	5·2	5·5	4·0	4·4	4·7
Total spending	(£ million)	696·7	742·4	795·3	843·2	914·5	1,009·4
Increase	(per cent.)	—	6·6	7·1	6·0	8·5	10·4
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	1·4	1·2	0·8	1·5	1·7
	(£ million)	—	10·3	9·9	6·6	13·3	17·5
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	1·9	2·0	0·6	5·0	4·8
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	8·0	13·2	12·1	9·2
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	8·0	20·9	33·5	44·9
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·0	1·6	1·3	1·0
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	1·4	2·3	2·4	2·8	2·7
	(£ million)	—	10·3	18·0	20·2	25·4	27·7

		1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88[1]
East Anglian							
Net spending	(£ million)	285·4	308·4	331·1	354·9	385·9	427·1
Charges	(£ million)	3·6	4·1	4·2	3·3	3·5	4·2
Total spending	(£ million)	289·0	312·5	335·3	358·2	389·4	431·3
Increase	(per cent.)	—	8·1	7·3	6·8	8·7	10·8
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	2·9	1·4	1·6	1·7	2·1
	(£ million)	—	9·1	4·8	5·6	6·6	9·0
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	3·4	2·1	1·4	5·2	5·2
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	3·3	2·9	4·5	4·0
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	3·3	6·4	11·2	16·1
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·0	0·8	1·2	0·9
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	2·9	2·4	2·4	2·9	3·0
	(£ million)	—	9·1	8·2	8·5	11·3	12·9
North West Thames							
Net spending	(£ million)	624·6	656·3	691·6	719·6	769·2	821·5
Charges	(£ million)	8·6	9·1	9·6	9·2	8·6	11·3
Total spending	(£ million)	633·2	665·4	701·2	728·8	777·8	832·8
Increase	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·4	3·9	6·7	7·1
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	0·0	−0·4	−1·2	−0·2	−1·3
	(£ million)	—	−0·1	−2·8	−8·7	−1·4	−10·9
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	0·5	0·3	−1·4	3·3	1·7
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	10·6	14·4	15·8	13·8
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	10·6	24·2	39·8	56·2
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·5	1·9	2·1	1·8
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	0·0	1·1	0·7	1·9	0·5
	(£ million)	—	−0·1	7·6	5·0	14·9	3·8
North East Thames							
Net spending	(£ million)	788·9	829·2	869·2	902·6	965·1	1,037·9
Charges	(£ million)	11·7	12·0	12·2	11·6	11·0	11·1
Total spending	(£ million)	800·7	841·1	881·3	914·2	976·1	1,049·0
Increase	(per cent.)	—	5·1	4·8	3·7	6·8	7·5
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	0·0	−1·0	−1·4	−0·1	−1·0
	(£ million)	—	−0·4	−8·5	−12·8	−1·2	−10·0
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	0·5	−0·3	−1·6	3·3	2·1
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	11·7	17·2	16·4	19·7
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	11·7	27·6	45·3	66·2
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·4	1·8	1·7	1·8
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	0·0	0·4	0·4	1·6	0·8
	(£ million)	—	−0·4	3·7	3·4	15·4	8·7
South East Thames							
Net spending	(£ million)	691·3	729·7	762·1	797·9	847·6	919·1
Charges	(£ million)	9·2	9·7	10·0	9·6	9·5	9·8
Total spending	(£ million)	700·4	739·4	772·1	807·5	857·1	928·9
Increase	(per cent.)	—	5·6	4·4	4·6	6·1	8·4
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	0·4	−1·3	−0·6	−0·7	−0·1
	(£ million)	—	3·3	−10·1	−4·7	−6·1	−1·0
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	1·0	−0·6	−0·8	2·7	2·9
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	14·0	14·3	12·7	12·1
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	14·0	29·0	43·1	58·1
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·9	1·8	1·5	1·5
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	0·4	0·6	1·2	0·8	1·4
	(£ million)	—	3·3	4·4	9·7	6·7	12·9
South West Thames							
Net spending	(£ million)	525·7	554·0	580·9	603·8	645·5	703·8
Charges	(£ million)	4·7	5·1	5·4	4·5	4·6	4·9
Total spending	(£ million)	530·4	559·1	586·3	608·3	650·1	708·7
Increase	(per cent.)	—	5·4	4·9	3·8	6·9	9·0
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	0·3	−0·9	−1·4	0·0	0·5

		1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88[1]
	(£ million)	—	1·7	−5·2	−8·4	−0·2	3·4
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	0·8	−0·2	−1·6	3·4	3·6
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	6·9	8·5	10·9	6·5
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	6·9	15·0	25·3	33·5
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·2	1·3	1·7	0·9
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	0·3	0·3	−0·1	1·7	1·4
	(£ million)	—	1·7	1·7	−0·6	10·9	9·8
Wessex							
Net spending	(£ million)	414·2	444·4	477·9	503·2	545·4	595·9
Charges	(£ million)	4·2	4·8	4·8	3·7	3·8	3·9
Total spending	(£ million)	418·4	449·1	482·6	506·9	549·2	599·8
Increase	(per cent.)	—	7·3	7·5	5·0	8·3	9·2
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	2·1	1·6	−0·2	1·3	0·7
	(£ million)	—	9·6	7·6	−0·8	7·3	4·0
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	2·7	2·3	−0·3	4·8	3·7
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	4·2	4·7	8·5	10·5
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	4·2	8·6	17·4	27·5
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	0·9	0·9	1·6	1·8
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	2·1	2·5	0·7	3·0	2·5
	(£ million)	—	9·6	12·0	3·8	16·2	14·9
Oxford							
Net spending	(£ million)	330·0	348·0	376·4	397·3	427·9	472·3
Charges	(£ million)	4·6	4·8	5·6	5·1	5·9	6·6
Total spending	(£ million)	334·7	352·8	381·9	402·4	433·8	478·9
Increase	(per cent.)	—	5·4	8·3	5·3	7·8	10·4
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	0·3	2·3	0·1	0·9	1·7
	(£ million)	—	1·1	8·8	0·6	3·7	8·4
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	0·8	3·0	0·0	4·3	4·9
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	3·7	4·8	4·6	5·3
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	3·7	8·6	13·6	19·5
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·0	1·2	1·1	1·3
Margin available for service including cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	0·3	3·3	1·3	2·0	3·1
	(£ million)	—	1·1	12·8	5·4	8·5	14·7
South Western							
Net spending	(£ million)	503·7	535·8	566·3	599·4	645·9	705·1
Charges	(£ million)	3·6	4·6	4·7	3·9	4·1	4·9
Total spending	(£ million)	507·3	540·4	571·0	603·3	650·0	710·0
Increase	(per cent.)	—	6·5	5·7	5·6	7·8	9·2
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	1·4	−0·1	0·4	0·8	0·7
	(£ million)	—	7·4	−0·8	2·6	5·2	4·8
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	1·9	0·6	0·2	4·3	3·7
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	4·7	6·2	6·6	11·4
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	4·7	11·2	18·1	30·2
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	0·9	1·0	1·0	1·6
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	1·4	0·8	1·4	1·8	2·3
	(£ million)	—	7·4	4·4	8·6	11·7	16·2
West Midlands							
Net spending	(£ million)	804·0	854·3	911·8	967·7	1,043·5	1,143·0
Charges	(£ million)	5·7	6·9	7·4	6·2	6·3	6·3
Total spending	(£ million)	809·7	861·3	919·3	973·9	1,049·7	1,149·3
Increase	(per cent.)	—	6·4	6·7	5·9	7·8	9·5
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	1·2	0·9	0·7	0·8	0·9
	(£ million)	—	10·4	8·1	6·9	8·7	10·4
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	1·7	1·6	0·5	4·3	4·0
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	13·5	12·0	13·7	15·4
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	13·5	26·2	38·3	54·6

		1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88[1]
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·5	1·2	1·3	1·3
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	1·2	2·4	1·9	2·1	2·2
	(£ million)	—	10·4	22·0	18·7	22·4	25·5
Mersey							
Net spending	(£ million)	433·3	453·2	479·7	504·3	539·0	585·6
Charges	(£ million)	3·0	3·4	3·6	3·6	3·8	3·6
Total spending	(£ million)	436·2	456·6	483·3	507·9	542·8	589·2
Increase	(per cent.)	—	4·7	5·9	5·1	6·9	8·5
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	−0·4	0·1	−0·1	0·0	0·0
	(£ million)	—	−1·9	0·2	−0·5	−0·2	0·3
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	0·1	0·8	−0·3	3·4	3·1
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	6·0	8·4	10·7	9·0
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	6·0	14·2	25·6	36·4
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	1·3	1·7	2·0	1·6
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	−0·4	1·4	1·6	2·0	1·6
	(£ million)	—	−1·9	6·5	8·1	10·7	9·7
North Western							
Net spending	(£ million)	724·8	763·4	808·2	854·7	916·5	996·4
Charges	(£ million)	4·8	5·8	6·3	5·6	5·8	6·2
Total spending	(£ million)	729·6	769·2	814·5	860·3	922·4	1,002·6
Increase	(per cent.)	—	5·4	5·9	5·6	7·2	8·7
Inflation in service	(per cent.)	—	5·1	5·8	5·2	6·9	8·5
Change in purchasing power	(per cent.)	—	0·3	0·1	0·4	0·3	0·2
	(£ million)	—	2·4	0·7	3·5	2·7	1·9
Change in real terms	(per cent.)	—	0·8	0·8	0·2	3·7	3·2
Cash releasing cost improvements							
New	(£ million)	—	—	7·5	13·6	14·1	13·7
Recurrent	(£ million)	—	—	7·5	18·5	32·9	48·5
Increase—new cost improvements	(per cent.)	—	—	0·9	1·6	1·6	1·4
Margin available for service development in year	(per cent.)	—	0·3	1·0	2·0	1·9	1·6
	(£ million)	—	2·4	8·0	17·3	17·5	15·9
Change in GDP deflator			4·6	5·1	5·4	3·3	5·3

[1] Provisional.

Notes:

Income and expenditure figures are based on health authorities' summarised accounts.

Health authorities have been required to make cost improvements since 1984-85. Data on efficiency savings made by authorities before that date were not collected centrally.

Real terms growth has been calculated using the gross domestic product deflator.

Responsibility for the cost of the London Ambulance Service, previously shared between all four Thames regions, was transferred to South West Thames in 1987-88.

The consequent increase in expenditure in that region has been excluded from the spending figures in the table.

Hospitals

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what way and at what level plans and decisions on building or expanding National Health Service hospitals will be taken within the new framework for the National Health Service set out in "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regions will continue to be responsible for the strategic oversight of health authorities' capital planning and capital programmes, but there is to be increased delegation of decisions on individual schemes both from Department to region and from region to district. There may also be additional delegation to local level of responsibility for the management of individual schemes. NHS hospital trusts will be responsible for their own capital investment decisions and for managing their own schemes, providing their borrowing is contained within the overall national annual financing limit.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the savings made or estimated to be made by withdrawing exclusive telephone lines from the central control room of the London ambulance service to ambulance stations; and what assessment has been made of the advantage gained or disadvantages experienced in operational efficiency.

Mr. Freeman: No estimates have been made of the costs of withdrawing the private wire circuits between the central control room of the London ambulance service and ambulance stations. They have been upgraded to accept data transmissions as part of the introduction of the computer-aided dispatch system. The primary function of these circuits is the mobilisation of ambulance crews by providing direct contact between the control room and ambulance stations. It would not therefore be practical to discontinue their use. As the new system has been installed

for less than four weeks, it is not yet possible to assess effectively the advantages gained or any disadvantages which might be experienced.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent changes have been made in the control room equipment or organisation of the London ambulance service; if he has assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of any new equipment; and if he will place in the Library a copy of any evaluation study or efficiency report relating to recent capital expenditure.

Mr. Freeman: To facilitate the installation of a new computer-aided dispatch system, the London ambulance service central control room has transferred to temporary accommodation while changes and refurbishment to accommodate computer terminal equipment are carried out. The automatic call distribution telephone system has been extended and a new selective calling radio system introduced: in addition, to alleviate difficulties caused by the temporary reorganisation, the number of control staff answering calls has been increased. As the computer-aided dispatch system will not be fully functional until August 1989, it would be premature to carry out any evaluation at this stage.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made on the installation of a computerised system of call distribution at the London ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The installation of the automatic call distribution system by the London ambulance service is being carried out in two parts. The first phase was completed in the existing control room in March 1988 and harnessed 999 calls and calls from the other emergency services to the new system. The second phase, which began on 8 January 1989, involves the temporary relocation of the control room to enable the remaining telephone lines (from hospitals, doctors, ambulance crews, and the divisional control rooms) to be linked to the computer-aided dispatch system. The computer-aided dispatch system will not be operational till August 1989.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the capital and revenue budget for the London ambulance service for each of the last five years; what proportion the South West Thames regional health authority, the South East Thames regional health authority, the North East Thames regional health authority and the North West Thames regional health authority contributed, respectively; and if the budget of the London ambulance service is cash-limited.

Mr. Freeman: The figures are in the table.

Capital budget

	SWTRHA 17·53 per cent.	*NETRHA 32·38 per cent.*	*NWTRHA 28·91 per cent.*	*SETRHA 21·18 per cent.*	*Total*
1984-85	653,878	1,208,078	1,078,406	790,115	3,730,477
1985-86	727,091	1,343,343	1,199,153	878,582	4,148,169
1986-87	1,361,972	2,516,323	2,246,228	1,645,742	7,770,265
1987-88	3,949,498	—	—	—	3,949,498
1988-89	7,169,000	—	—	—	7,169,000

Revenue budget

	SWTRHA 17·53 per cent.	*SETRHA 32·38 per cent.*	*NETRHA 28·91 per cent.*	*NWTRHA 21·18 per cent.*	*Total*
1984-85	6,503,000	12,015,000	10,725,000	7,858,000	37,101,000
1985-86	6,687,000	12,355,000	11,029,000	8,860,000	38,151,000
1986-87	7,332,000	13,546,000	12,092,000	8,860,000	41,830,000
1987-88	43,099,000	—	—	—	43,099,000
1988-89	46,060,840	—	—	—	46,060,840

Since 1987 the Department of Health has made the total allocation direct to the managing authority, South West Thames RHA. The South West Thames RHA would normally expect the London ambulance service to remain within its budget.

Health Authorities (Land)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each health authority *(a)* the square footage of unused properties and *(b)* the square footage or acreage of unused land and the estimated value of each category as a percentage total land and property and value as a percentage of the total land and property value of each authority; and if he will make a statement as to his Department's policy on the sale of unused land and property.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not collected routinely centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information on the total surplus property (both land and buildings no longer currently used for Health Service purposes and with no future use envisaged) of each regional health authority is held centrally and this information as at 31 March 1988 is as follows:

RHA	*Total estate (acres)*	*Surplus (acres)*	*Per cent. of surplus*
Northern	3,495	308·20	8·82
Yorkshire	3,927	140·00	3·57
Trent	4,324	808·55	18·70
East Anglian	1,648	23·13	1·40
N W Thames	2,483	37·60	1·51
N E Thames	2,714	267·27	9·85
S E Thames	3,677	582·49	15·84
S W Thames	3,810	128·33	3·37
Wessex	2,511	179·24	7·14
Oxford	2,183	183·07	8·39
South Western	3,787	712·39	18·81
West Midlands	5,147	629·50	12·23

RHA	Total estate (acres)	Surplus (acres)	Per cent. of surplus
Mersey	2,427	782·57	32·24
North Western	3,160	267·85	8·48
SHAS (BGs)	496	7·0	1·41
England	45,789	5,057·19	11·04

Values of surplus properties are not collected separately centrally but information is held on the estimated income from property disposals for each regional health authority for the current financial year and the three following years. This information was given in my reply to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 24 January at column *546*. Our policy on the sale of unused property is that it should be disposed of in a publicly acceptable manner for the best price possible.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Gateshead (ENT)

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the total waiting list, the longest time any patient had to wait and the numbers waiting by number of months wait for the ear, nose and throat department at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Gateshead, over the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect waiting information centrally for individual hospitals. For details about the Queen Elizabeth hospital, the hon. Member may wish to contact the district general manager of Gateshead district health authority.

Weil's Disease

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many deaths from Weil's disease have been recorded for each of the last 10 years;

(2) if he will list the places where deaths from Weil's disease over the last 10 years have been recorded.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table; 1987 is the latest full year available. Death registrations with Leptospirosis (Weil's Disease)[1] as underlying cause of death: numbers and county district of usual residence, England and Wales 1978-88.

Year	Number	Area of usual residence
1978	2	Easington; Ryedale
1979	1	Test Valley
1980	1	East Hertfordshire
1981	1	Kennet
1982	1	Basingstoke and Deane
1983	1	Merthyr Tydfil
1984	—	—
1985	—	—
1986	—	—
1987	—	—
1988[2]	2	n/a

[1] International classification of disease code 100·0.
[2] Provisional, January-September only.

Waiting Lists

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has plans to provide additional funds to reduce hospital waiting lists in the Merseyside region.

Mr. Mellor: Last December, we announced a further £1·445 million for Mersey region from the waiting list fund for 1989-90. This brings the total additional funds we have allocated to Mersey region through this initiative to £4·488 million over three years. In addition, Crewe district health authority will have an opportunity to bid against the £6 million reserved from the waiting list fund next year for districts with special waiting problems.

Radioactive Iodine

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how quickly iodine tablets have to be administered following exposure to iodine 131 to be *(a)* 100 per cent. effective and *(b)* 50 per cent. effective in counteracting the effects of radioactive iodine.

Mr. Freeman: I am advised that experiments have shown that a dose of up to 100mg of stable iodine is almost 100 per cent, effective if taken immediately before or at the time of exposure to radioactive iodine. It is still 50 per cent. effective if taken about five hours after exposure.

Core Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list all those services which are not regarded as core services as defined in the White Paper, "Working for Patients" paragraph 4.15;

(2) whether gynaecology is a core service as described in the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The White Paper stipulates that DHAs will be responsible for ensuring that the health needs of the population they serve are met; that there are effective services for the prevention and control of diseases and the promotion of health and that their population has access to a comprehensive range of high quality, value for money services. The broad categories of "core" services set out in the White Paper are examples of those to which patients need guaranteed local access. It will be up to each district health authority to consider in the light of their own particular circumstances what services constitute "core" services for them and what other servies can be obtained in a more flexible way. The duty of the district will be to obtain the best services for their populations from whatever source including their own hospitals, from other authorities' hospitals, from the new self-governing hospitals or the private sector.

Breast Feeding

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about the percentage of women breastfeeding their baby at six weeks in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: Annual statistics on the incidence of breastfeeding are not collected centrally. However, national surveys of infant feeding practices in 1975 (England and Wales), 1980 and 1985 (Great Britain), show that the percentages of women breastfeeding at six weeks were as follows:

	Per cent.
1975	
England and Wales only	46
1980	
England and Wales	42
Great Britain	41

	Per cent.
1985	
England and Wales	40
Great Britain	38

Vaccination

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the vaccination programme.

Mr. Freeman: Uptake figures for the year 1987-88 (April to March) show an increase in the national vaccination rate for polio, diphtheria and tetanus to 87 per cent., measles 76 per cent. and whooping cough 73 per cent. Ninety-six out of 190 district health authorities in England have now reached or surpassed the 1990 target of 90 per cent. for polio, while measles and whooping cough are showing welcome signs of moving towards that target.

These figures do not include the results of a very successful campaign against measles last summer (when three times the average monthly usage of the vaccine was recorded), or the introduction from October 1988 of the combined vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), which has already been an outstanding success. Already more than 1·2 million doses of that vaccine have been distributed, against a requirement for the recommended groups of 400,0000.

We intend to maintain this momentum and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced in December that £7·8 million has been allocated towards purchase of the MMR vaccine in 1989-90.

From 1989-90 we shall also be committing at least £1 million per annum towards the promotion of immunisation jointly with the HEA. This remains a very important part of our programme in which both health authorities and general practitioners are expected to play a full part.

Fertility Services

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will specify in which districts *(a)* there are and *(b)* there are not fertility services.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that this information is not held centrally. The provision of infertility services is a matter for individual health authorities to decide in the light of local needs and priorities.

Well Woman Clinics

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how may well woman clinics there are;

(2) if he will list those districts which *(a)* do and *(b)* do not have well woman clinics.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Grading

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses, midwives and health visitors from each of the old grades have been assimilated to each of the new grades in the recent clinical grading structure in the North East Thames regional health authority and for the North West Thames regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is available in the Library.

Single Parents

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his assessment of the number of single parents with dependent children in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* the United Kingdom for each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Comparable information for the whole of the United Kingdom and for constituent countries is not available. However, the estimated number of one-parent families with dependent children in Great Britain was 940,000 in 1984, 970,000 in 1985 and 1,010,000 in 1986. Estimates for earlier years are not strictly comparable. An article which discusses these estimates and gives the definitions used is included in "Population Trends No. 55 (Spring 1989)" to be published shortly. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Biocides

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish the report of the expert advisory committee on biocides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have arranged today for a copy of this report which was produced in response to a recommendation in the Badenoch report and which is being published by HMSO to be placed in the Library. I am grateful to Dr. Wright, director of Newcastle public health laboratory and his committee for producing a thorough analysis of the use of biocides in minimising the risk of multiplication of legionellae pneumophilia in hospital cooling tower water systems and other water systems in hospitals.

The report is being sent to all health authorities in England so that those responsible for maintenance of hospital cooling tower systems may take its recommendations fully into account. The Department will be pursuing those recommendations which call for national action. Although this report deals only with water systems in health care premises, I hope that it will receive a wider readership as much of the report will be of more general application.

I am sure that it will be very useful to those concerned with the operation and maintenance of health buildings and will help in reducing the risk of the spread of legionnaire's disease in hospitals. I also trust that, as the report has wider general application, it will serve as a further reminder to employers of their responsibility, under the Health and Safety and Work etc. Act, to maintain a safe working environment for their employees.

National Health Service Review

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has of the final cost to public funds of *(a)* the recently completed National Health Service review and *(b)* its launch, publicity and communication to National Health Service staff and others.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 3 February 1989]:* Work on the review was undertaken as an integral part of the Department's contribution to Government business, and the manpower costs involved are not separately

identifiable. The estimated cost of the launch including the exercise of communicating with NHS staff and discussing the review's conclusions with them is £1,250,000.

Elderly Persons (Residential Places)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of continuing care residential places are provided for the elderly *(a)* by local authorities, *(b)* by voluntary organisations and *(c)* by the private sector in each region for (i) the year 1987 and (ii) the year 1988.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* Provisional information on the number of places in homes for elderly people as at 31 March 1987 by social services inspectorate regions is given in the table. Information for the year ending 31 March 1988 is not yet available.

Number of places in residential care homes for the elderly, by social services inspectorate region, as at 31 March 1987[1]

		Percentage of total places in:		
Region	*Total number of places*	*Local authority homes*	*Voluntary homes*	*Private homes*
Northern	14,533	63·0	5·9	31·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	25,348	56·2	5·0	38·8
North Western	35,698	47·8	9·3	42·9
West Midlands	22,851	50·4	8·6	40·9
East Midlands	17,076	52·9	8·2	38·9
Thames/Anglia	30,083	47·4	13·7	39·0
Inner London	9,610	69·1	21·8	9·1
Outer London	17,880	50·5	23·4	26·0
Southern	46,440	29·0	13·7	57·3
South Western	26,629	29·8	9·2	61·0
England	246,148	45·6	11·4	43·0

[1] Provisional.

Continuing Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what safeguards his Department is considering to ensure that not all continuing care facilities will be provided by the private sector.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* Our view is that a mixture of statutory, voluntary and private facilities is the best way of meeting the wide range of care needs of dependent people of all ages. We are considering the future organisation of care provision in the light of Sir Roy Griffiths' report.

Listeria Monocytogenes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, in view of the fact that the infectious dose of listeria monocytogenes for vulnerable people is not known, he will prohibit the consumption of food that contains listeria by those people known to be particularly at risk.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 2 February 1989]:* Listeria monocytogenes is known to be widely distributed in the environment, and the World Health Organisation working group on foodborne listeriosis has said that its total elimination from all food is impracticable and may be impossible. It is important to reduce the risks as much as possible, and both the Government and the food industry are working together to consider optimal production methods which will achieve this.

SCOTLAND

Projects (EC Grants)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the total value of European Community grants to Scottish projects in the period 1978 to 1988.

Mr. Lang: We estimate some £1·3 billion in European Community grants has gone to Scottish projects in this period, not including European social fund grants to national schemes.

Regional Aid

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total value of United Kingdom Government regional aid in the period 1978 to 1988.

Mr. Lang: Gross expenditure on regional preferential assistance in Scotland in the period 1 April 1978 to 31 March 1988 was just over £2·1 billion.

Lennox Castle Hospital

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many visits were made to Lennox Castle hospital over the past two years by the general manager of Greater Glasgow health board and individual members of the board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board has a programme of visits which takes members round all its hospitals. Although the programme was disrupted in 1988 by the consequences of industrial action, there has been one visit to Lennox Castle hospital in the last two years. No records are kept of informal visits by individual board members. The board general manager has visited Lennox Castle hospital on seven occasions in the last two years. I have visited the hospital on three occasions with the health board chairman and general manager, most recently on 23 January.

Legal Services

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the publication and preparation of the Green Paper on Scottish legal services;

(2) on what date the Green Paper on Scottish legal services was originally due to be published.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As my right hon. and learned Friend informed the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 26 October 1988, he intends to seek views early this year on his further proposals on the future work and organisation of the legal profession in Scotland.

Nurses

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give *(a)* the total money allocated to the Greater Glasgow health board for nurses' wages for the year 1988-89 and *(b)* the projected expenditure for 1988-89 for nurses' wages based on the actual regrading.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board has been given an additional £24·177 million, over and above its initial allocation for 1988-89 to meet the cost of

the pay awards to nurses and other staff covered by the review bodies. Information on the actual cost of nurses wages in 1988-89 for individual boards will not be available centrally until boards submit their annual accounts in June.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many agency nurses, in whole-time equivalents, have been used in the Greater Glasgow health board from 1 October 1988 to 31 December 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the table.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

	Agency Nurses W.T.E.
1988	
October	96·73
November	105·39
December	114·73
Average for period	105·62

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prescriptions for benzodiazepines were dispensed by community pharmacists in Scotland in 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that some 3 million NHS prescriptions for benzodiazepines were dispensed by community pharmacists in Scotland in 1987.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of people in Scotland dependent on benzodiazepines.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available. It is very difficult to define clinical dependency objectively in a way which would enable such information to be collected.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many working days were lost for the last year for which figures are available, resulting from people withdrawing from benzodiazepines.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what facilities are available in Scotland for those wishing to withdraw from benzodiazepines; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what funds are currently available to assist those wishing to withdraw from benzodiazepines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision and funding of services for those dependent on benzodiazepines is primarily the responsibility of health boards and local authorities. NHS services are provided by the usual range of primary care and hospital-based services. In addition, many of the local statutory and voluntary sector projects concerned with the treatment and rehabilitation of drug misusers include a service for benzodiazepine dependants. Last month I announced that an additional £1 million per annum will be made available to health boards for 1989-90 for the development of services for drug misusers.

Cervical Cytology

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the reason for Argyll and Clyde health board employing private contractors for cervical cytology; what information he has on the qualifications and training of the staff of the private company; and whether the health board will be liable for any errors of the private company.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Argyll and Clyde health board engaged the services of a private firm to screen a number of cervical cytology smears during the period January to March 1988 in order to deal with a temporary backlog in cervical smears reporting which had developed in one of the board's laboratories. The board rightly wished to avoid any lengthy delay in informing women of the results of their smears—delay which could cause unnecessary anxiety in those women concerned.

Officers of the board satisfied themselves that the firm concerned employed suitably qualified staff and operated a proper quality control system. The board accepts liability for any errors resulting from the arrangement on the same basis as it accepts liability for smears reported by its own laboratories.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1986 the amount of money spent by each health board on training laboratory staff for cervical cytology screening; what assistance his Department has given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The training of laboratory staff is a matter for individual health boards to determine and this information is not held centrally.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to provide additional funding to health boards for cervical cytology.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government are providing additional funds—about £5 million in the current year—to assist all health boards to improve their computer facilities. This will enable boards to establish a fully computerised call and recall system for cervical cancer screening. Computer software is also being provided to boards free of charge.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Greater Glasgow health board operates a system of performance review of persons occupying senior management, medical and senior nursing posts.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice his Department will give to community charge officers if they discover a person is copying the extract of the community charge register available for public inspection for purposes wholly unconnected with the community charge.

Mr. Lang: The rules which apply to the inspection of the community charges register are clearly set out in

section 20 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended, and in the Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 1988. I do not consider that specific advice on the application of these rules is required.

Pre-school

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of three and four-year-old children, expressed numerically and as a percentage of the age group *(a)* in nursery classes, *(b)* in primary classes and *(c)* attending pre-school playgroups in each of the local education authority areas in 1977, 1982 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of three and four-year-old children in education authority nursery schools or departments and education authority primary schools or departments in 1977, 1982 and 1987 are shown in the table. The numbers of children attending education authority and registered pre-school playgroups in 1977 and the numbers of places available in 1982 and 1987 are also shown. These numbers have been expressed as rates per hundred of the three and four year old child population. Information about the ages of children attending pre-school playgroups in 1977 and the numbers attending in 1982 and 1987 are not available.

	Number			Rate		
Nursery	*1977*	*1982*	*1987*	*1977*	*1982*	*1987*
Borders	240	390	390	9·8	17·5	16·6
Central	1,220	1,960	2,490	16·4	29·3	37·8
Dumfries and Galloway	230	270	430	6·2	8·1	12·7
Fife	2,980	3,440	4,190	32·0	40·8	48·5
Grampian	2,290	2,240	2,680	18·2	18·3	21·2
Highland	180	570	620	3·3	10·7	11·6
Lothian	6,190	7,050	7,970	30·9	43·3	47·8
Strathclyde	14,030	16,070	17,550	20·2	27·8	29·6
Tayside	1,720	2,100	2,340	16·3	23·5	25·1
Orkney	0	90	80	0·0	16·5	18·3
Shetland	0	90	110	0·0	12·1	17·7
Western Isles	140	170	0	16·8	19·7	0·0
Scotland total	29,220	34,410	38,850	20·5	27·9	30·8

	Number			Rate		
Primary	*1987*	*1982*	*1987*	*1977*	*1982*	*1987*
Borders	230	160	210	9·2	7·3	9·0
Central	680	550	530	9·2	8·1	8·0
Dumfries and Galloway	310	240	290	8·4	7·0	8·7
Fife	10	610	760	0·1	7·2	8·8
Grampian	960	890	930	7·6	7·3	7·3
Highland	410	440	430	7·7	8·2	8·1
Lothian	1,520	1,200	1,150	7·6	7·4	6·9
Strathclyde	5,730	4,530	4,760	8·3	7·8	8·0
Tayside	270	560	590	2·6	6·2	6·3
Orkney	0	30	30	0·0	5·3	6·4
Shetland	70	70	40	10·3	9·4	6·8
Western Isles	70	80	70	9·0	9·3	9·3
Scotland total	10,260	9,330	9,790	7·2	7·6	7·8

	Number			Rate		
Playgroups	*1977*	*1982*	*1987*	*1977*	*1982*	*1987*
Borders	1,350	990	1,590	54·3	44·6	67·8
Central	2,310	2,120	2,150	31·2	31·6	32·6
Dumfries and Galloway	1,530	1,360	1,780	41·2	40·7	52·9
Fife	3,510	2,290	2,320	37·7	27·1	26·8
Grampian	4,850	5,160	4,910	38·5	42·3	38·9
Highland	2,250	2,770	2,960	41·8	52·1	55·8
Lothian	7,100	5,110	5,220	35·5	31·4	31·4
Strathclyde	23,270	17,090	16,820	33·5	29·6	28·3
Tayside	2,810	2,760	2,920	26·6	30·9	31·3
Orkney	340	410	580	75·5	79·0	128·4
Shetland	500	570	530	76·3	80·7	84·7
Western Isles	240	310	1,640	29·9	36·1	221·7
Scotland total	50,050	40,920	43,430	35·1	33·2	34·5

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many arrests took place at Celtic *v* Rangers and Rangers *v* Celtic football matches in 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A total of 269 arrests were made at these matches.

Ecology

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place a consultancy research contract with the countryside interpretation unit, presently based at the Open university, Milton Keynes, as part of his Departmental programme to increase public environmental awareness of Scotland's natural ecology.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has no immediate intentions of placing a consultancy contract with the countryside interpretation unit. Research contracts are commissioned in keeping with the Department's research priorties and on the basis of competitive tenders, unless there are special reasons for inviting a single contractor. The Department will consider proposals for research relevant to its responsibilities in line with its established contractual procedures.

Further Education

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many fifth-form pupils have moved into full-time further education in each of the last three academic years giving the figures in numerical and percentage terms and for each standard planning region;

(2) how many 18-year-old students have progressed into higher education in each of the last three academic years, giving figures in numerical and percentage terms and for each standard planning region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information at the level of detail requested is not readily available. The most recent information from the biennial Scottish young people's survey relating to the destination of school leavers was published in December 1988 in Scottish Education department statistical bulletin "School Leavers' Destinations (No. 12/E1/1988)" which is available in the Library.

Single European Market

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the grants available to small businesses preparing for the single European market of 1992.

Mr. Lang: An extensive range of assistance is available to firms in Scotland to help them meet the challenge of the single market. The enterprise initiative assists companies to improve their competitiveness by developing skills in six key areas of managment practice. Substantial help is available to assist firms break into export markets or to develop their existing overseas business, and regional enterprise grants for innovation and investment have been designed specifically for small firms with fewer than 25 employees. In addition, a range of assistance is available to small businesses from the Scottish development agency.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken in the past 12 months to prepare Scottish businesses for the single European market of 1992.

Mr. Lang: In addition to the Government's "Europe Open for Business" campaign which covers the whole of the United Kingdom, my Department is working closely with the Scottish development agency, enterprise trusts, chambers of commerce, and other organisations in Scotland, and both Ministers and officials have taken part in an extensive series of seminars and business meetings held throughout Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend has also established the single market committee of the Scottish Economic Council to examine the impact of the single market on the economy of Scotland and to submit proposals to encourage those concerned to prepare for it. Our aim is to ensure that every sector of industry and commerce in Scotland is fully prepared for the challenges and opportunities which the single market will present.

Conservation

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since its introduction *(a)* the total amount of conservation grants paid in Scotland under the enviromentally sensitive areas scheme and *(b)* the total amount of funding received from the European Economic Community for conservation grants in Scotland under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has made the following payments under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme:

	£
1987	16,300
1988	186,800

Information on the amount of European Community reimbursement is not yet available.

Radio Forth

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what instructions the Lord Advocate gave to officers of Strathclyde police to interview Mr. David Johnston a reporter working for Radio Forth.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Mr. Johnston was interviewed by police officers on the proper instruction of the Lockerbie disaster senior investigating officer.

School Buildings

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an expenditure estimate of the outstanding backlog of building work in primary and secondary schools in *(a)* repairs and maintenance, *(b)* modernisation, *(c)* other capital works and *(d)* new build.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Local authorities are themselves responsible for estimating the detailed expenditure needs of their education buildings. They have substantial resources, both current and capital at their disposal for necessary building works.

Her Majesty's Inspectors

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of Her Majesty's inspectors' school reports published in each of the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 inclusive for Scotland and each local education authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The publication of Her Majesty's Inspectors' reports on schools was instituted from the

beginning of the 1983-84 session. The number of reports produced for each of the school sessions since then are set out in the table below:

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Borders	3	5	5	5	4
Central	8	7	9	10	9
Dumfries & Galloway	5	6	5	7	6
Fife	9	10	11	11	12
Grampian	17	15	17	17	15
Highland	13	10	17	14	10
Lothian	19	14	20	21	19
Strathclyde	52	62	51	51	54
Tayside	13	11	16	13	12
Orkney Islands	2	2	1	2	1
Shetland Islands	1	4	1	3	1
Western Isles	1	6	5	4	3
Scotland	143	152	158	158	146

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of Her Majesty's inspectors in each of the years 1979-80 to 1987-88, inclusive.

Mr. Rifkind: The total number of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools in post at 1 September in each of the years 1979 to 1988 inclusive is as follows:

	Number
1 September 1979	119
1 September 1980	109
1 September 1981	99
1 September 1982	93
1 September 1983	105
1 September 1984	109
1 September 1985	114
1 September 1986	116
1 September 1987	113
1 September 1988	[1]105

[1] At this date there were seven Her Majesty's Inspector vacancies, for which open recruitment competitions had been advertised.

Curriculum Development

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representations from independent/non-maintained schools about curriculum development.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total amount of public money spent on compensation to owners of sites of special scientific interest in Scotland for each year since 1982; and where each one of those sites is located.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* The Nature Conservancy Council is empowered to enter into management agreements with owners or occupiers of land designated as a site of special scientific interest, or within a national nature reserve. Details of individual payments are confidential, but data on the numbers and costs of such payments are published in the Nature Conservancy Council's annual reports, copies of which are in the Library.

Forestry

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the total new plantings of private forestry in Scotland during the current planting season; and what estimate he has as to how this has been affected by the changes in the tax regime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* The main planting season extends to the end of May and it is therefore not possible at this stage to provide a meaningful estimate of the amount of new planting that is likely to take place.

Training

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the numbers of training places taken up in Scotland since the new training scheme was introduced and of the numbers who have refused or left the training scheme.

Mr. Ian Lang *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* By 20 January 1989, almost 16,000 people had entered Employment Training. At 30 December 1988, the latest date for which information on leavers is available, 5,016 people had left employment training, mainly due to completing the balance of their training under previous programmes. No figures are kept of those who decide not to participate in employment training.

DEFENCE

Gulf (Visit)

13. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he intends to visit the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for defence hopes to visit the Gulf again later this year. I was there in Dubai and Qatar last week.

Defence Industry (Ownership)

14. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy toward the possible increase of foreign ownership or part-ownership of vital British defence industries.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the possible increase of foreign ownership or part-ownership of vital British defence industries.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy toward the possible increase of foreign ownership or part-ownership of vital British defence industries.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department monitors proposals for increased foreign ownership, or part ownership of United Kingdom defence industries and assesses on a case by case basis the implications for national security and our ability to secure value for money in procurement.

Value for Money

15. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline his future policy towards achieving value for money.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have introduced a range of initiatives including the planned introduction of the new management strategy; the pursuit of a more commercial approach in the area of defence procurement, and the extension of competiton in defence support services. We shall continue to pursue these efficiency measures energetically.

Conventional Stability Talks

16. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the Government's policy for the conventional stability talks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom and its NATO allies are currently finalising proposals for tabling at the negotiation on conventional armed forces in Europe, previously known as the conventional stability talks, which is due to begin in Vienna in March. The objective will be to eliminate capabilities for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action by measures which include the elimination, by reductions, of the current imbalances in key equipments such as tanks and artillery. A total ceiling on tanks of about 40,000, shared equally between the countries of NATO and the Warsaw pact is envisaged. Such measures will require heavily asymmetrical reductions by the Warsaw pact to reflect its higher force levels, even if the reductions in its forces announced recently are implemented.

US Bases

17. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation took place between the United States Administration and Her Majesty's Government prior to the submission of the addendum to the United States defence budget submitted to Congress proposing to double United states spending on British bases.

31. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation took place between the United States Administration and Her Majesty's Government prior to the submission of the addendum to the United States defence budget submitted to Congress proposing to double United States spending on British bases.

75. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation took place between the United States Administration and Her Majesty's Government prior to the submission of the addendum to the United States defence budget submitted to Congress proposing to double United States spending on British bases.

133. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation took place between the United States Administration and Her Majesty's Government prior to the submission of the addendum to the United States defence budget submitted to Congress proposing to double United States spending on British bases.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of the United States' budget plans are a matter for the United States Government, but my Department maintains close liaisen with the United States authorities on their proposals for the bases made available to them in the United Kingdom. All military construction projects at these bases require the approval of her Majesty's Government before they can proceed.

25. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had at NATO's (i) planning group and (ii) high level group about United States proposals tc enhance its military bases in the United Kingdom.

50. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had at NATO's (i) nuclear planning group and (ii) high level group about United States proposals to enhance their military bases in the United Kingdom.

80. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's *(a)* nuclear planning group and *(b)* high level group about United States proposals to enhance their military bases in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The details of nuclear planning group and high level group discussions are confidential.

40. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for burden-sharing arrangements of the proposed increase in the financial commitment of the United States to its bases in the United Kingdom.

74. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for burden-sharing arrangements of the proposed increase in the financial commitment of the United States to its bases in the United Kingdom.

102. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for burden-sharing arrangements of the proposed increase in the financial commitment of the United States to their bases in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heffer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for burden-sharing arrangements of the proposed increase in the financial commitment of the United States to their bases in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United States presence in the United Kingdom is an important contribution to the sharing of risks, roles and responsibilities within the Alliance. Details of United States spending plans are, of course, a matter for the United States Government.

56. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Defence Department about its plans to build new storage vaults for nuclear bombs at a number of its military bases in the United Kingdom.

69. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Defence Department about its plans to build new storage vaults for nuclear bombs at a number of its military bases in the United Kingdom.

86. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what discussions he has had with the United States Defence Department about its plans to build new storage vaults for nuclear bombs at a number of its military bases in the United Kingdom.

121. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Defence Department about its plans to build new storage vaults for nuclear bombs at a number of its military bases in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department is involved in continuing discussions with the United States Government on this matter.

Nuclear-Powered Vessels

18. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a study of possible radioactive contamination at Holy Loch, Faslane and Rosyth caused by nuclear-powered defence vessels.

20. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a study of possible radioactive contamination at Holy Loch, Faslane, Rosyth and the Firth of Clyde caused by nuclear-powered defence vessels.

24. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a study of possible radioactive contamination at Holy Loch, Faslane and Rosyth caused by nuclear-powered defence vessels.

30. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a study of possible radioactive contamination at Holy Loch, Faslane, Rosyth and the Firth of Clyde caused by nuclear-powered defence vessels.

Mr. Younger: No. Thorough monitoring of radioactivity in environmental materials and gamma dose rates in air at Holy Loch, Faslane and Rosyth is carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The results show that public radiation exposure in these areas is consistently less than 0·1 per cent. of the limit recommended by the international commission on radiological protection. This is equivalent to the radiation which would be received during a return flight in the Glasgow shuttle. The Ministry of Defence carries out its own monitoring of these sites, and the results are consistent with those produced by MAFF.

Single Market

19. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence procurement implications of the implementation of the single European market.

88. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the defence procurement implications of the implementation of the single European market.

Mr. Sainsbury: The implementation of the single European market does not directly affect the managment of defence procurement. The implementation will, however, have an important impact on many of our suppliers, as they operate in both the civil and defence sectors of the economy.

Women (Front-line Units)

21. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends deploying women in front-line units of the three services.

142. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends deploying women in front-line units of the three services.

Mr. Neubert: All three services are examining ways of increasing the range of employment opportunities for women. It remains our policy that women should not be employed in direct combat roles, though they may bear arms for self-defence and the defence of certain establishments.

Defence Establishments (Explosions and Fires)

22. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on recent explosions and fires at defence establishments.

136. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on recent explosions and fires at defence establishments.

141. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on recent explosions and fires at defence establishments.

Mr. Sainsbury: The 1988 figures for the defence establishments, as distinct from service establishments, are 80 fires requiring fire-fighting action and two explosions. These incidents resulted in four minor casualties, and the aggregate damages are assessed to be less than £40,000.

Trident

23. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *133*, he will indicate the major areas of cost reduction in the Trident programme.

63. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *133*, he will indicate the major areas of cost reduction in the Trident programme.

85. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *133*, he will detail the sources of the cost savings in the Trident programme.

126. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for

Winchester (Mr. Browne) of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *133*, he will detail those areas in which there has been a real reduction in costs in the Trident programme.

Mr. Younger: The £104 million real reduction in the Trident estimate since my announcement in January 1988 has arisen largely in the missile area, where there has been a reduction of about £100 million. In addition, there have been other smaller reductions of £8 million in the submarine area, and some £24 million in the equipment area. These reductions have been offset by the net effect of smaller changes in other areas of the programme.

45. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has assessed the value for money received through the purchase of Trident; and if he will make a statement.

127. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Younger: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) on 17 January at column *133* and to the detailed report on Trident which I placed in the Library of the House at the same time. These show that Trident remains outstanding value for money in providing effective deterrence.

48. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the extent to which Trident will provide the United Kingdom with a credible strategic nuclear deterrent into the 21st century.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government's decision to replace Polaris with Trident was based on a full assessment of what was needed to maintain the effectiveness and credibility of Britain's independent strategic nuclear deterrent into the next century.

73. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received recent representations from the Amalgamated Engineering Union about the cost of Trident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. Trident remains outstanding value for money in providing effective deterrence for this country.

European Fighter Aircraft (Radar)

26. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the latest procurement plans for the EFA radar system.

43. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the latest procurement plans for the EFA radar system.

71. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the latest procurement plans for the EFA radar system.

Mr. Sainsbury: A report by the prime contractor is currently under consideration by NEFMA, the international management agency for the EFA programme, and by the collaborating nations. I would hope a decision on the winning consortium could be made early this year.

143. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has had discussions with any of his counterparts in the Governments funding the European fighter aircraft on the criteria which should be taken into account in reaching a decision on which consortium should be awarded the nose radar contract; and if he will make a statement on the prospects for an early decision.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend often discusses with his counterparts the current position on a wide range of projects, including EFA. In respect of the second part of his question I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale).

Chemical Weapons

27. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the readiness of British forces to repel attack by chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom abandoned its offensive chemical warfare capability in the late 1950s but maintains an appropriate mix of adequate and effective nuclear and conventional forces to deter or repel any form of attack. We also carry out extensive research at the chemical defence establishment, Porton Down, into defensive measures to protect our armed forces against an attack using chemical weapons. This includes the detection of chemical agents, the protection of personnel, and medical counter-measures. Our armed forces are trained and equipped accordingly.

96. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Government intend responding to the Soviet announcement of a unilateral cut in chemical weapons.

120. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government intends responding to the Soviet announcement of a unilateral cut in chemical weapons.

134. **Mr. Norris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Government intend responding to the Soviet announcement of a unilateral cut in chemical weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We welcome the announcement by Mr. Shevardnadze that the Soviet Union intends to begin destroying some of its chemical weapons stocks, but no details have been given of the rate of destruction or the quantity and type of weapons to be destroyed. There is a long way to go before Soviet stocks, which are the largest in the world, are brought down to the level of the West's. The United Kingdom abandoned its offensive chemical warfare capability in the late 1950s and the United States observed a unilateral moratorium on the production of chemical weapons from 1969 to 1987, although the Soviet Union continued production. The United States has already begun a destruction programme of their unitary chemical weapon stocks.

29. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent bilateral discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about chemical weapons production.

32. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent bilateral discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about chemical weapons production.

66. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent bilateral discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about chemical weapons production.

129. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent bilateral discussions he has had with his United States counterpart about chemical weapons production.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has regular discussions with his United States counterpart on a wide range of defence issues.

130. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether stocks of United States forces nerve gas or other chemical or biological weapons are advanced-based in Britain or in any other NATO country.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no such stocks in Britain. However, United States forces in Germany hold stocks of chemical weapons.

NATO Nuclear Planning Group

28. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he intends attending NATO's nuclear planning group.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The next meeting of the NATO nuclear planning group is due to take place in the spring in Brussels.

Redundant Land and Buildings

33. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on the sale of redundant land and buildings to assist in the financing of the equipment budget.

Mr. Neubert: It is the Department's policy to keep the size of its estate under constant review and to dispose of surpluses as quickly as possible so that holdings are the minimum required for defence purposes. The resources released as a consequence are available for other high priority defence requirements.

TGWU (General Secretary)

34. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received a request from the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union for a briefing on defence matters prior to his visit to the Soviet Union.

123. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received a request from the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union for a briefing on defence matters prior to his visit to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Disarmament

35. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's response to the detailed conventional forces reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other eastern European Governments.

38. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's response to the detailed conventional force reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other eastern European Governments.

79. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts about a NATO response to the detailed conventional force reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Governments.

97. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions are taking place to determine NATO's response to Soviet troop withdrawals from Eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

113. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation counterparts about a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation response to the detailed conventional forces reduction announced by the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Governments.

117. **Mr George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts about a NATO response to the detailed conventional forces reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Governments.

119. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's response to the detailed conventional forces reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Governments.

124. **Ms. Mowlam** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's response to the detailed conventional forces reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Governments.

135. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts about a NATO response to the detailed conventional forces reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other Eastern European Governments.

144. **Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response to the Soviet bloc troop reduction initiative he will be advocating to Britain's NATO partners.

Mr. Archie Hamilton The countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation have welcomed the reductions announced by the Soviet Union and other Warsaw pact countries as a significant step towards the elimination of the Warsaw pact's superiorities in conventional forces in Europe. But even if the announced reductions are implemented, the Warsaw pact will continue to enjoy significant numerical superiorities in key equipments such as tanks and artillery. NATO will therefore continue with its existing policy of deterrence whilst seeking balance in conventional forces in Europe at the new conventional arms control negotiations which are scheduled to begin in Vienna in March this year.

115. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a further statement on the

extent to which, following the withdrawals from eastern Europe of Soviet tanks and manpower as announced by Mr. Gorbachev, the Warsaw pact will have achieved a balance with NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: If implemented, the reductions announced by Mr. Gorbachev in December 1988, and elaborated in January 1989, would leave the Warsaw pact with an advantage over NATO in tanks and artillery of some 2·5:1. NATO countries are still analysing the recent announcements of reductions in the forces of other Warsaw pact countries. It is clear, however, that significant imbalances would remain even if these reductions were also implemented.

Low Flying

36. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from (i) German citizens and (ii) the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany seeking a reduction of low flying in Germany.

112. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from *(a)* German citizens and *(b)* the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany seeking a reduction of low flying in Germany.

Mr. Neubert: My right hon. Friend has not received any such representations from citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany, but last week he had discussions with his German colleague, Dr. Scholz, about a wide range of issues of mutual interest, including ways in which it might be possible to ease the impact of low flying training on German citizens.

58. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make arrangements for independent monitoring of low-level military flying exercises to enforce regulations concerning maximum speeds and minimum heights.

Mr. Neubert: No.

70. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the expected number of low-flying exercises over Northumberland in the next 12 months.

Mr. Neubert: Whilst detailed planning has not yet been finalised, low-flying exercises activity over Northumberland this year is expected to be no greater than in recent years. I shall of course continue to give hon. Members advance notification of any significant low-flying activity which may affect their constituents.

89. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the extent of low-flying training available to the RAF in West Germany is sufficient; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The present level of low-flying training available to the Royal Air Force in the Federal Republic of Germany, together with that undertaken by Royal Air Force (Germany) aircrew in the United Kingdom and elsewhere is assessed to be sufficient to enable them to carry out their essential operational training and other tasks.

99. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to reduce the amount of low-flying in Scotland.

131. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to reduce the amount of low flying in Scotland.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying military aircraft passed within one mile of East Shilton and Hinckley, Leicestershire, each month between 1 January 1988 and 31 January 1989.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is not available and could not be provided without disproportionate effort and cost.

Manpower Shortfall

37. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department is taking to deal with the expected shortfall in manpower in the 1990s.

67. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures his Department is taking to deal with the expected shortfall in manpower in the 1990s.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 3 February 1989 at column *443*.

Soviet Defence Minister

39. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet the Soviet Defence Minister to discuss disarmament proposals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no current plans to meet the Soviet Defence Minister.

Warrior (Trials)

41. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied with the outcome of trials of Warrior.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes. The extensive trialing of prototype equipment during development, which is continuing with in-service production vehicles, demonstrates that Warrior is fully meeting its performance, reliability and maintainability requirements.

NATO (Contribution)

42. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the British contributions to NATO.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 3 February 1989 at column *445*.

United States Secretary of State for Defence

44. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to meet his new American counterpart.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence met Mr. Tower at the recent Wehrkunde conference in Munich.

Central Ordnance Depot, Donnington

46. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to visit Central Ordnance Depot, Donnington to discuss with the work force his plans for contractorisation.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has no plans at present to visit Donnington.

Royal Ordnance Factories (Sale)

47. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the light of the report of the Public Accounts Committee on the disposal of Royal Ordnance factories, he will make it his policy to apply for outline planning permission prior to similar sales in the future.

68. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in the light of the report of the Public Accounts Committee on the disposal of Royal Ordnance factories, he will make it his policy to apply for outline planning permission prior to similar sales in the future.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 67 of the Treasury Minute on the 43rd to 48th Reports from the Committee of Public Accounts, which was published on 18 January as Cm. 563.

NATO (Nuclear Strategy)

49. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about NATO's current nuclear strategy in the light of the last NATO nuclear planning group meeting at Scheveningen.

52. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about NATO's current nuclear strategy in the light of the last NATO nuclear planning group meeting at Scheveningen.

110. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about North Atlantic Treaty Organisation current nuclear strategy in the light of the last North Atantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group meeting at Scheveningen.

128. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's current nuclear strategy in the light of the last NATO nuclear planning group meeting at Scheveningen.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 29 November 1988 at column 573 to the hon. Member for Deptford (Ms. Ruddock).

On-site Inspections

51. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions Warsaw pact on-site inspections have taken place in the United Kingdom under the terms of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There has been one such occasion: the Soviet Union conducted an inspection in the south of England under the terms of the document of the 1986 Stockholm conference from 5-7 October 1988.

Soviet Union (Units)

53. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on briefing right hon. and hon. Members undertaking visits to the Soviet Union.

138. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on briefing right hon. and hon. Members undertaking visits to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-West (Mr. Moss) earlier today.

Greenham Common

54. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of Greenham common air base by United States military forces.

55. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of Greenham common air base by United States military forces.

87. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of Greenham common air base by United States military forces.

92. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of Greenham common air base by United States military forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: RAF Greenham common has been designated as a NATO standby operating base for many years and we envisage that this role will continue after the cruise missiles are withdrawn in about two years time. No decisions have yet been taken on any additional roles for the base thereafter.

NATO Secretary General

57. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; and what matters he intends to discuss.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) earlier today.

Northern Ireland (Army Personnel)

59. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the number of Army personnel serving in Northern Ireland and the comparable figure for 1979.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of Army personnel (including UDR) serving in the security forces in Northern Ireland were as follows:

	Number
1 January 1989	16,007
1 January 1979	20,488

Comparable figures for the total number of service personnel serving in the security forces in the Province were 17,287 and 21,465 respectively.

HMS Shropshire

60. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to name one of Her Majesty's ships Shropshire.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department has no plans at present to revive the name Shropshire for one of Her Majesty's ships. The name would be considered should a suitable opportunity arise.

Belize

61. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when next he intends to visit Belize.

Mr. Younger: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby).

Defence Spares and Maintenance

62. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how he intends to make savings in defence spares and maintenance.

Mr. Neubert: We are pursuing a number of initiatives to achieve savings in defence spares and maintenance costs, through improvements in spares purchasing and repair and overhaul contracts, better resource management supported by investment in information technology, and improved reliability and maintainability of equipment.

Wehrkunde Conference

64. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends attending the Wehrkunde conference.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend attended this year's Wehrkunde conference in Munich on 28 and 29 January.

Stock Levels

65. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total level of stocks held by the Ministry of Defence at the latest convenient date.

Mr. Neubert: In addition to any stocks which may be held to meet specific war reserve or contingency requirements the Ministry of Defence holds working stocks, the levels of which vary according to factors such as shelf life, the rate of consumption, economic order quantity and lead times for replacement. Typically stock levels range from two months for items readily available from commercial sources to eight years for those which are not for example, for support of refurbishment programmes for major specialised equipments.

Naval Procurement

72. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the naval procurement programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since 1979, the Government have ordered a total of 64 vessels at a cost in excess of £6 billion. The acceptance of HMS Trenchant, a Trafalgar class submarine, will bring the number of these vessels subsequently accepted into service to 40. The vessels currently under construction comprise two Trident submarines, two further Trafalgar class submarines and four conventional Upholder class submarines, as well as two type 22 and seven type 23 frigates, five of a new class of single role minehunters and two of a new class of auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels. The Government expect to invite tenders for a further batch of type 23 frigates and to order a third Trident submarine later this year. In addition, although orders are not envisaged for this year, tenders have already been invited for an aviation support ship, and we are in the process of evaluating the results of feasibility studies into the replacement of the capability currently provided by the assault ships Fearless and Intrepid.

Women Pilots

76. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the recruitment and training of women pilots following the comments made by the new Chief of the Air Staff.

Mr. Neubert: Whilst there are no current plans to change our policy preventing women from undertaking directly combatant duties, the Royal Air Force is currently studying the possibility of employing women in some pilot roles.

RAF Officer and Aircrew Selection Centre, Biggin Hill

77. **Mr. John Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to visit the Royal Air Force officer and aircrew selection centre at Biggin Hill before the proposed transfer of the centre to RAF Cranwell.

Mr. Neubert: I have no plans to do so.

Efficiency and Savings

78. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what success he has had in persuading the services to implement efficiency and savings.

81. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what success he has had in persuading the services to implement efficiency and savings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) on 3 February at column *443*.

Procurement

82. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on procurement from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* European and *(c)* United States-owned defence industries.

118. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on procurement from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* European and *(c)* United States-owned defence industries.

132. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on procurement from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* European and *(c)* United States-owned defence industries.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

95. **Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he will take as chairman of the Independent European Programme Group to promote the objective of European collaboration in the supply of defence equipment as set out in the Luxembourg communiqué of 9 November 1988.

116. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's efforts to date to secure Europe wide procurement harmonisation and reciprocity; if he will discuss these matters with his NATO counterparts; and when he next expects to discuss these matters with the secretary-general of NATO.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Luxembourg communiqué contained a wide range of measures designed to increase the effectiveness of European armaments co-operation, most particularly by creating a European market for defence equipment. Our aim during the chairmanship is to make concrete progress towards this by focusing on a number of specific objectives, with milestones for achievement. We shall be seeking our IEPG partners' agreement to these objectives which will include proposals for the opening up of the market to the benefit of all IEPG countries (through, for instance, the publication of bidding opportunities); measures to enhance research co-operation through a European technology programme; and intensified efforts to harmonise requirements and identify viable projects for co-operation. We believe that progress in these areas will strengthen the European contribution to NATO, and therefore benefit the Alliance as a whole.

111. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on recent developments to ensure value for money in procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) on 20 June 1988 column *221*.

Dog Training (Review)

83. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest position regarding the review of dog training at the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Melton Mowbray; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The Peat Marwick McLintock report on training arrangements has been received by the Ministry and its contents are being considered. In arriving at a decision, account will be taken on the points previously made by my hon. Friend.

Nuclear-powered Submarines

84. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the decommissioning of Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 9 May 1988 at column *2*.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist to distribute iodine tablets to residents of a town near a nuclear submarine base in the event of a major containment failure of a pressurised water reactor on a nuclear submarine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Arrangements are in place at ports where nuclear submarines are permitted to berth to ensure the prompt distribution of stable iodine to those at risk in the very unlikely event of a containment failure leading to the release of radioactive iodine. Formal contact is maintained with the relevant public authorities who, together with their naval counterparts, review these arrangements on a regular basis and thereby keep them fully up-to-date.

Drugs

90. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his campaign to reduce drug taking among service men.

Mr. Neubert: Drug abuse is not a major problem in the armed forces. Nevertheless the services pursue a vigorous programme of education and prevention. Several new drug abuse prevention films have been made recently and the three services' specialist drug detection teams were strengthened following a rise in convictions in the early 1980s. A drop in convictions each year since 1984 gives reasonable grounds to believe that these measures are proving successful. The services are aware of the need for constant vigilance.

European Defence Procurement

91. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the main recent achievements of his Department in furthering European defence procurement.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the main recent achievements of his Department in furthering European defence procurement.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the main recent achievements of his Department in furthering European defence procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: There have been a number of recent achievements to add to our successful history of equipment collaboration with our European partners. For example, in the last six months memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have been signed for the development phase of the European fighter aircraft (EFA) and the third generation of anti-tank weapon (TRIGAT).

A further valuable recent achievement has been the Anglo-French reciprocal purchasing initiative, launched in

1987 with the aim of encouraging cross-channel competitive bidding so as to create a more open market in defence equipment between Britain and France. These various measures, and plans to implement greater coherence and co-ordination of research spending, should result in greater value for money in procurement and a stronger European contribution to NATO defence. As holders of the IEPG chair for the next two years, the United Kingdom will be concerned to press ahead with the action plan already agreed in pursuit of these objectives.

Foulness

93. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to visit the defence establishments at Foulness.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence, has no plans at present to visit AWE Foulness.

RAF Molesworth

94. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of Royal Air Force Molesworth.

104. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on 3 February at column *444*.

Western European Union

100. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the recent British contribution to the Western European Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The United Kingdom has held the Presidency of the WEU Council of Ministers since 1 July 1988. Four main priorities were established for our Presidency: these were set out in my reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 29 November 1988 at column *227*.

Competitive Tendering

101. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what savings have been achieved through competition in RAF equipment.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Department has achieved significant cost savings on equipment for each of the three services through the adoption of a commercial approach to defence procurement, which includes, of course, a greater emphasis on competition. Eleven examples, where savings totalling some £105 million had been made, were included in the 1988 statement on the Defence Estimates. Four of the examples were of RAF equipment. However, it is not possible to calculate the cumulative total savings, nor the savings achieved for an individual service, since the adoption of the commercial approach in the early 1980s.

Attack Helicopter

103. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to purchase a new attack helicopter.

Mr. Sainsbury: Studies are in progress to investigate possible options for replacing the Army's anti-armour helicopters.

NATO

106. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans his Department has for celebrating the 40th anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on 22 December 1988 at columns *377-78*.

RAF Widows

107. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representatons he has received concerning compensaton payments to the widows of Royal Air Force personnel killed in the Chinook helicopter accident in the Falkland Islands on 27 February 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: A number of representations have been received from hon. Members and from others. Formal claims on behalf of the dependants of five of the Royal Air Force personnel who lost their lives on 27 February 1987 were commenced by solicitors in August 1987. Since then, correspondence has continued between the solicitors and the Department, whose claims branch is awaiting the completion of all necessary inquiries into the incident, including the results of an inquest by Her Majesty's coroner. Once these inquiries have been completed, it is hoped to be able to come to a decision very quickly on any ex-gratia compensation which might be payable.

Nuclear Waste (Storage)

108. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current position regarding his proposals to locate a nuclear waste storage facility in the Plymouth area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department is still considering the next step following Plymouth city council's objection to the notice of proposed development for this project.

Submarines (Irish Sea)

109. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding incidents involving fishing boats and submarines in the Irish sea; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 14 November 1988 at column *413*.

Horseshoe Barracks, Shoeburyness

114. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet made a decision on the future of the Horseshoe barracks in Shoeburyness, Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Horseshoe barracks is surplus to Ministry of Defence requirements and we expect to dispose of it on

the open market once existing facilities have been reprovided elsewhere. We are currently reviewing the boundary of the area to be released following the recent visit to Shoeburyness by the historic military buildings committee and will be consulting closely with Southend borough council when drawing up our plans for the disposal of the site.

Weapons

122. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the respective levels of *(a)* conventional, *(b)* nuclear and *(c)* chemical weapons between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In respect of information on conventional and nuclear force levels, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave him on 29 November 1988 at columns *226-27*. The broad assessment that I gave then has not changed. No equivalent information is available on chemical weapons, but it is clear that the Soviet Union is the world's largest holder of stock of such weapons, even from the levels of stocks which the Soviet Union has acknowledged possessing, which are, however, significantly below western estimates of the total Soviet stockpile.

INF Treaty (Inspections)

125. Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the on-site inspections provided by the intermediate range nuclear forces treaty are working satisfactorily; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date, the system of on-site inspections provided for under the terms of the treaty on the elimination of United States and Soviet intermediate range missiles has operated satisfactorily in so far as it affects the United Kingdom. Both the United States and Soviet Governments have also expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the on-site inspections. Soviet inspectors have visited the United Kingdom three times since the treaty took effect on 1 June 1988: on 19-22 July 1988 baseline inspections were conducted at RAF Greenham common and RAF Molesworth; on 31 October to 2 November 1988 a short-notice inspection from their annual quota was conducted at RAF Molesworth; and on 18-20 January 1989 a close-out inspection was conducted at RAF Molesworth, together with a short-notice inspection from their annual quota at RAF Greenham common.

Disaster Relief

137. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the role of the services in disaster relief over the past year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been a number of instances in the past year, both at home and abroad, where the armed forces provided emergency assistance to the civil authorities in disaster relief.

In the United Kingdom, very extensive assistance was provided in the aftermath of the tragic air crash at Lockerbie in December 1988, and help was also provided following the air crash at Kegworth in January 1989.

In addition, RAF fixed and rotary-wing aircraft and Royal Navy ships and rotary-wing aircraft assisted in many rescue and recovery operations, including the Piper Alpha and Ocean Odyssey oil rig disasters.

Abroad, the Royal Navy were first on the scene to provide effective relief in the wake of hurricane Gilbert in Jamaica in September. The RAF flew in much needed supplies, and the Army spent three weeks on the island carrying out repairs to buildings and services.

After the severe earthquake in Nepal in August, the British military hospital at Dharan treated over 700 Nepalese casualties, carrying out over 300 operations; additional medical personnel and medical supplies were also flown in.

Following the damage which Cyclone Uma caused to roads and bridges in Vanuatu in 1987, a team of Royal Engineers has been carrying out a reconstruction programme.

Most recently, after the earthquake in Armenia in December, the Ministry of Defence supplied over 70,000 ration packs as part of Her Majesty's Government's £5 million relief package. Medical supplies were provided to the Red Cross, and the Army provided specialised microphones to detect people under the wreckage.

Sports

139. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the allocation of resources for sports activities as between officers and men.

Mr. Neubert: Resources for sports activities are allocated for the use of all service personnel regardless of rank.

Defence Products (Sales)

140. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what special steps he plans to take to promote sales of British defence products.

Mr. Sainsbury: The British defence industry has an excellent record of export achievement. We shall do everything possible within the necessary constraints of our national policies to ensure that this success continues.

YTS

145. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel currently serving in the Royal Air Force joined through the YTS.

Mr. Neubert: As at 1 January 1989, 1,564 serving personnel (960 airmen and 604 airwomen) had been accepted for regular service with the Royal Air Force following training under the armed services youth training scheme.

Anti-ballistic Missiles

146. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of his Department's study of anti-ballistic missile defence systems.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 26 January 1989 at column *754*.

Glengarry Forest (Transmitter)

147. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when it is expected that the trial extremely low frequency transmitter station at Glengarry forest will be commissioned.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is anticipated that, subject to local planning permission, the construction of the Glengarry experimental extremely low frequency transmitter should take place in 1991 and 1992, but test transmissions are unlikely to start until the following year.

Atomic Weapons Testing (Compensation)

148. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with the compensation claims of the nuclear test veterans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The judgment by the House of Lords last year in the case of Mr. Melvyn Pearce made it possible for those who, like him, participated in the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons test programme in the Pacific, to pursue claims in the courts for damages. The Government cannot accept that the Crown is legally liable for the ill-health suffered by Mr. Pearce and others like him allegedly arising from their participation in the test programme, and proposes to contest the claims. Solicitors acting for both sides in the case of Mr. Pearce are currently discussing the disclosure of relevant documents for the purposes of litigation.

105. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had about compensating those affected by British atomic weapons testing in Australia.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin).

Helicopters

149. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on long-term helicopter procurement policy.

Mr. Sainsbury: Procurement policy for helicopters, as for other equipment, is aimed at meeting defence requirements in the most cost-effective way. The strategy adopted in individual cases will be determined against the criteria set out in Open Government, document 83/01, "Value for Money in Defence Procurement", a copy of which is in the Library.

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of Royal Air Force Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on 3 February 1989 at column *444*.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 8 February 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Isle of Man

99. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of the Manx Government; and what matters relating to the representation abroad of the interests of the Manx Government were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend met members of the Executive Council of the Isle of Man in September1987. No matters relating to the representation abroad of the interests of the Manx Government were discussed on that occasion, but Home Office Ministers and officials are in regular contact with the Isle of Man Government on matters concerning the island.

Services for Deaf People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many interpreters for the deaf are employed by police authorities; if he is satisfied with the availability of interpreters for deaf people in contact with the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is an operational matter for the police to obtain the services of a suitably qualified interpreter for the deaf in appropriate cases. The Home Office has no record of the numbers of such interpreters whose services are used by the police. Such information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Guidance to the police on interviewing suspects who are deaf is contained in the codes of practice issued in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and in Home Office circular 88/85, copies of which are in the Library. Code C, for the detention, treatment and questioning of persons by police officers, advises the police that most local authority social services departments can supply a list of suitably qualified interpreters.

The Home Office is currently reviewing the first four codes of practice issued. The views of a wide range of organisations (including those representing the deaf) have been sought and will be taken fully into account.

Economic League

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Economic League is registered under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Mr. Renton: The Economic League has a single entry in the data protection register, a copy of which is in the Library, covering its processing of personal data for the administration of the organisation.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to enact legislation to ensure that people blacklisted by the Economic League can obtain access to the files that have caused their blacklisting to check that information.

Mr. Renton: No.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight, 20 January, *Official Report*, column *350*, what action is being taken to reduce the time taken to deal with claims for compensation by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have provided extra resources which have enabled the board to open a new office in Glasgow, to increase its staff in post from 220 in 1987 to 320 now, and to finance the resulting increase in the number of awards made. We are also reviewing administrative procedures with the board with the aim of reducing the time taken to resolve claims.

Custody Time Limits

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the further extension of custody time limits.

Mr. Hurd: I intend to lay regulations which will, with effect from 1 June, extend custody time limits to Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Cleveland, Derbyshire, Durham, Hereford and Worcester, Humberside, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Northumbria, North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, South Yorkshire, Suffolk, Warwickshire, and West Yorkshire. In the west midlands, the time limit to committal will be reduced from 84 to 70 days in all petty sessions areas except Birmingham where it will remain 84 days. The regulations will also apply with custody limits to serious fraud cases transferred to the Crown court under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1987.

Probation Officers

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* in tabular form the information he has, using age bands, for each five-year period from 1965 to the most recent year for which figures are available, on the ages of individuals appointed to be senior probation officers;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information he has, in age bands and in tabular form, on the ages of individuals appointed to be probation officers since 1965 who were (i) under 28 years of age and (ii) between 28 years of age and 65 years of age.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, if it is available at all.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list Rugby League football clubs together with the following information for each of them during the 1987-88 season: *(a)* the number of

matches played at their grounds, *(b)* the total season's attendance, *(c)* the total arrests in association with such matches, *(d)* the average attendance per match, *(e)* the average number of arrests per match and *(f)* the arrests as a proportion of the attendance.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 26 January 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

No information is collected centrally about the numbers of arrests at Rugby League matches. Attendance figures and matches played at the grounds of Rugby League clubs in the 1987-88 season were:

Division 1	*Number of matches at ground*	*Total attendance*	*Average attendance per match*
Bradford Northern	14	68,674	4,905
Castleford	13	58,770	4,520
Halifax	15	96,440	6,429
Hull	17	84,073	4,945
Hull Kingston Rovers	17	73,229	4,308
Hunslet	14	36,704	2,622
Leeds	16	177,631	11,102
Leigh	15	69,606	4,640
St. Helens	18	146,856	8,159
Salford	18	72,573	4,032
Swinton	14	42,292	3,021
Warrington	18	93,544	5,197
Widnes	15	99,427	6,628
Wigan	21	278,917	13,282
Division 2			
Barrow	14	22,740	1,624
Barley	16	15,956	997
Bramley	15	13,061	871
Carlisle	16	13,607	850
Dewsbury	16	12,274	767
Doncaster	16	23,658	1,479
Featherstone Rovers	19	38,669	2,035
Fulham	15	9,322	621
Huddersfield	14	8,417	601
Keighley	16	17,988	1,124
Mansfield Marksman	14	5,146	368
Oldham	18	69,449	3,858
Rochdale Hornets	15	16,444	1,096
Runcorn Highfield	16	8,658	541
Sheffield Eagles	14	11,862	847
Springfield Borough	18	19,231	1,068
Wakefield Trinity	17	40,049	2,356
Whitehaven	16	31,087	1,943
Workington Town	14	10,322	737
York	16	22,324	1,395

Police Surgeons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will review present arrangements for the work of general practitioners who act as part-time police surgeons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 27 January 1989 at column *769*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Borrowing

Mr. Warren: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a breakdown from the latest available data of the major types of borrowers in the public and private sectors of the economy.

Mr. Major: Information on borrowing is given in the CSO's monthly publication "Financial Statistics", which is available in the Library of the House. Section 1 provides a unified set of financial data for all the main sectors of the economy. Subsequent sections give various breakdowns by financial instrument and source appropriate to individual sectors. Also given is an industry analysis of borrowing from the monetary sector.

EC (Indirect Taxation)

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will report on his discussions with the European Commissioner for taxation and customs union on 19 January; and how far these discussions advanced the planned approximation of indirect taxes within the Community.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer had a useful discussion with Madame Scrivener which I hope will pave the way for further constructive exchanges in the future. The Government remain of the view that indirect tax approximation is unnecessary for the completion of the single market.

Mr. Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he intends to put to the Council of Ministers on 13 February to advance the planned approximation of indirect taxes within the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has already suggested an alternative, market-based approach to indirect taxation in the single market, which remains on the table for future discussions.

VAT

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on proposed changes to value added tax zero rating of supplies to non-domestic consumers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I assume that the hon. Gentleman has in mind the changes in VAT zero rating resulting from last June's judgment of the European Court of Justice which were announced in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on 6 February. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received, and taken fully into account, a large number of representations about the implementation of this judgment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate what additional revenue would accrue from proposed changes to implement value added tax standard rating of supplies to university halls of residence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: None. No changes are proposed to the VAT zero rating of supplies of new construction services and fuel and power to university halls of residence.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify each donation which the Overseas Development Administration has made in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Chris Patten: The ODA has made three responses to public appeals since 1979, in each case to appeals launched by the disasters emergency committee of major voluntary agencies following disasters overseas. These are:

	£
December 1987, for famine victims in Ethiopia	2,000,000
August 1988, for flood victims in Sudan	1,000,000
August 1988, for flood victims in Bangladesh	1,000,000

These figures exclude the ODA's responses to the many appeals to donor Governments from the United Nations and other international agencies.

Amazonia

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of Her Majesty's Government's contribution to development projects in the Amazonian area of Brazil; and what measures are taken to ensure that these projects do not result in the destruction of tropical rain forests.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have jointly funded with non-governmental agencies nine projects assisting the people of the Amazonian region at a cost of about £77,000 and we are providing £80,000 to the Maraca rain forest project which conducts research into forest regeneration. International organisations of which the United Kingdom is a member have supported projects in the region, but we do not have information detailing disbursements under individual loans provided through these channels. Environmental conditions have normally been attached to such loans.

Afghanistan

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to provide aid to meet current humanitarian needs in Kabul.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have provided £60 million of aid for the victims of war in Afghanistan since 1980, including £10 million in the current financial year. In addition, I have just agreed a further contribution of £500,000, particularly to meet current mother and child relief needs; £250,000 of this is being channelled through UNICEF and £250,000 is for the International Committee of the Red Cross relief programmes.

SCOTLAND

Lennox Castle Hospital

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what dates in the period 1979 to 1988 the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland has visited Lennox Castle hospital; and when the commission first indicated to Greater Glasgow health board its anxieties about conditions there.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the discharge of its functions under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984, the Mental Welfare Commission has visited Lennox Castle hospital on the following occasions:

Programmed visits
28 November 1984
23 October 1985
26 November 1986
13 April 1988

Special visits
2 August 1985
7 January 1988
9 December 1988

Prior to 1984, visits were confined to those by individual medical commissioners for the purposes of interviewing patients and such visits continue on an annual basis.

The commission first commented adversely about some aspects of the facilities at Lennox Castle following the visit on 28 November 1984. The Greater Glasgow health board has embarked on a major rebuilding and upgrading programme; two new, purpose-designed intensive care units have been built, and four wards substantially upgraded at a cost of £3·8 million. A recurring increase of £2 million, or 18 per cent. of the mental handicap budget, has been approved by the board in the current year for the recruitment of additional staff and support in the community.

The board has committed itself to making Lennox Castle a centre of excellence and is making the necessary provision to achieve that objective.

Training Schemes

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many workers in Scotland are presently employed in Government-sponsored training schemes; what this represents as a proportion of the work force; and what are the figures for each o the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: Information on numbers participating in Government training programmes is available only for YTS and the community programme and from 1984 onwards. Participants in these programmes as a proportion of the civilian work force since 1984 are set out in the table:

Year	*(a)*[1] *Numbers in YTS and community programme*	*(b)*[1] *Civilian work force*	*(a) as a percentage of (b)*
1984	44,958	2,083	2·2
1985	50,304	2,109	2·4
1986	59,307	2,100	2·8
1987	68,464	2,089	3·3
1988	77,117	2,108	3·6

[1]At 31 March.

At present some 49,000 young people are participating in YTS and almost 20,000 people in employment training (which from September 1988 replaced the community programme and all other adult training measures).

Housing

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the net spending on housing, in real terms, in 1978-79, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: At 1987-88 prices Scottish net public housing expenditure in 1978-79 was £1,191 million, almost half on general subsidies to the housing stock; estimated expenditure in 1988-89 is £607 million, and planned expenditure in 1989-90 and 1990-91 £537 million and £557 million respectively. Gross capital expenditure on housing at 1987-88 prices was £691 million in 1978-79 and £833 million in 1988-89, and is planned to be £818 million and £766 million in 1989-90 and 1990-91. None of these figures includes housing benefit expenditure.

Scottish Trades Union Congress (Health Matters)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the date of all communications received by him from the Scottish Trades Union Congress on health matters since September 1988 and the date of his reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is as follows:

Date of communication	*Date of reply*
7 September 1988	8 February 1989
6 January 1989	26 January 1989
20 January 1989	31 January 1989

A further letter from the Scottish Trades Union Congress dated 3 February was also received by me on 6 February.

Cervical/Cytology

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board for each of the last three years the number of cervical smears carried out.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not currently available in the form requested, but arrangements are under way to collect it on a health board basis.

Glasgow Royal Infirmary

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he has any information from Greater Glasgow health board on the starting date for the improvement work to the accident and emergency department of Glasgow royal infirmary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The main part of the programme to upgrade accident and emergency services at Glasgow royal infirmary started on site in October 1988 with an expected date of completion of April 1990. However, to allow that work to start, other linked schemes were put in hand in November 1987 so that part of the accident and emergency workload could be dealt with elsewhere.

Pharmacists

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the establishment level of hospital pharmacists for each health board in Scotland, and the actual number of pharmacists employed in each board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following table gives the information as at 31 December 1987:

Health board	*Establishment level (Whole time equivalents)*	*Staff in post (Whole time equivalents)*
Argyll and Clyde	26	25
Ayrshire and Arran	25	24·3
Borders	6	7
Dumfries and Galloway	8·3	7·3
Fife	20	19
Forth Valley	17·3	17·3
Grampian[1]	35	32
Greater Glasgow	133·9	122·9
Highland	14·8	14·8
Lanarkshire	30·7	28·7
Lothian	83·7	79·7
Tayside	47·3	46·7
Western Isles	2	2

[1]Grampian health board provides also hospital pharmaceutical services for Orkney and Shetland health boards.

Blood Products

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many units of blood products were supplied to *(a)* commercial medical establishments and *(b)* other private hospitals by the Scottish blood transfusion service in each year since 1982, what was the cost of these supplies in each year, and what was the revenue income in each year from such sales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	Supplied to the private sector Units of whole blood and platelet depleted blood	Units of red cell concentrates	Revenue received (£)
1983	650	830	Nil
1984	560	1,600	1,915
1985	730	2,300	27,287
1986	494	2,509	34,032
1987	385	2,755	45,380
1988	286	3,384	54,557

Notes:

1. Other blood products are occasionally supplied, in small quantities, to the private sector.
2. Receipts relate to all blood and blood products supplied.
3. Receipts will not necessarily be brought to account in the year of supply.

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to announce the review of handling charges for blood, blood products and plasma units to private medical establishments by the blood transfusion service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department received the preliminary results of the review on 31 January 1989. I shall write to the hon. Member once a decision has been taken.

Water Orders

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average length of time taken by his Department to deal with an application for approval of a water order; when the initial draft of the water order for Allt Bail'un Tuim, Bhuidhe in Glenmoriston was submitted to the Scottish Office by Highland regional council; when he expects to be able to give approval; and if he will make a statement on the length of time taken to process this water order.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average time from submission of a preliminary draft to making a water order is about 20 months. The initial draft of the Allt Bail'un Tuim Bhuidhe water order was submitted on 22 July 1987. Engineering appraisal and consultation within the Scottish Office was followed by several rounds of correspondence with the council. Statutory procedures, including an advertising stage which allows for objections to the Secretary of State, have still to be completed and I cannot say when the order will be made. The time taken to deal with this order reflects the degree of consultation and consideration required, and is not unusual. The procedures are designed to safeguard the rights of all parties who may be affected.

Deaf People (Services)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many qualified social workers with specialist training for work with people who are deaf are currently employed in Scotland by *(a)* social work departments, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* other bodies; how many have completed training in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally. Qualifying training "is designed to import the basic knowledge and skills required for social work generally". There is at present no formal specialist training course for those wishing to work exclusively or primarily with deaf people. However the Open university, with financial support from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health, is developing a course which will be available to social work staff throughout the United Kingdom who wish to specialise in this area.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many interpreters for the deaf are employed by public bodies in Scotland; how many have been trained in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comprehensive information of the kind requested is not held centrally. I understand that there are 15 interpreters on a register maintained by the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters, which also undertakes their training. The latest information on trainees is as follows:

	Number
1983	2
1984	1
1985	3
1986	—
1987	1

In 1988-89 grant of £18,580 will be paid to the association towards training and running costs generally.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of sessions contributed by the 127 honorary consultants in Greater Glasgow health board hospitals and clinics; on what basis remuneration is calculated; and what the total remuneration is expected to be in the current financial year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 726 sessions. Honorary consultants remain employees of their parent authority and their honorary contracts with the health board are unpaid appointments. The cost of any distinction awards for which they are eligible is however reimbursed to the parent authority by the National Health Service. Greater Glasgow health board spent £1·5 million on reimbursement between 1 February 1988 and 1 February 1989.

NHS (Market Research)

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many market research studies of the National Health Service have been commissioned since 1979; which companies undertook them; what the remit was in each case; and what the budget was in each case.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The only market research study undertaken nationally has been the survey recently carried out by Research Surveys of Great Britain Ltd. at a cost of £105,000 plus VAT. The study was designed to investigate consumers' experience of and attitudes to the National Health Service, and to discover whether, and if so how, the public wish the service to change.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which company or body is conducting the present market research study of the National Health Service in Scotland; and whether the sample size is drawn from the general public or from within the National Health Service itself.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The company which conducted the study is Research Surveys of Great Britain Ltd. The sample was designed to include in-patients, out-patients, GP patients and the general public.

Southern General Hospital

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints have been received from patients or other members of the public about the accident and emergency unit at the Southern general hospital in each of the past five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of complaints received by the board is as follows:

Year	*Number of complaints*
1984	4
1985	5
1986	8
1987	5
1988	5

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of the number of jobs attributable to forestry in each of the regions of the United Kingdom.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in that form.

HEALTH

Irradiated Rodent Corpses

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what methods have been used for the disposal of irradiated rodent carcases used in radiation experimental work by the Medical Research Council and hospitals involved in medical radiation research.

Mr. Freeman: The disposal of irradiated rodent carcases used in radiation experimental work are subject to authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. The disposal routes for such carcases would be

(1) incineration and landfill; or
(2) landfill disposal; or
(3) maceration and sweage disposal.

The route chosen would depend on the level of radioactivity and whether full pathological control is necessary.

National Health Service Costs

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what 3 per cent. of the Thames regions' budgets represents in cash terms for the current year.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

3 per cent. of 1988-89 revenue allocations

	£ million
North West Thames	28·0
North East Thames	34·6
South East Thames	30·3
South West Thames	24·5

The figures include cash limit adjustments made up to 6 February 1989. They exclude transfers between revenue and capital.

Leighton Hospital, Crewe

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his undertaking in the *Official Report*, 17 January, column 316, when he intends to provide a detailed reply to the speech of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich in her Adjournment debate.

Mr. Freeman: I wrote to the hon. Lady on 8 February.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what considerations he has given to the implications for the ambulance service of the establishment of National Health Service hospital trusts and the creation of a national internal market for health services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The review proposals including the establishment of NHS hospital trusts will not affect the ambulance service's responsibility for transporting free of charge patients whom a clinician has determined are medically unfit to travel by other means.

General Practitioners

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds he proposes to make available to the successor bodies to family practitioner committees to provide for adequate monitoring of the effect on general practitioners working in sole practices of his proposals to relate a higher proportion of general practitioners' income to list sizes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As stated in paragraph 13.3 of "Working for Patients" (Cm 555), the costs of implementing reforms will be considered as part of the annual public expenditure surveys. However, changes to the general practitioners' contract to place more emphasis on capitation will not discriminate between single practices, group practices and partnerships and I see no need for the monitoring proposed.

Services for Deaf People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many qualified workers with specialist training for work with people who are deaf are currently employed in England by *(a)* social services departments, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* other bodies; how many have completed training in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold information centrally on the nature of the work carried out by particular social workers. The two post-qualifying training courses for social workers with deaf people in London and Edinburgh closed in 1984 and there is at present no formal training course. However, the Department is currently providing substantial financial support towards the development of a distance learning course to be run by the Open university from 1991.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many interpreters for the deaf are employed

by public bodies in England; how many have been trained in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold information centrally on the numbers of interpreters for the deaf employed by public bodies or the number trained. However, we continue to give financial support to the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People. The council arranges training courses in communication with deaf people and maintains a register of interpreters. We are also in touch with the panel of four main voluntary organisations in the deafness field about future interpreting needs.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for the latest year for which figures are available, the total number of tranquillisers of all varieties which were prescribed to National Health Service patients and the percentage that these drugs represented of all drugs prescribed to National Health Service patients, together with the total value of these tranquillisers and as a percentage of the total cost of National Health Service drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In England in 1987 the number of prescriptions for tranquillisers, sedatives and hypnotics dispensed by community pharmacists was 24·3 million or 7·4 per cent. of all prescriptions for drugs dispensed by them. The net ingredient cost of tranquillisers, sedatives and hypnotics was £32·5 million or 2·2 per cent. of the net ingredient cost for all drugs dispensed by community pharmacists.

Hospitals (Management)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will outline his proposals for how the procedures by which individual hospitals will become independent management units will be initiated, and by whom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The White Paper "Working for Patients" (Cm. 555) explains that it will be open to a variety of interests either to initiate an application to establish an NHS hospital trust or to respond to an initiative taken by the Secretary of State. I will shortly issue a working paper giving further information about the plans for NHS hospital trusts.

Regrading

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many, and what proportions of, nursing, midwifery and health visiting staff from each of the old grades have been assimilated in new grades as at the latest date for which figures are available in the Worthing health authority and the Chichester health authority; and what comparable figures he has in regional health authorities in England.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The only information available relates to the initial regrading on the basis of duties and responsibilities on 1 April 1988. Tables showing the numbers of nursing and midwifery staff assimilated from each of the old grades to each of the new grades, by district and by region, are in the Library. The information requested on the proportions of staff is now ready and has been placed in the Library also.

Aplastic Anaemia

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many people were recorded as suffering from aplastic anaemia in 1988 and in each of the last five years;

(2) if he will list by year for the last five years, by district health authority the number of cases of aplastic anaemia that have been reported; how many of these cases were fatal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 January 1989]:* The available information is given in the tables. Figures by district health authority are not available centrally.

Number of deaths registered in England and Wales with aplastic anaemia as underlying cause (ICD 284[1]), by regional health authority of usual residence, 1981-1987

Area of usual residence	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*[2]1986*	*[2,3]1987*
Northern	29	20	13	21	32	21	18
Yorkshire	21	16	15	31	19	17	20
Trent	28	16	17	29	20	19	21
East Anglia	9	15	8	9	15	9	12
North West Thames	12	14	12	13	14	14	10
North East Thames	29	25	28	33	14	17	19
South East Thames	20	18	16	11	22	16	16
South West Thames	7	11	13	18	12	12	13
Wessex	18	16	11	13	12	17	16
Oxford	10	8	10	9	14	13	14
South Western	22	21	26	21	19	26	7
West Midlands	29	29	19	23	27	33	21
Mersey	16	18	8	7	17	12	12
North Western	22	19	22	16	20	18	12
Wales	32	19	9	11	18	12	20
Outside England and Wales	5	3	1	8	4	6	6
Total	309	268	228	273	279	262	237

[1] International Classification of Diseases: 9th revision.
[2] At age 28 days and over.
[3] 1987 figures at the latest available.
In cases where aplastic anaemia was assigned originally as the underlying cause of death, but where further information is received about drug treatment (including adverse reactions), or about the conditions for which that treatment was given, the final underlying cause will be assigned to those other causes.

Estimated Number of In-Patients with Main Diagnosis of Aplastic Anaemia Discharged from NHS Non-Psychiatric Hospitals, By Region of Treatment, England 1981-1985

	1985	1984	1983	1982	1981
	ECD Digit-84 Diagnosis-Aplastic Anaemia				
Northern	300	260	(170)	(190)	240
Yorkshire	260	280	(140)	250	210
Trent	260	350	230	(190)	(160)
East Anglia	(110)	(150)	(110)	(120)	(130)
North West Thames	(170)	210	210	(120)	210
North East Thames	250	320	260	230	(190)
South East Thames	330	240	220	390	280
South West Thames	(110)	230	(90)	(80)	(80)
Wessex	(170)	(140)	(120)	(140)	(150)
Oxford	(90)	(150)	(160)	(50)	(80)
South Western	(140)	(110)	200	210	250
West Midlands	310	360	260	270	250
Mersey	(80)	(180)	(120)	(110)	(150)
North Western	210	310	(170)	260	(150)
SHA's	(30)	0	(30)	(60)	(10)
England	2,820	3,290	2,490	2,670	2,540

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE)
ICD—International Classification of Diseases—9th Revision
Figures in Brackets should be treated with caution as they are based on small sample numbers.

Cook-Chill Food

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if the production of cook-chill food to be carried out in Wakefield health authority's central production unit will be subject to the requirements of regulation 27 of the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations;

(2) if the various elements of the production of cook-chill food which are to be carried out away from Wakefield health authority's central production unit are subject to regulation 27 of the Food Hygiene (General) Regulations.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* Regulation 27 is a legal requirement only where food is for immediate consumption. However, my Department's guidelines for all cook-chill catering in the NHS require temperatures that fall well within those specified under regulation 27 and we expect NHS health authority management to meet these requirements.

DEFENCE

Soviet Union (Defence Cuts)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he proposes to make to the recent defence cutbacks made by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart), for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), and for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), and to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) on 7 February.

NATO

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards the modernisation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's short-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on 29 November 1988 at column *567*.

Nevada Test Site

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the financial cost attributed to the annual defence budget and paid to the United States Government to implement environmental clean-up at the Nevada test site following the testing of United Kingdom nuclear warheads at the site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the continuing absence of escapes of radioactivity from these underground tests, no such costs arise.

Potton Island, Essex

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of the clean-up of Potton island in Essex following the nuclear materials testing programme in the 1950s; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: No firings have been carried out on Potton island at any time which involved radioactive materials. There is an ongoing decontamination exercise on Potton island to ensure that the area is clear of conventional munitions and explosives, and, although the final sum will not be known until the end of the exercise, the cost of the initial decontamination was some £40,000.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many undergraduates from universities and other institutions of higher education are employed during the summer vacation at atomic weapons establishment sites.

Mr. Sainsbury: About 50 such students are employed at AWE, mostly at Aldermaston, during their summer vacation.

COMECON (Travel)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many occasions since 1979 permission for

emigration to, or travel within, the Soviet Union or other COMECON countries has been denied to applicants formerly employed at the atomic weapons research establishments;

(2) on how many occasions since 1979 permission for emigration to, or travel within, the Soviet Union or other COMECON eastern bloc countries has been denied to applicants formerly employed at the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 26 January 1989 at column *704*.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consideration he has given to the implications for the defence of the United Kingdom arising out of the construction of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he proposes to take any measures to protect the Channel tunnel against enemy action in time of war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The implications for the defence of the United Kingdom arising from the construction of the Channel fixed link, and the defence of the Channel fixed link itself, are under consideration as part of normal defence planning.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the implication for the discharge of the United Kingdom's obligation to NATO arising out of the construction of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on 12 January 1989 at columns *724-25*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Deaf People (Court Interpreters)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Attorney-General how many interpreters for the deaf are employed by the court services; if he is satisfied with the availability of interpreters for deaf people in contact with the courts; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In the Crown court and in civil proceedings it is the responsibility of the party to the proceedings requiring the services of an interpreter, either for himself or for a witness, to make the necessary arrangements to secure their attendance at any conference with legal advisers or at court. Some Crown court centres maintain a register of interpreters although they are under no obligation to do so. Such registers are compiled from lists supplied by the police and a court will make the list available if requested to do so. I know of no difficulties arising in the courts for which the Lord Chancellor is administratively responsible as a result of the present arrangements.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Handicapped Children

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to give the parents of handicapped children the same rights as those of able-bodied children to choose to which schools they wish to send their children.

Mr. Butcher: Parents of handicapped children without statements of special educational needs under the Education Act 1981 already have the same choice of school rights as other parents. For those children with statements, local education authorities are required to seek medical, educational and psychological advice, and any other advice considered necessary, including parental views. My right hon. Friend believes that the most suitable school placements for children with statements should continue to be based on that advice.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy in relation to making adjustments to the volume of block grants to universities to reflect any significant changes to the taxation liabilities of universities;

(2) whether the present vote provision for 1989-90 in respect of grants to universities was calculated to take account of changes in value added tax regulations now proposed to take effect in that year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The provision for universities for 1989-90 announced in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 612) includes a compensating adjustment in respect of the impact on universities of the introduction of VAT on new construction from 1 April 1989. Changes in taxation arrangements do not automatically lead to changes in public funding; they will be taken into account as appropriate in reaching decisions on the level of provision for universities, which are not deficit funded.

VAT

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from individuals or bodies concerned with education on the subject of proposed changes to value added tax zero rating of supplies to non-domestic consumers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A small number of representations have been received about the changes which are to be introduced from 1 July 1990. School and student boarding accommodation will be regarded as domestic use and will continue to be zero rated for supplies of fuel and power.

Southwark Director of Education

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on which dates since 1 January 1988 he has met the director of education of the Southwark diocese; at which of these meetings city technology colleges in the Southwark diocese have been discussed; at which of these meetings the future of the sites reserved for education by the London Docklands

development corporation in Surrey docks, London SE16, has been discussed; and on which of these dates the future of Bacon's school, London SE1 and London SE16, has been discussed.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has had three meetings with the director of education of the Southwark diocese since 1 January 1988. At meetings on 29 September, 6 December and 12 January 1989, there was some discussion of options for the future of Bacon's school, whether on its present site or on a relocated site in the Surrey docks. Should the diocesan board of Education and the governors of the school wish to see the existing school closed to make way for a city technology college, the governors would need the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under section 14 of the 1944 Education Act.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to her reply, 3 February 1989, c. 409]:* I regret that part of the information given to the hon. Member was incorrect.

This Department's specific contribution to the European University Institute in 1987-88 was £1,232,000.

PRIME MINISTER

Non-ministerial Appointments

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list, and give details of remuneration for, all those non-ministerial appointments which are in her gift as Prime Minister and to which a salary per annum is attached of more than *(a)* £10,000, *(b)* £20,000, *(c)* £30,000, *(d)* £40,000, *(e)* £50,000, *(f)* £60,000, *(g)* £70,000, *(h)* £80,000, *(i)* £90,000, *(j)* £100,000, *(k)* £110,000 and *(l)* £120,000.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the replies that I gave to the right hon. Member on 31 January 1988 at column *149* and 2 February 1989 at column *425*.

ENERGY

Research Projects

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the scope and the level of funding for research projects commissioned by his Department from groups led by Messrs. Lawrence Draper and Malcolm Tucker; and what work Messrs. Draper and Tucker are currently doing for his Department.

Mr. Peter Morrison: In the period from 1977 to date my Department has commissioned research at the Institute of Oceanographic Sciencies (IOS) involving Messrs. Lawrence Draper and Malcolm Tucker on the measurement and analysis of wave climate in United Kingdom waters and the kinetics of waves. The level of funding for this work is in excess of £2 million.

Mr. Malcolm Tucker, who retired from IOS in 1986, is currently retained as a consultant by my Department to provide expert advice on environmental data. Mr. Lawrence Draper is currently associated with three IOS projects funded by my Department covering wave climate measurements around the United Kingdom, guidance on oceanographic design parameters and provision of expert advice on oceanography.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his assessment of the importance of the data on wave climate collected by Messrs. Lawrence Draper and Malcolm Tucker of the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences to the development of oil and gas reserves in the North Sea;

(2) if he will give an estimate of the value, in terms of lives saved, oil and gas production and economic benefit, of the availability of wave data prior to the exploitation of Britain's offshore oil and gas reserves.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department—advised on safety research and development by technology boards with members from the oil industry, the certifying authorities and the academic world—has identified specific projects relating to wave data which have contributed to the safe and economic design of offshore structures.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many contracts British Nuclear Fuels plc has signed with foreign customers for the storage and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel since 1973; and if he will seek the permission of the British Nuclear Fuels plc chairman to publish the value of each of these respective contracts in pounds sterling at 1989 values.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that British Nuclear Fuels plc has signed 34 contracts with foreign customers for the storage and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel since the beginning of 1973. The financial terms of these contracts are commercially confidential.

Wind Energy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the maximum contribution to be made by wind energy as a percentage of United Kingdom electricity production in the year 2000.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is great uncertainty about projections for developing technologies such as renewable sources of energy. By the year 2025, wind energy might provide up to 30 TWh per year of electricity, which represents about 10 per cent. of current electricity requirements.

We have not made any estimates for the year 2000, but would expect commercial exploitation of wind energy to commence in the mid-1990s if the present assessment phase of our renewable energy programme is successful.

Sizewell

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he plans to announce the opening date and name of the inspector for the Sizewell C public inquiry into the Central Electricity Generating Board planning application for a new pressurised water reactor at its Sizewell nuclear site;

(2) if it will be the responsibility of National Power to cover the costs of the Sizewell C planning inquiry, including the fee for the inspector and the publication cost of daily transcripts and support documentation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB announced on 31 January its intention to submit an application to my right hon. Friend for his consent to construct a pressurised water reactor nuclear power station at Sizewell in Suffolk. Before the application has been made and advertised and the response to it is known, it is too early to speculate about a public inquiry.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on British Nuclear Fuel's proposals to build new nuclear power stations at Chapelcross, Sellafield and Calder Hall.

Mr. Michael Spicer: British Nuclear Fuels plc has announced that it is to mount a feasibility study to look at several options for the construction of new nuclear power stations which might eventually replace the Magnox stations which it operates at Calder Hall and Chapelcross. BNFL has made no other commitment at present. I understand that the company's study will take about 18 months to complete.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what emergency planning arrangements are in force for the evacuation of members of the public in the event of an accident involving the spent nuclear fuel cooling ponds at Berkeley, Oldbury, and Hinkley nuclear plants.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Contingency plans, including evacuation plans for members of the public, exist at the Berkeley, Oldbury and Hinkley nuclear plants, in common with all licensed nuclear sites to deal with any accident involving an off-site release of radioactivity.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy, when considering the issue of transport licences for the export of plutonium, on examining the end-use requirements of the country or countries for which the plutonium is intended, to ascertain if there are genuine commercial needs for the material.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to export licences. These are not issued unless the Government are satisfied that among other things the end use will be as stated in the application.

All exports of nuclear materials are made within the guidelines set out in the statement by the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Callaghan, on 31 March 1976 at columns *514-16*.

Contracts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all his Department's contracts with *(a)* Zeus and *(b)* Securipol Limited since 1979; and if he will give the purpose of each contract.

Mr. Parkinson: None.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industry Act 1975

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether section 13 of the Industry Act 1975 will require repeal or amendment when the Single European Act takes effect in 1992.

Mr. Maude: No.

Key Guns

Mr. George: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will ban he importation of key guns that can unlock doors and cars and are being used for criminal purposes.

Mr. Alan Clark: It would be very difficult to prohibit the import of key guns without similar restrictions on the domestic manufacture and sale of such devices. Following expressions of concern the Home Office is consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers about the effectiveness and availability of such devices in the United Kingdom and to establish what problems they present. We will consider this issue further in the light of the findings of this report.

Telephone Monitoring

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will call for a report from the Director General of Oftel on how many occasions British Telecom engineers have monitored telephone conversations on domestic telephone lines within the Wakefield district in the last year for which figures are available;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Director of Oftel on how many occasions British Telecom engineers have monitored private conversations on domestic telephone lines, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Atkins: No, but I shall draw the hon. Member's concern to the attention of the Director General of Telecommunications. He already has powers to look into such matters.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what non-statutory safeguards are available for British Telecom customers, in the event that their private and personal conversations are monitored by employees of British Telecom.

Mr. Atkins: Safeguards in addition to the existing statutory safeguards are a matter for the operator in the first instance. The Director General of Telecommunications already keeps the sufficiency of the safeguards under review.

Supermarkets (Charging Practices)

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of recent court cases, he will seek to amend the law relating to the charging practices of supermarkets and to increase the maximum levels of fines available to the courts.

Mr. Forth: No. The effectiveness of part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 in controlling misleading price indications will need to be assessed as experience of its operation develops after 1 March before consideration can be given to further measures.

North East Shipbuilders

Mr. Curry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what expenditure is expected in 1988-89 on the remedial measures announced on 7 December 1988 following the closure of North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

Mr. Newton: It is estimated that £358,000 will be spent by the end of March this year, primarily on counselling and training; £106,000 will be spent by the Department of Employment on counselling, and a further £251,000 will be spent by British Shipbuilders. Parliamentary approval for the £251,000 will be sought through the introduction of a new subhead on class V vote 4 in a Supplementary Supply Estimate to cover the new service. Pending that approval urgent expenditure estimated at the full £251,000 will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Ford Motor Company

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the estimated cost to the balance of payments of the trading methods of the Ford Motor Company whereby most of its vehicles are assembled outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* To estimate the impact on the balance of payments of the Ford Motor Company's overall investment and sales policies would be highly complex.

As a long-established multinational, the company imports and exports components as well as assembled vehicles and has major investments in this country. The value of such an estimate would be subject to so many variables as to rob it of any tangible significance.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from the EEC Commission about the limit to foreign shareholdings in Rolls-Royce plc; and what parts of the treaty of Rome have been quoted by the Commission in relation to such representations.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* Discussions with the Commission are continuing. The Government consider that the limit on foreign shareholdings is justified by article 223 of the European Community treaty which allows a member state to take such measures as it considers necessary for the protection of the essential interests of its security.

WALES

Higher Education

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many 18-year-old students have progressed into higher education in each of the last three academic years giving figures in numerical and percentage terms and for each standard planning region.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

18-year-old students[1] from Welsh schools intending to proceed into higher education[2]

	Number ('000)	*Percentage of all [1]18-year-old leavers*
1984-85	3·5	45·0
1985-86	3·7	48·9
1986-87	3·4	45·5

[1] Aged 17 at 31 August i.e. the beginning of the academic year.
[2] Degree courses, teacher training courses and HNC/HND courses.

Consultants

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many consultants at present hold a contract with the National Health Service in Wales; and in what disciplines the six new appointments during the next three years will be made.

Mr. Grist: The number of consultants who held a contract with the National Health Service in Wales on 30 September 1987 was 864, compared with 696 in 1978.

No decision has yet been taken on where and in which specialties the posts will be created, but they will be targeted to achieve maximum benefit, including the need to reduce waiting lists.

General Practices

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list the location of the 30 practices in Wales with more than 11,000 patients.

Mr. Grist: At February 1988 there were 36 practices in Wales with more than 11,000 patients. The location of the main surgery of these practices was as follows:

Location	*Number of practices*
Rhyl, Clwyd	1
Wrexham, Clwyd	3
Old Colwyn, Clwyd	1
Prestatyn, Clwyd	1
Mold, Clwyd	1
Gresford, Clwyd	1
Carmarthen, Dyfed	1
Haverfordwest, Dyfed	1
Pontllanfraith, Gwent	1
Caldicot, Gwent	1
Monmouth, Gwent	1
Newport, Gwent	3
Amlwch, Gwynedd	1
Llandudno, Gwynedd	1
Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan	2
Church Village, Mid Glamorgan	1
Pontypridd, Mid Glamorgan	2
Dowlais, Mid Glamorgan	1
Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan	1
Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan	1
Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan	1
Ystrad Mynach, Mid Glamorgan	1
Brecon, Powys	1
Newtown, Powys	1
Cardiff, South Glamorgan	2
Barry, South Glamorgan	1
Gowerton, West Glamorgan	1
Swansea, West Glamorgan	1
Mumbles, West Glamorgan	1

Water Pollution

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what evidence he has of leaks of polychlorinated biphenyls from Rechem International (Pontypool) into the sewage system operated by Welsh Water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: None. The Welsh water authority has the responsibility, under the Public Health (Drainage of Trade Premises) Act 1937 for consenting to discharges of trade effluent to public sewers. Furthermore, the authority monitors such discharges and is responsible for ensuring compliance with the quality conditions in each consent.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the Welsh water authority the number of pollution incidents and the number of sewage works which breached their discharge consents in 1987-88.

Mr. Grist: Welsh water authority area figures are available for calendar years. In 1987 (the latest year for which figures are available) recorded pollution incidents totalled 2,489 and 108 sewage treatment works breached their consent conditions.

Services for Deaf People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many qualified social workers with specialist training for work with people who are deaf are currently employed in Wales by *(a)* social service departments, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* other bodies; how many have completed training in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many interpreters for the deaf are employed by public bodies in Wales; how many have been trained in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This information is not held centrally. The Department is, however, currently funding a Wales Council for the Deaf project to increase the number of people with advanced qualifications in sign language. The training involved conforms to nationally accepted Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People standards.

Rates

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the estimated national domestic rate for Wales had the system to be introduced in 1990 been in operation in the current financial year, together with the current business in each Welsh district.

Mr. Grist: In 1990, domestic rates will be replaced by the community charge and there will be no national domestic rate. 1988-89, non-domestic rate poundages in each Welsh district are listed in the following table:

	Non-domestic rate poundage 1988-89 Pence
Alyn and Deeside	245·4
Colwyn	258·1
Delyn	245·4
Glyndwr	250·7
Rhuddlan	245·9
Wrexham Maelor	252·2
Carmarthen	255·2
Ceredigion	248·3
Dinefwr	248·4
Llanelli	270·9
Preseli Pembrokeshire	245·3
South Pembrokeshire	251·6
Blaenau Gwent	258·4
Islwyn	251·5
Monmouth	254·4
Newport	250·5
Torfaen	260·1
Aberconwy	256·8
Arfon	249·9
Dwyfor	253·3
Meirionnydd	247·3
Ynys Môn	246·3
Cynon Valley	265·2
Merthyr Tydfil	273·3
Ogwr	279·1
Rhondda	277·0
Rhymney Valley	277·4
Taff Ely	273·9
Brecknock	244·0
Montgomeryshire	224·2
Radnor	231·9
Cardiff	225·6
Vale of Glamorgan	232·0
Port Talbot	302·3
Lliw Valley	304·3
Neath	306·4
Swansea	313·9
Wales average	257·6

Winvest

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many inquiries Winvest has received regarding Clwyd for each of the last six months.

Mr. Peter Walker: Winvest receives many inquiries from companies interested in investing in Wales, only some of which are related to particular areas of Wales.

All of these inquiries are acted upon and many of them have been appropriate to Clwyd. There is therefore no need to keep a statistical record on a county basis.

TRANSPORT

Motorists (Eyesight)

Mr. Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consultations he has had with, or what representations he has received from, organisations concerned with the eyesight standards of motorists; and if he will institute discussions with professional bodies and with the British Insurance Association to encourage drivers to have regular eyesight tests and to remind drivers of their legal obligations;

(2) what information he has about semi-official surveys, including surveys undertaken by police authorities, into the question of eyesight standards of motorists;

(3) what investigations have been undertaken by his Department into the question of eyesight tests for motorists and with particular reference to injury or

damage accidents to which poor eyesight might have contributed; and what is his estimate of the cost of undertaking such a survey.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received strong support for the present eyesight test and standard from the College of Ophthalmologists (formerly the Faculty of Ophthalmologists at the Royal College of Surgeons).

Research by the transport and road research laboratory, reported in 1986 as "A Re-analysis of California Driver Vision Data", found that once age and other variables had been taken into account, there was no detectable relationship between the propensity to have accidents and any of the large number of visual tests employed. This confirmed earlier work at TRRL and other work carried out overseas over a period of some decades which has in no case found any important relationship between accidents and any measure of visual acuity.

The cost of repeating the work would be in excess of £200,000. We are considering whether other work is now required to provide additional information about drivers over the age of 70.

I have placed a copy of the report in the Library of the House. I have also placed there a copy of a paper entitled "Vision and Driving" prepared by the Department's medical adviser, together with another piece of work—"A Survey of Visual Acuity of Drivers"—carried out by the Motor Industry Research Association for the TRRL.

There have been calls from various organisations, including the police, calling for higher standards of eyesight for drivers and for compulsory regular testing.

We have periodic discussions with the Association of British Insurers about medical factors affecting fitness to drive, including eyesight standards and the need to encourage regular checks.

We are aware of one or two police forces carrying out eyesight surveys using binocular screening devices.

Barnstaple Downstream Bridge

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any representations asking him to approve the financial implications of the Devon county council plans for the construction of the Barnstaple down-stream bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has received a large number of representations urging reconsideration of the county council's capital allocation for roads in 1989-90. Most of these representations express concern over the future of the Barnstaple down-stream bridge. This bridge is included in Devon's transport policies and programme for a start of construction in 1995.

Central London Rail Study

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the response of the business community to the options advanced in the central London rail study.

Mr. Portillo: I have not yet had a reaction from business interests: the report was published less than a fortnight ago.

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he plans to have with user groups and local transport groups about the options put forward in the central London rail study.

Mr. Portillo: I intend to consider the written representations received before arranging discussions with interested parties.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the main components required by the major upgrading programme of Network SouthEast and London Underground Ltd., proposed by the central London rail study.

Mr. Portillo: It is for the operators to appraise the individual components of the proposed major upgrading programme and bring forward proposals accordingly.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The expected cost of subscriptions for international organisations on which the Department is represented for the financial year 1988-89 is as follows:

	£ thousands
International Civil Aviation Organisation	1,075
International Maritime Organisation	420
Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development	
European Conference of Ministers of Transport	224
Road Research	36
Central Rhine Commission	102
International Railway Convention	80
International Railway Congress Association	1
Permanent International Association of Navigational Congress	3
International Drivers' Behaviour Research Association	3
Permanent International Association of Road Congress	3
International Union of Public Transport	1
European Concrete Committee	3
	1,951

Ministers' and officials' travelling and subsistence expenses cost a further £43,000.

The organisation Eurocontrol has not been included as it is self-financing. During 1988-89 the subscription was £7·1 million and the receipts received £10 million. There is an income equalisation provision designed to ensure that any shortfall or excess in receipts is recovered or refunded over a period of two years.

King's Cross (Fire)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many members of the public have written to him on the subject of the fire at King's Cross; and how many letters he has replied to directly.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend has received just over 200 letters from members of the public about the King's Cross fire and related matters which have received replies on his behalf from officials as is customary.

Roads (Construction and Maintenance)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the reasons for the difference in the anticipated expenditure on new road construction and structural maintenance in 1988-89, as set out in table 8:14

of chapter 8 of Cm. 608, and the figures set out in table 1 of national roads expenditure of the Department of Transport's evidence to the Select Committee on Transport on 7 December 1988.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The figures set out in table 1, national roads expenditure, of the Department of Transport's evidence to the Select Committee on Transport show the expenditure originally planned for 1988-89 after allowing for receipts from the EC, £20 million made available from the Reserve and announced in the Autumn Statement and a reduction of £1·6 million in respect of the overspend on the national roads vote in 1987-88. The expenditure shown in table 8:14 of chapter 8 of Cm. 608 is the estimate of the outturn for the year made at end September 1988. The final outturn may differ somewhat.

Bridge Heights

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norwood given on 25 January, *Official Report*, column *571*, why bridge heights are not shown in imperial and metric measures when the facility to do so is available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department of Transport provides metric height signs on trunk roads which are used extensively by foreign lorries and where the bridge height is less than 4 m. Local highway authorities are advised to do the same on their roads.

We shall be encouraging the general use of metric signs in addition to imperial units as part of a series of measures we are introducing to reduce the incidence of bridge bashing.

M2 and A2 (Traffic Counts)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the last detailed counts of traffic were taken on the M2 and A2 roads between London and Dover; what were the results of such counts; and whether he will undertake new counts in the current year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Detailed counts were taken in 1988 at one location on the M2 and at four on the A2. The results are being assembled and I will send a summary to my hon. Friend.

Further counts are planned for 1989.

London to Dover Journey Times

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals his Department is currently considering to improve journey times to the port of Dover from central London; and how much money he will make available to improve the road and rail routes to the port of Dover over the next 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The national trunk road programme includes the following schemes, valued at about £150 million (November 1985 prices):

M2 Widening between Junctions 1 to 3
M20 Widening between Junctions 5 to 8 (Maidstone bypass)
M20 Maidstone to Ashford (under construction)
A20 Folkestone to Court Wood
A20 Court Wood to Dover

The programme is currently under review.

It is for British Rail to bring forward proposals for rail investment.

Dial-a-Ride

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made towards providing each member of dial-a-ride with at least one trip a week.

Mr. Portillo: I have just announced a £1 million increase in grant to London dial-a-rides for 1989-90. That is the fourth successive annual increase, amounting to over 70 per cent. since responsibility for funding was taken over from the Greater London council. The additional funds will enable the provision of more vehicles, more drivers and other improvements aimed at providing more trips and a better service for users. Precisely how many trips are generated depends on how efficiently the dial-a-ride local management committees use the resources which have been made available.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new dial-a-ride buses, excluding replacements, have been provided during the last year; and how many extra trips they have completed.

Mr. Portillo: London dial-a-ride services are run by local voluntary management committees, funded by grant which is allocated by London Regional Transport. Details of vehicles provided, and the use to which they are put, are matters for them and London Regional Transport.

London Regional Transport (Assaults)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many physical assaults have taken place on bus drivers and bus conductors working for London Regional Transport in the last 12 months, and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Portillo: There were 823 reported assaults on drivers and conductors of London Buses Ltd. in 1988 compared with 1,358 in 1985, 1,109 in 1986 and 880 in 1987.

Pelican Crossings

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the manufacturers of bleeping pelican crossings to ensure that any malfunction is eliminated; and if he will now consider approving the speaking pelican crossing as a suitable replacement for defective existing equipment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has discussed the safety requirements for audible signals at pelican crossings with the appropriate manufacturers. These requirements include that the failure of all safety interlocks should not cause the audible signal to sound except when a red signal is displayed to traffic.

The method of actuating both a "speaking" pelican crossing and the audible devices on existing pelican crossings is the same. In this respect neither is safer than the other. We have decided against approving "speaking" pelican crossings for other reasons.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what tests were carried out prior to his

Department approving bleeping pelican crossings; and what was the rate of malfunctions detected during such tests.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Comprehensive functional tests were carried out on the equipment prior both to its approval and to its initial introduction in 1977. No malfunctions were observed.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to alert the public to the risks of malfunction of bleeping pelican crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local authorities have been advised to switch off the audible facility at those crossings with suspect equipment. This action will eliminate any risk from a malfunction.

A press notice has been issued describing the action taken and the reason for it.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of *(a)* deaths, *(b)* serious injuries and *(c)* injuries which have resulted from the malfunctioning of bleeping pelican crossings in each of the past 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total of 37 casualties should be compared with total pedestrian casualties in 1987 of 57,453. Of these 2,170 occurred on pelican crossings, and a further 2,470 occurred within 50 m of such a crossing. More than 7,000 pelican crossings were in operation during 1987.

There are very few recorded cases of pedestrian casualties at malfunctioning pelican crossings. In these cases, we do not know if any of the accidents were caused by the defective crossing, as we do not collect the causes of road accidents.

The following table shows number of pedestrian casualties, by severity and by month, at pelican crossings that were out of order or defective, in 1987, the latest year for which complete figures are available.

Pedestrian casualties on pelican crossings that are out of order/defective: Great Britain: 1987

Month	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
January	0	0	1	1
February	0	1	1	2
March	0	1	0	1
April	0	0	1	1
May	0	0	4	4
June	0	0	1	1
July	0	3	6	9
August	0	2	2	4
September	0	2	3	5
October	0	3	2	5
November	0	0	2	2
December	0	0	2	2
Total	0	12	25	37

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of bleeping pelican crossings which have been disconnected in each of the past 12 months as a result of a serious malfunction; and if he will express this as a proportion of the total in service.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information is not recorded centrally in the form requested. The Department has been notified of one such case in Great Britain in the last 12 months. This represents less than 0·013 per cent. of all pelican crossings currently in service in Great Britain.

About 1,000 (approximately 10 per cent.) of the pelican crossings fitted with similar audible signals have been switched off as a precautionary measure while checks are made and a modification incorporated.

Road Traffic Law

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the review of road traffic law conducted by the North committee.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The North report was published in April 1988.

My right hon. Friend yesterday announced publication of a White Paper "The Road User and the Law" (Cm. 576), which sets out the Government's proposals to reform road traffic law in the light of the North committee's recommendations.

Channel Tunnel

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will define what is encompassed in the phrase "Channel tunnel rail services" in his answer to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) 25 January, *Official Report*, column *571*.

Mr. Portillo: My answer referred to section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, which encompasses all services for the carriage of passengers or goods by way of the Channel tunnel system.

Bus Fares (Merseyside)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has on the level of bus fares on Merseyside since deregulation.

Mr. Portillo: The PTE estimated that the average increase in commercial bus fares occurring after deregulation and following from the introduction of precept control was 55 per cent., as the previous massive subsidies were removed. At the end of 1987 there was a further average increase of 10 per cent.

Traffic Speed in Cities

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he expects to bring forward proposals to increase the average speed of road traffic in major cities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic management and road construction in major cities are largely the responsibility of local highway authorities. They have duties to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic, including pedestrians.

Available measures to increase the average speed of vehicular traffic must be considered within this framework and the scope for additional road capacity.

The effectiveness of the measures depends on good enforcement of traffic and parking regulations by the police and traffic wardens.

Settle-Carlisle Line

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in light of the recent Settle-Carlisle railway business development plan, he will now lift the closure order on the line.

Mr. Portillo: We are still considering all the evidence on British Rail's closure proposal including the business development plan.

British Rail (North West)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the north-west regional managers of British Rail; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend holds regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail on a wide range of matters. He does not hold separate meetings with British Rail's regional managers.

London Underground

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many automatic exit barriers are currently in operation at London Underground stations; and how many are proposed to be installed during the period of London Regional Transport's consultants' study into the safety aspects of these barriers.

Mr. Portillo: I understand from London Underground that as at 2 February 1989, there were 533 gates in use at 49 stations. By the end of April, when the consultants' study is due to be complete, London Underground estimates that a further 118 gates will have been commissioned at a further 12 stations.

Motor Taxation

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total revenue from motor taxation in 1987-88; and what is the estimated revenue in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* The information is as follows:

	Yield (£ billion)	
	1987-88	*1988-89*
Vehicle Excise Duty	2·6	2·8
Fuel Duty	7·8	8·6

Safety Plans

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to encourage and help local authorities to implement low-cost safety engineering schemes and to develop areawide safety plans.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are working closely with the local authority associations to identify problems over implementing low-cost safety engineering schemes and ways of stepping up this important safety work.

We are already developing jointly with the Institution of Highways and Transportation practical guidelines for implementing areawide urban safety projects. Last autumn we increased the economic valuation for fatal road casualties and this will improve the economic rate of return on accident investigation and prevention schemes. The transport and road research laboratory has now completed a full survey of local authorities' arrangements, procedures, and levels of activity on road safety engineering, and a report will be published shortly.

AIP and urban safety schemes are among the most important methods of reducing road casualties. Much expertise already exists at local level and much can be achieved at low cost. It is for local authorities, within their statutory responsibility for road safety, to determine priorities and tackle this work. The Department will continue to give full support and guidance.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Whales

98. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations have been made by him to the Japanese Government about the killing of whales by Japanese fishermen.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Recently we have expressed our serious concerns to the Japanese Government about their current feasibility programme of whaling for scientific purposes both directly and through the relevant forum of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). In December the United Kingdom commissioner to the IWC expressed our views to the chairman of the IWC in a letter circulated to all member Governments including Japan. This made clear our firm view that Japan should not implement her plans until the major concerns about these identified by the scientific committee to the IWC had been addressed and resolved. The letter was passed personally by the United Kingdom commissioner to the Japanese embassy in London with a clear explanation of the United Kingdom Government's concern.

Further, once the period for consideration of the scientific committee's views by commissioners was complete and learning that the programme was to go ahead, I authorised our commissioner to propose a resolution for consideration by the IWC. This was seconded by Australia and New Zealand. If adopted it will put on a formal and international basis the call to Japan to cease its current programme. Our embassy in Tokyo is also in close touch with the Japanese Government. Also, similar concerns expressed by the Falkland Islands Executive Council have been passed to the Japanese embassy.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Those international organisations on which Ministers or officials of my Department are represented are as follows:

The total estimated cost of my Department's commitment to international organisations in 1988 was £283,000.

United Nations (UN)
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)
World Health Organisation (WHO)
Commission of the European Communities
Council of the European Communities
Office Internationale des Epizooties (OIE)
European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation (EPPO)
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
Office Internationale de la Vigne et du Vin (OIV)
Council of Europe (COE)

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)
Intergovernmental Commission for the Channel Tunnel
International Coffee Organisation
International Cocoa Organisation
International Society for Horticultural Service
International Dairy Federation
International Whaling Commission (IWC)
North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)
North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO)
European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC)
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO)
International Maritime Organisation (IMO)
London Dumping Convention
Oslo Commission (OSCOM)
Paris Commission (PARCOM)
Coordinated Research and Environmental Surveillance Panel (CRESP)
International Association for the Physical Sciences of the Ocean (IAPSO)
Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR)
International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)
International Seed Testing Association
International Union of Radioecologists (IUR)
North Sea Task Force (NSTF)
Group of Experts on Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution (GESAMP)
International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA)
Bird Strike Committee Europe
International Committee for Irrigation and Drainage
International Organisation for Biological Control
International Plant Variety Rights Organisation (UPOV)
International Society for Plant Pathology
International Soil Tillage Research Organisation
International Standards Organisation
Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC)
The Insecticide Resistance Action Committee
The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
European Society for Nuclear Methods in Agriculture (ESNA)
International Commission on Uniform Methods of Sugar Analysis (ICOMSA)
International Consultative Group on Food Irradiation
International Standards Organisation
Association of Analytical Chemists
International Wheat Council
International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry

Goats Milk

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will bring forward proposals for the regulation of the production of goats milk and goats milk products.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The wording of the Food Act 1984 means that the regulations which apply to cows milk cannot be extended to cover goats milk. However, goats milk and goats milk products are subject to the general provisions of the Act whereby all food (including drink) must be of the nature, substance and quality demanded by the purchaser and must be fit for human consumption. It is also an offence to label goats milk (or goats milk products) in a false or misleading way.

The Ministry issued a code of practice on the hygienic production of goats milk in March 1988.

Beef and Veal

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the original saving of the measures set out in European Economic Community document 8903/88 on beef and veal; with what the saving was compared; and what alterations were made to this proposed saving in consequence of the changes agreed at the Council meeting on 23 January.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The European Commission's estimate of the savings over the 1989 preliminary draft budget which would have been brought about by the adoption of its proposals for the reform of the beef regime (set out in document 8903/88 (COM(88)529), as amended) were 51 mecu (£33 million) in 1989 and 55 mecu (£35·5 million) in a full year. The 1989 budget as adopted was consistent with these proposals. The Commission has revised its forecasts to take account of the decisions of the 23-24 January Council of Ministers and the present prospects for the market and predicts a further saving of 11 mecu (£7 million) in 1989. The Commission estimates that the full year effect of the measures as adopted will be a cost of 23 mecu (£15 million).

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the exceptional circumstance clause was included in the final text of the measures on beef and veal agreed by the European Economic Community Council on 23 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The Council of Ministers decided that in various circumstances buying into intervention could take place outside the limit of 220,000 tonnes a year. These would include the exceptional circumstances envisaged in the Commission's original proposals and also if there were market weakness defined in either of two ways. The first is if the average market price in at least three member states or regions which together account for at least 55 per cent. of the Community production of the category concerned falls below 80 per cent. of the institutional intervention price; and the second, if the Community price falls below 78 per cent. of the institutional intervention price. Legal texts have yet to be adopted implementing these provisions.

These concessions on beef intervention were one of the reasons why we voted against the package.

Milk

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional milk production can be permitted in consequence of the additional quotas agreed at the Council meeting on 23 January; and what estimate he has made of the additional cost to the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The Council has agreed to allocate up to 600,000 tonnes of additional milk quota. I understand that the Commission now estimates the resultant cost to the Community budget in a full year to be 99 mecu (£64 million). Other elements in the package agreed by the Council should result in savings of 64 mecu (£41 million) giving a net cost in the milk sector of 35 mecu (£23 million).

Variable Premium

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what increase in the retail price of beef he anticipates in terms of pence per pound in the United

Kingdom in consequence of the abolition of the variable premium; and if there will be any consequent increase in consumer prices in the rest of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The abolition of the variable premium in the United Kingdom was decided by the Council in the context of other decisions to limit intervention and to reduce buying-in prices; to apply in the United Kingdom the Community special premium for beef; and to improve the terms of the suckler cow subsidy. Taken together these measures are unlikely to have any significant effect on retail prices in the United Kingdom and they place the United Kingdom beef market on the same footing as the rest of the Community.

Beef

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of beef exported by the European Economic Community in 1988; and what were the comparable totals for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* During the period January-August 1988 (the latest for which figures are available) 357,503 tonnes of beef were exported from the European Community. This excludes exports from Greece for which 1988 figures are not yet available. The calendar year figures for the previous five years are as follows:

	tonnes
1983	[1]427,786
1984	[1]566,151
1985	[1]591,907
1986	[2]935,887
1987	[2]691,912

[1] EC 10.
[2] EC 12.

Leukaemia

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether research is currently being undertaken or is planned, to examine the possibility of links between bovine leukaemia virus and the incidence of leukaemia in children whose fathers are engaged in the meat trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 February 1989]* Various studies have been carried out into this subject but I am not aware of any research currently being undertaken or planned.

Abattoirs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many man-years of his Department's staff time were engaged in the supervision of abattoirs in 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In my reply to the hon. Member on 18 January I provided information for all years for which figures are available. Staff engaged on this work have other responsibilities and time allocated to specific duties is not recorded for the years prior to 1983-84. However, resources allocated in earlier years were similar to those employed in 1983-84.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Fraud

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money has been lost in each year since 1979 because of social security fraud; and how many prosecutions have resulted *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the social security area covering Nottingham.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 31 January at column *192*.

Insulation Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the total value in current and standard prices of grants for *(a)* draughtproofing and *(b)* loft insulation to claimants of supplementary benefit and income support for the last five years;

(2) what is the maximum grant for *(a)* draughtproofing and *(b)* loft insulation payable to claimants of supplementary benefit and income support in each of the last five years; and what is the value of this maximum in standard prices;

(3) what is the number of grants made for *(a)* draughtproofing and *(b)* loft insulation to claimants of supplementary benefit and income support since 1983.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Help with the cost of simple draughtproofing (but not loft insulation) was available to recipients of supplementary benefit under the old single payments scheme. Details of the number of single payments for draughtproofing since 1983 and their cost are recorded in table 19.2 of the "Annual Statistical Enquiry", copies of which are in the Library.

There was no maximum amount for a single payment for draughtproofing. The regulations provided for a payment of an amount equal to the cost of necessary materials.

The discretionary social fund replaced single payments on 11 April 1988. Community care grants and budgeting loans are available from the fund for people receiving income support. Crisis loans are available to anyone, whether receiving income support or not, in an emergency. Payments for draughtproofing and loft insulation are not excluded from the social fund, but a social fund officer, who determines applications to the fund, would not normally make an award for these items if help with the materials and work is available from another source, such as a community insulation project or the homes insulation scheme.

Information about the number and type of awards form the social fund for draughtproofing and loft insulation is not collected.

Loans and Grants

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out for each office in Wales and the cumulative total, the percentage of the allocations not spent at the latest available date on *(a)* the loans budget and *(b)* the grants budget.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Such information is available from the details held in the Library.

Disabled Claimants

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will be responsible for meeting the case costs after April of those disabled people in supported lodgings who are new claimants, as distinct from existing claimants.

Mr. Scott: As under present social security arrangements, the care costs of supported lodgers will be met in a variety of ways after April 1989. Some will be able to meet these costs from their own resources, including social security benefits. Others will have these costs met in whole or in part by bodies such as local authorities. Those supported lodgers entitled to income support will receive housing benefit to help with their accommodation costs and normal income support (including any appropriate premiums) for other expenses. This change will mean that many disabled people in supported lodgings will be better off, after meeting charges for accommodation and the provision of care, than they would have been under existing benefit arrangements. The overall effect of the change will be to provide an estimated £1 million extra for supported lodgers as a whole.

Income Support

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent estimates for take-up of income support; and what are the comparable figures for supplementary benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my right hon. Friend to paragraphs 21 to 25 and table 15.17 on pages 272 and 273 of Cm. 288 (the 1988 public expenditure White Paper) for details of the latest available take-up estimates for the main income-related benefits. Take-up estimates for 1985 should be available shortly. In 1991, analyses from the 1989 family expenditure survey will provide comprehensive information on the reformed benefits introduced in April 1988.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if there are any circumstances in which a family with children where the father works irregularly may find themselves ineligible for either income support or family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes. To obtain family credit one parent must be normally engaged in work for at least 24 hours a week. If the employed parent works on average for less than 24 hours a week there would be no entitlement to family credit, but there might be entitlement to income support.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the time scale of his Department's proposed consideration of the future of disability benefits following the results of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' disability surveys; when he hopes to report progress in extending the eligibility for attendance allowance to the under-twos; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) on 19 December at columns *114-15*.

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether he is able to break down the extra number of people who will become dependent on means-tested benefits due to the freeze in child benefit into *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit;

(2) how many extra people will become dependent on means-tested benefits as a result of the increase in children's personal allowances by an extra 50p broken down into income support, family credit and housing benefits.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing how many more *(a)* families and *(b)* children will be dependent on income-related benefits as a result of the extra increase in personal allowances of 50p per child, and broken down into income support, family credit and housing benefit, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 23 January 1989]:* Estimates are available only on the caseload assumptions used in the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits". They are based on the 1985 family expenditure survey data uprated to reflect the position in 1989-90. Estimates of this kind are particularly uncertain because of small sample size and large sampling error. Bearing these factors in mind, the estimated increases arising from the non-uprating of child benefit are:

- Income Support—1,000-2,000 families (around 5,000 people)
- Housing Benefit—2,000-3,000 families (around 10,000 people)
- Family Credit—20,000-25,000 families (just under 80,000 people)

The estimated increases arising from the extra 50p on children's allowances are:

- Income Support—2,000 families (including about 5,000 children)
- Housing Benefit—3,000 families (including around 5,000 children)
- Family Credit—25,000 families (including about 50,000 children)

Single Payments

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the total of all single payments paid by local offices in London, *(b)* the equivalent figure for only those single payments encompassing items now covered by the social fund, for 1986-87 and 1987-88, *(c)* the total number of budgeting loans, crisis loans, community care grants paid out in the same catchment area so far for the year 1988-89 and *(d)* the expenditure represented by *(a)* to *(c)*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 26 January 1989, c. 709]:* I regret that part of the information given was incorrect. The reply should be as follows.

Details of the total number of all single payments paid by local offices in the London postal area for the periods 1986-87 and 1987-88 by office are in the Library.

There are two expenses for which single payments could be made but which are specifically excluded from the social fund: returnable deposits on accommodation and work-related expenses. The £30 limit for budgeting loans and most community care grants will also operate in some

cases to prevent payment for items that would otherwise have been available as single payments. Figures are not available for items covered by the social fund that were available previously as single payments.

Information on the numbers of applications for social fund loans and grants processed and awarded, listed by local office, including information on budget allocations and expenditure, is also in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr. Fred Holroyd

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the answer, 11 January, *Official Report*, column 698, on what date in August 1988 the Royal Ulster Constabulary communicated with Mr. Fred Holroyd.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* The communication referred to in the answer of 11 January took place on 27 August 1985.

Schools

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available, from and including 1985, to indicate the primary and secondary schools which have had tenders for major capital works approved and the amount involved in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The information is as follows:

Scheme	*Date tenders approved*	*Total amount of approved tenders (£)*
Primary Schools		
1985		
Magheraberry, Moira, Craigavon	January 1985	280,000·00
St. Mary's, Portaferry	January 1985	645,000·00
Bunscoil Ghaelach, Belfast	January 1985	170,000·00
St. Luke's/St. Mark's, Twinbrook Dunmurry	March 1985	94,000·00
Hamiltonsbawn	March 1985	290,000·00
Botanic, Belfast	September 1985	55,000·00
Ballymagroarty, Londonderry	November 1985	886,000·00
St. Malachy's, Belfast	November 1985	714,000·00
Ardstraw	December 1985	199,000·00
1986		
Glebe, Sion Mills	January 1986	278,000·00
Sacred Heart, Belfast	January 1986	763,000·00
Markethill	January 1986	588,000·00
Ballarena, Limavady	January 1986	172,000·00
Glenwood, Belfast	January 1986	163,000·00
St. Mary's, Killesher, Enniskillen	February 1986	59,000·00
1987		
St. Columbas, Longtower, Londonderry	May 1987	998,000·00
Edenberry, Banbridge	June 1987	659,000·00
Broughshane	June 1987	194,000·00
Kells and Connor, Ballymena	July 1987	301,000·00
St. Therese of Lisieux, Belfast	July 1987	700,000·00
St. Peter's, Panton Street, Belfast	September 1987	931,000·00
Ballyhenry, Newtownabbey	September 1987	848,000·00
Andrews Memorial, Comber	September 1987	195,000·00
Grange Park, Bangor	November 1987	149,000·00
St. Brigid's, Glassdrummond, Newry	December 1987	386,000·00
1988		
Jones Memorial, Enniskillen	February 1988	100,000·00
Victoria, Ballyhalbert	March 1988	291,000·00
Currie, Belfast	April 1988	89,000·00
Laghey, Dungannon	September 1988	267,000·00
St. Joseph's, Garvagh	October 1988	190,000·00
Waringstown	October 1988	716,000·00
Holy Cross Boys', Belfast	December 1988	95,000·00
1989		
St. Anne's, Strabane	January 1989	700,000·00
Brookeborough, Enniskillen	January 1989	156,000·00
Secondary Schools[1]		
1985		
Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch	January 1985	571,000·00
Portadown College	March 1985	1,167,000·00
Orangefield Secondary, Belfast	March 1985	85,000·00
St. Colm's Secondary, Twinbrook Dunmurry	April 1985	103,000·00
Royal School, Armagh	August 1985	195,000·00
Rainey Endowed, Magherafelt	August 1985	189,000·00
Kilkeel High	September 1985	1,371,000·00
Laurelhill Secondary, Lisburn	December 1985	3,121,000·00
1986		
St. Patrick's High, Maghera	August 1986	3,573,000·00
1987		
Lagan College, Belfast	March 1987	608,000·00
Model Girls Secondary, Belfast	July 1987	789,000·00
Hunterhouse College, Belfast (Phase I)	August 1987	270,000·00
Larne Gramar	August 1987	1,484,000·00
Dalriada, Ballymoney	September 1987	255,000·00
Royal School, Armagh	September 1987	3,102,000·00
St. Colman's High, Ballynahinch	October 1987	1,411,000·00
Antrim Secondary	December 1987	172,000·00
1988		
Hunterhouse College, Belfast (Phase II)	January 1988	353,000·00
Donwnshire Secondary, Carrickfergus	January 1988	137,000·00
Monkstown Secondary, Newtownabbey	January 1988	137,000·00
St. Catherine's College, Armagh	February 1988	988,000·00
St. Mary's Junior High, Lurgan	March 1988	184,000·00
Bangor Grammar	June 1988	445,000·00
Movilla High, Newtownards	July 1988	280,000·00
Banbridge Academy	November 1988	470,000·00
Royal School, Dungannon	November 1988	261,000·00
Larne High	December 1988	1,355,000·00

[1] Including Grammar schools.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to ensure that voluntary grammar schools are in future funded on an equitable per capita basis; what criteria he has used in the past for such funding; and if he will take steps to provide additional funds to those schools which have received less than the per capita norm in past years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* In the past, voluntary grammar schools funding has been mainly based on historic patterns of expenditure but in recent years resources have been skewed in favour of the relatively low-spending schools. This reallocation of funds will continue until the introduction, as part of the education reform measures, of a formula-based funding arrangement for all secondary schools (including voluntary grammar schools). While being related to pupil numbers, formula-based funding will also have regard to other factors.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Creation

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full-time and part-time jobs were created in the 12 months to September 1988 in the north-west region.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses.

In the year to September 1988, the civilian work force in employment increased by 5,000 in the north-west region. This includes net increases of 4,000 in female full-time employees in employment, 7,000 in female part-time employees in employment and 1,000 in participants in work-related Government training programmes (who are counted as part time). These increases were offset by a decrease in male employment; however comparable estimates of full and part-time employment are not available for male employees in employment or the self-employed.

American Tourists

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many American tourists visited the United Kingdom in the last 12 months; what contribution to the balance of payments was made by them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Estimates show that the number of visits to the United Kingdom by North American residents in the 11 months to November 1988 was 3·2 million. Estimates of expenditure for that period are not yet available as they are produced on a quarterly basis.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the unadjusted number and percentage of male, female and total employees in employment in part-time work in September 1988 in the south-east.

Mr. Lee: Employment estimates for regions are not seasonally adjusted. Regional estimates of part-time male employees are not available. In September 1988 there were 1,416,000 female part-time employees in employment in the south-east region, this figure represents 40 per cent. of female employees and 19 per cent. of all employees in employment in the region.

Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee last met; and what was discussed.

Mr. Lee: The committee last met on 17 January, to discuss the effect of the abolition of domestic rates on the construction of the retail prices index. A report is expected on this shortly.

Discrimination in Employment

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the reasons for his decision not to introduce legislation to ratify International Labour Organisation convention No. 111 on "Discrimination in Employment and Occupation (1958)".

Mr. Nicholls: The Government believe that their commitment to the elimination of unfair discrimination between one worker and another in employment is already clearly demonstrated by existing legislation, mainly the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and consider that the amendments to this legislation that would be required to give further effect to the provisions of convention 111 are unnecessary and undesirable.

Child-minding Allowance

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the level of take-up of child-minding allowance for people attending Government training schemes; and if he will make a statement on the continuation of the scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Child care payments are made only on employment training. Comprehensive information on take-up is not yet available. Information on the number of employment training participants for whom child care payments are made will be regularly collected from March and the first results will be available at the end of April 1989. Early indications suggest that over 2,000 lone parents have joined employment training and many of these people will have received help with child care costs.

Inflation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the average annual inflation rate in 1978 and 1988 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the European Economic Community.

Mr. Lee: The annual average rate of increases in the retail prices index for the United Kingdom was 8·3 per cent. in 1978 and 4·9 per cent. in 1988. The corresponding figures for the 12 countries of the Community were 8·3 per cent. for 1978 and 3·3 per cent. for 1988.

Regional Tourist Boards

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to ensure that regional enterprise units do not compete with or shadow the functions of regional tourist boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The terms of reference of the Department's regional enterprise units include developing links with tourist bodies, identifying obstacles to the growth of tourism, and supporting any co-ordinating machinery established for discussing tourism at the regional level. There are no plans for them to duplicate or shadow the functions of the regional tourist boards.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will ensure that the tripartite structure in funding and control of regional tourist boards is maintained; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will ensure that the levels of subsidies to the regional tourist boards keep pace with inflation; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will provide additional funds to the regional tourist boards to undertake research into *(a)* domestic and international tourist trends, *(b)* occupancy work and *(c)* visitor surveys.

Mr. Lee: The organisational structure of the English regional tourist boards (RTBs) is not a matter for Government to decide. The role and level of funding of RTBs is currently being considered as part of the review of tourism policy announced last July by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Radiation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* staff and *(b)* patients were affected by radiation overdose incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive within the National Health Service in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: No staff were affected.

Information on how many patients were affected is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under what circumstances, as specified in the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985, radiation over exposures of *(a)* staff and *(b)* patients within the National Health Service are required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Nicholls: The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 require that patient exposures suspected to be greater than intended which arise from faulty equipment and suspected overexposures of staff from any cause are immediately investigated by the employer. Unless it can be shown beyond reasonable doubt that no excessive exposure occurred, the employer is required to notify the Health and Safety Executive forthwith.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by the Health and Safety Executive to carry out its responsibilities within the National Health Service under the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Inspectors in Her Majesty's factories inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive have a range of inspection responsibilities. Inspectors are not employed solely on work in connection with the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 within the National Health Service.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the responsibilities of the Health and Safety Executive to staff and patients of the National Health Service under the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive enforces the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 in the National Health Service as in all other places where work with ionising radiations is carried out. The regulations control the exposure of employees or other people affected by work with ionising radiations principally by requiring all doses to be kept as low as reasonably practicable and in any case below dose limits. The regulations also cover the equipment used for medical exposures and exposures of patients that were much greater than intended because of faulty equipment.

Economic League

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations about people blacklisted by the Economic League.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on Tuesday 7 February 1989.

Chief Inspector of Mines

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chief inspector of mines; and what subjects were discussed;

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* My right hon. Friend has not met the chief inspector of mines. The chief inspector, as a senior official of the Health and Safety Executive, has frequent contact with the director general, and opportunity for contact with the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission.

Small Firms

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what services will be provided to small firms by the Government business shop opened in Manchester; and what plans there are to open further such shops in England and Wales.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

The Manchester Government business shop, which is based in the small firms centre, will help business people carry out some of the basic transactions required by Government and obtain information and assistance in a single place. It will deal with:

VAT registration and information
information on business tax
PAYE and national insurance
information on employment protection and health and safety requirements

Government business shops are part of a pilot exercise and Manchester is one of six locations. The others are in Glasgow, Newcastle, Doncaster, Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare and Reading. The pilot schemes will run for six months and from the experience of these shops we shall decide whether and how we should proceed to a more extensive network, in the light of the reaction of business clients, costs and benefits and effects on existing services.

ENVIRONMENT

Opencast Mining

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much land in the United Kingdom is currently being used for the opencast extraction of coal, clay or other minerals; how much has been used and is currently unrestored to its former condition; and whether he will make a statement on Government policy in respect of unrestored land.

Mr. Chope: Surveys of mineral workings carried out by local authorities on behalf of the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office in 1982 indicated that 115,000 hectares of land in England and Wales had permissions for surface mineral workings. Within this, 61,500 hectares were or had been in use as mineral working

sites. Fifty-six per cent. of these workings had satisfactory reclamation conditions and 44 per cent. had either no conditions or unsatisfactory conditions. There are no comparable figures available for Scotland. Local authorities carried out further surveys in England and Wales during 1988, and the Department will be publishing the results of these for England later this year.

The Government policy in respect of unrestored land associated with minerals being worked under planning control is to ensure that land taken for mineral operations is restored after working has come to an end. The 1981 Minerals Act imposes a duty on mineral planning authorities to undertake a periodic review of mineral sites and empowers them to make orders to restore and improve the environment of sites which do not have adequate conditions. Derelict workings can also be eligible for derelict land grant to achieve reclamation.

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the housing investment programme allocations proposed to each local authority for 1989 indicating the respective bid and showing the allocation as a percentage of the bid, together with the appropriate figures for 1978-79 on a constant value basis.

Mr. Trippier: The information for 1989-90 and 1978-79 has been placed in the Library. Since 1981-82 local authorities have been able to supplement their allocations by expenditure financed from capital receipts. Nationally, two thirds of local authorities' spending power on housing in 1989-90 is expected to come from capital receipts.

Water Meter Trial Schemes

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment where the water meter trial schemes are taking place; when each one started; and what criteria were used to determine the places selected.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has approved 11 water metering trials under section 4 of the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Act 1988:

Isle of Wight (Southern Water)
Chandlers Ford (Southern Water)
Bristol (Bristol Waterworks Company)
Haling Park (Thames Water)
Chorleywood (Rickmansworth Water Company)
Bromsgrove (East Worcestershire Waterworks Company)
Brookmans Park (Lee Valley Water Company)
Turlin Moor (Wessex Water)
Broadstone (Wessex Water)
Camberley (Mid Southern Water Company)
Hutton Rudby (Northumbrian Water)

Charging by measure in the Bromsgrove trial started on 9 January. All of the other trials are due to start from 1 April 1989, except for the Haling park trial where charging by measure is to begin from 1 October 1989. My right hon. Friend has yet to consider a proposal by Yorkshire Water about a proposed metering trial in south Normanton, Yorkshire.

The trial sites were selected by the water industry so as to include a wide range of different property types and climatic conditions.

Water Authorities (Footpaths and Bridleways)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of *(a)* statutory public footpaths, *(b)* statutory public bridleways and *(c)* permissive footpaths lie within British water authorities' land holdings; and if he will list the mileage for each water authority in each category.

Mr. Howard: This information is not held centrally by my Department or by individual water authorities.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been expended, where and on what, through derelict land grant in the north-west for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: Derelict land grant expenditure by local authorities in the north west totalled £24·28 million in 1987-88; a further £5·2 million grant was paid to non-local authority applicants. Details are given in the following table.

A wide variety of reclamation schemes meeting the Department's criteria for grant were supported in 1987-88. A total of 142 schemes were completed in the course of the year producing 563 hectares of reclaimed land. One hundred and six hectares were reclaimed for industrial and commercial development, 24 hectares for housing and 109 hectares for mixed development. The remaining 324 hectares were reclaimed for public open space or other soft end uses.

Derelict Land Grant: Expenditure in the North West, 1987-88

	£
1. Local authorities	
Cheshire County Council	638,323
Congleton	381,604
Crewe and Nantwich	127,045
Macclesfield	127,285
Vale Royal	4,999
Warrington	1,148,926
Lancashire County Council	1,495,163
Blackburn	355,120
Blackpool	17,100
Burnley	30,846
Chorley	52,992
Hyndburn	191,555
Lancaster	154,505
Pendle	349,719
Preston	820,088
Ribble Valley	17,938
Rossendale	377,899
South Ribble	16,556
West Lancashire	45,931
Cumbria County Council	3,123,386
Allerdale	1,083,134
Barrow	72,090
Carlisle	58,773
Eden	16,571
Bolton	364,131
Bury	433,063
Manchester	422,715
Oldham	249,480
Rochdale	26,751
Salford	5,255,292
Stockport	20,298
Tameside	507,334
Trafford	45,438
Wigan	1,303,223
Ellesmere Port and Neston	1,007,115
Halton	1,264,307
Knowsley	455,929

	£
Liverpool	248,830
Sefton	341,000
St. Helens	497,587
Wirral	187,922
Merseyside Residuary Body	940,991
Total local authority expenditure	24,278,954
2. Non local authorities	
Total expenditure	5,200,892
Total Derelict Land Grant expenditure	29,479,846

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify each donation made by his Department in response to appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80

Mr. Ridley: In the financial year 1985-86 my Department made a contribution of £250,000 to the Lord Mayor of Bradford's appeal fund set up to help victims of the stadium fire disaster. There have been no other donations since 1979-80. In general my Department responds to particular emergencies or similar situations through established public expenditure programmes rather then by contributing to private appeal funds.

Water Pollution

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider increasing the penalties for offences of pollution of water courses and the discharge of effluents containing illegal levels of polychlorinated biphenyls and pollutants.

Mr. Moynihan: Under part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, the maximum penalties which can be imposed by magistrates for water pollution offences, including any illegal discharges of polychlorinated biphenyls or other pollutants, are fines not exceeding £2,000 and terms of imprisonment of up to three months. However, on indictment there is no limit on the fine that may be imposed and the term of imprisonment can be up to two years. Penalties for pollution offences are kept under regular review, but I understand that there are no immediate plans for increasing them.

Pollution

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each water authority the number of pollution incidents and the number of sewage works which breached their discharge consents in 1987-88.

Mr. Ridley: The number of water pollution incidents reported by English water authorities in 1987 were:

	Number
Anglian	1,605
Northumbrian	671
North West	2,961
Severn Trent	4,435
Southern	1,795
South West	2,251
Thames	2,969
Wessex	1,339
Yorkshire	2,738

Document Clearing Group

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the membership and terms of reference of the document clearing group supervised by his Department's advisers Schroder Wragg in respect of information made available to the general public by water authorities.

Mr. Ridley: The document clearance group comprises members from Clifford Chance and Herbert Smith, legal advisers to the Government and to the Water Authorities' Association on the privatisation of the water industry, J. Henry Schroder Wragg, the Government's merchant bank advisers and Dewe Rogerson, financial public relations advisers to the association and the Government. The group's role is to review information relating to the businesses of the 10 water authorities in England and Wales which is to be made publicly available by Government, the WAA or the water authorities, to ensure that such information complies with the legal requirements relating to offers for sale.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the standards to be set for discharges of radioactive waste from pressurised water reactors and those set for comparable reactors abroad.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The technology of the new generation of PWRs will make it possible to operate them so that the levels of radioactivity in the discharges are very low. In granting authorisation for such discharges the authorising Departments will continue to require the operators to meet specified discharge limits and in addition to use best practicable means to limit discharges of radioactivity so as to ensure that exposures are kept as low as reasonably achievable. These controls will ensure that radiation doses to the critical group of people most affected by the discharges will remain well within the limits recommended by the International Commission for Radiation Protection and endorsed by the National Radiological Protection Board. Due regard will be had to the balance between costs of pollution abatement, including the exposure of on-site personnel, and the effects of the discharges on the environment. Each case will be considered on its merits, but in general the effect is likely to be that levels of radioactivity in discharges from PWRs in the United Kingdom will not differ significantly from those from reactors of a compatible size and environmental situations such as those in France.

Housing (Rural Areas)

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further provision is being made for low-cost housing in rural areas.

Mr. Trippier: We have announced new targets for low-cost housing in rural areas and proposals for enabling shared ownership dwellings in villages to be retained to meet low-cost housing needs.

Last July the Government announced the rural housing initiative which set specific targets for low-cost housing in smaller villages. The Housing Corporation established a special rural programme aimed at expanding the role of

housing associations in villages with a population of under 1,000. The corporation agreed to earmark sufficient funds to permit some 300 approvals for rented housing in 1989-90 and 600 in 1990-91. In December 1988 the Housing Corporation announced that the target of 600 approvals had been brought forward to 1989-90. We are pleased to announce today that the new targets for 1990-91 will be 900 approvals and for 1991-92 1,100 approvals. These targets effectively mean that the number of approvals given under the special rural programme will have nearly quadrupled over a four-year period.

There is concern that subsidised shared ownership houses in villages should be kept as low-cost homes and not lost through people becoming full owners and selling in the open market. In those rural areas where replacement of a shared ownership dwelling may be difficult, or where a private landowner has contributed a site on condition that it be retained for low-cost housing, we have in mind giving housing associations a pre-emptive right to buy back the dwelling at full market value when an occupier moves on. We will of course need to establish a funding arrangement which ensures that the association has the funds to exercise its right to repurchase. The arrangement proposed will maintain the right of the tenant to become the full owner of his home, but will provide a means of retaining the dwelling for low-cost housing when the occupier moves. It will provide a means therefore of sustaining the supply of low-cost housing in the villages and will reassure those landowners who contribute sites for that purpose. The details of the scheme are being discussed with the Housing Corporation.

Taken together with the proposals announced last Friday by the Secretary of State to improve the supply of sites for low-cost housing in rural areas, these measures will make a further significant contribution to augmenting the supply of low-cost housing in villages.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list in the *Official Report*, and according to the latest information available, the number of authorised permanent gipsy sites within each district of the counties of Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and Devon.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* Authorised permanent gipsy sites can be either private or local authority operated. The Department does not hold information on the numbers of authorised private sites. Information on the location of private sites is held by local authorities. Information provided by the district councils for the Department's biannual count exercise reveals that at July 1988 there were 49 caravans on private sites in Somerset; 52 in Wiltshire; three in Dorset and 17 in Devon.

Information on authorised local authority sites is held by the Department and updated each January. In respect of the counties requested the latest information is as follows:

Somerset
Mendip (Berkeley)
Sedgemoor (Westonzoyland)
South Somerset (Chubbards Cross, Ilton)
(Marsh Lane, Tintinhull)
Taunton Deane (Otterford)
West Somerset (Farringdon Hill Lane, Stogursey)

Wiltshire
North Wiltshire (Thingley Junction, Chippenham)
Salisbury (Dairyhouse Bridge, Salisbury)
(Oak Tree Field, Odstock, Salisbury)
(Lode Hill, Downton)
Thamesdown (Chiseldon Camp, Swindon)
(Hay Lane, Wroughton)
West Wiltshire (Fairwood, Dilton Marsh)

Dorset
East Dorset (Mannington Park, Wimborne)
North Dorset (Thornicombe, Blandford)
Poole (Mannings Heath)
Purbeck (Coldharbour, Wareham)
West Dorset (Piddlehinton, Dorchester)

Devon
East Devon (Broadclyst near Exeter)
(Sowton near Exeter)

Football League Grounds (Women)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many women have been *(a)* arrested and *(b)* found guilty of offences committed at Football League grounds during each of the last three seasons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply. The information requested is not recorded centrally.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Zambia

6. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the matters that were discussed in recent meetings with President Kaunda of Zambia.

88. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed during the recent ministerial visit to Zambia.

Mrs. Chalker: I discussed bilateral and regional matters with President Kaunda of Zambia when I met him during my visit to Zambia on 24 to 25 January.

Conventional Stability Talks

7. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the conventional stability talks to begin.

Mr. Waldegrave; These talks, now known as the negotiation on conventional armed forces in Europe, and the negotiations on confidence and security building measures, will be opened in Vienna by Foreign Ministers of the CSCE countries on 6 to 8 March.

Central America

9. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the next central American presidential summit; and if he has discussed this subject with the new Government of the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: Our latest information is that the next central American summit will take place in San Salvador on 13 to 14 February. We are in regular touch with the United States Administration about a wide range of issues, including central America.

72. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any discussions with the United States Administration with regard to their policies on central America.

Mr. Eggar: We have regular discussions with the United States Administration on a wide range of topics, including central America.

40. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the next central American presidential summit; and if he has discussed this subject with the new Government in the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: Our latest information is that the next central American summit will take place in San Salvador on 13 and 14 February. We are in regular touch with the United States Administration about a wide range of issues, including central America.

78. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit central America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit central America. I shall be visiting Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala later this month, when I attend the San Jose V Conference being held at San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

Israel

12. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Israeli ambassador; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I last met the Israeli ambassador on 26 January.

60. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last raised with the Israeli Government Israel's responsibilities under the Geneva convention.

81. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has recently made to the Israeli ambassador concerning Israel's treatment of Palestinians suspected of participating in the Intifada.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to take all appropriate opportunities to remind the Israeli authorities of their obligation to administer the occupied territories in accordance with international law and human rights standards.

83. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Israeli Government concerning west bank and Gaza detainees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We continue to take appropriate opportunities to remind the Israeli authorities of our opposition to the practice of administrative detention.

93. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards Mr. Elias Freij's suggestion to end the Palestinian uprising on the west bank and Gaza, for the purpose of encouraging talks with the Israelis; and whether he will make a statement on the implications for the peace process.

Mr. Waldegrave: We understand that Mr. Freij withdrew his suggestion after the Israeli decision to deport 13 Palestinians from the occupied territories.

Cuba

13. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about United Kingdom relations with Cuba.

Mr. Eggar: We maintain diplomatic relations with Cuba. Our new ambassador took up his appointment in January.

United States Secretary of State

15. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the United States Secretary of State; and what was discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I last met the United States Secretary of State at the CSCE meeting in Vienna on 17 January. We discussed a wide range of issues.

42. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will use the opportunity of his next meeting with the United States Secretary of State to reiterate the United Kingdom's commitment to international free trade.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. We share with the United States Administration a commitment to free trade. With our Community partners we must work with the United States to resist protectionism, and to sustain and extend the open multilateral trading system, in particular through the current GATT round.

58. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he proposes to discuss when he next meets the United States Secretary of State.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend proposes to discuss a wide range of issues when he next meets Mr. Baker on Sunday next.

84. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet the United States Secretary of State; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to meet Mr. Baker on Sunday next and will wish to exchange views with him on a wide range of issues.

35. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he proposes to discuss when he next meets the United States Secretary of State.

71. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he proposes to discuss when he next meets the United States Secretary of State.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend looks forward to exchanging views on a wide range of issues when he meets Mr. Baker on Sunday next.

36. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Secretary of State of the United States of America; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend will see Mr. Baker on Sunday next and looks forward to exchanging views with him on a wide range of issues.

Middle East

16. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the prospects for a peace settlement in the middle east have improved since the visit of the Minister of State the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) to representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Tunis.

17. **Sir Dennis Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

48. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the search for peace in the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Mr. Waldegrave: Recent developments, including the PLO's recognition of the right of Israel to exist, and its renunciation of terrorism, have substantially improved the prospects for progress towards a negotiated settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute.

27. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent moves he has made to further the calling of an international peace conference on the middle east.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our policy and that of the Twelve remains to support the calling of an international conference.

We are continuing our efforts to identify the necessary common ground for such a conference to be convened.

63. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to visit the west bank and Gaza strip.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to visit the occupied territories, but I aim to do so in early March.

Chile

19. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have been making to the Government of Chile concerning human rights in that country.

49. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have been making to the Government of Chile concerning human rights in that country.

Mr. Eggar: We have in the past few weeks made representations at a high level about a wide range of human rights issues in Chile. In addition, the Twelve have publicly affirmed their support for the work of the Catholic Church's human rights organisation, the Vicaria de la Solidaridad, and their appreciation for the important role played by the Vicaria since its creation.

Iraq

21. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about Iraq's ability to develop biological warfare agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to him on 18 January at column *194*.

Hong Kong

22. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent draft of the Basic Law for Hong Kong.

34. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of China concerning the drafting of the Basic Law for Hong Kong.

64. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent draft of the Basic Law for Hong Kong.

77. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of China concerning the drafting of the Basic Law for Hong Kong.

86. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the most recent draft of the Basic Law for Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: The second draft of the Basic Law will be published in the spring after consideration by the standing committee of the National People's Congress. We welcome the assurances of senior Chinese officials that the draft will be subject to further consultation in Hong Kong. We have had a fruitful dialogue with the Chinese authorities responsible for the drafting of the Basic Law and expect this to continue. We shall wish to satisfy ourselves that the provisions of the final text accurately reflect the terms of the joint declaration.

Czechoslovakia

23. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Czechoslovakia about human rights.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend raised these matters in his speech last month at the conclusion of the CSCE follow-up meeting in Vienna. In addition I raised human rights issues with the Czechoslovak ambassador on 31 January.

46. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made about recent human rights violations in Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend raised Czechoslovakia's handling of human rights in my speech last month at the conclusion of the CSCE follow-up meeting in Vienna. I also expressed our concern to the Czechoslovak ambassador on 31 January.

51. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation of international agreements on human rights in Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are many shortcomings in Czechoslovakia's implementation of its human rights commitments, especially in the field of freedom of speech and assembly.

54. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to have discussions with the Czech ambassador concerning human rights.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans for discussion with the Czechoslovak ambassador. I saw him on 31 January, and expressed our concern over their handling of human rights.

87. **Mr. Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Czech ambassador; and what matters he will raise.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to meet the Czechoslovak ambassador. I saw him on 31 January to thank him for his authorities' co-operation over Semtex. I also expressed our concern over their current handling of human rights.

United States of America

24. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: The American Secretary of State, Mr. Baker, will be visiting the United Kingdom on Sunday next. My right hon. and learned Friend plans to visit the United States shortly thereafter.

52. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the future of the special relationship with the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: We look forward to a continuation of the excellent and close relations that have long existed between our two countries.

President Gorbachev

25. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects President Gorbachev to visit Britain.

28. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any information on whether President Gorbachev intends to visit the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether a new date has been arranged for the visit to Britain of President Gorbachev.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Gorbachev will visit the United Kingdom from 5 to 7 April.

South Africa

26. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will protest to the South African authorities against the new legislation to restrict foreign funding of anti-apartheid organisations.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) on 1 February at column *246*.

33. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent communications he has had with the South African Government.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain regular contact with the South African authorities on a wide range of issues, both here and via Her Majesty's ambassador.

55. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has to announce a new package of British measures against South Africa during the Prime Minister's visit to Zimbabwe in March.

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress in measures he is taking to encourage reform in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We take every opportunity to encourage peaceful change in South Africa towards the replacement of apartheid by a non-racial, representative system of government.

Emperor Hirohito

29. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will reconsider his decision to attend Emperor Hirohito's funeral.

Mr. Eggar: No. I set out the reasons for my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to attend the late Emperor of Japan's funeral in my written answer to the hon. Member on 16 January at column *12*.

EC Foreign Ministers

30. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his fellow European Community Foreign Ministers within the framework of European political co-operation.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next proposes to have discussions with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met EC colleagues in the framework of European political co-operation in Brussels on 21 November 1988. He will meet them again in Madrid on 14 February.

Political co-operation matters were also discussed at the European Council in Rhodes on 2 and 3 December 1988

which the Secretary of State attended with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and at meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 19 December 1988, which he and I attended, and on 23 January 1989, which I attended.

Francisco Mendes

31. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of the Brazilian Government concerning the murder of Francisco Mendes.

Mr. Eggar: I was able to discuss with the Brazillian Government our concern at killings of rural organisers when I visited that country in November last year. The death of Francisco Mendes is being investigated by the Brazilian police and arrests have been made.

Libya

32. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonweath Affairs if he has any plans to discuss the construction of the Libyan chemical factory at Rablin with the other members of the Western European Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: The issue was discussed at official level in the WEU permanent council on 11 January. The agenda has not yet been set for the next WEU ministerial council meeting, which will take place in April.

39. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding relations with Libya.

Mr. Waldegrave: There can be no question of returning to normal relations with the Libyan Government as long as they maintain their support for international terrorism including the IRA.

75. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further evidence Her Majesty's Government have of an intention by Libya to develop a chemical weapons capability.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary on 13 January at column *773* to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler). We have no doubt that the Rabta plant is intended to produce CW in large quantities and that it could become operational in the near future.

Security Firms

37. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy as to the use of private security firms by his Department.

Mr. Waldegrave: Where appropriate, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and our posts overseas employ private security firms to protect buildings and personnel.

Human Rights Conference (Moscow)

38. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding the United Kingdom's participation in the proposed human rights conference in Moscow in 1991.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received a number of representations from members of the public and hon. Members, both for and against our participation in the proposed Moscow conference in 1991. We have made clear that we are prepared to attend the Moscow conference only if our conditions about further progress in Soviet implementation of human rights commitments are met.

West German Foreign Minister

41. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his West German counterpart; and what was discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met Herr Genscher on 27 January in Bonn and discussed a range of issues including East-West relations, Eastern Europe, arms control and the middle east.

Angola

43. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the timetable for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We welcome the recent agreement between Angola and Cuba which provides for total Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola within 27 months from 1 April 1989.

59. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that all foreign troops are withdrawn from Angola; and what action he is prepared to take to seek to bring the Angolan MPLA Government and Unita to the negotiating table.

Mrs. Chalker: We are giving our full support to the implementation of the agreement signed in New York on 22 December 1988 which provides for total Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola.

We would welcome any move to establish internal peace in Angola which had the support of both sides. We continue to be in touch with African leaders in the region who are best placed to mediate.

Namibia

44. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Namibia.

79. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: We look forward to implementation of the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia, which is due to begin on 1 April. The plan provides for free and fair elections in which Namibians will decide their own future.

70. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation of the quatrapartite agreement on South African withdrawal from Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: Implementation of the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia is due to begin on 1 April.

91. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to send observers to oversee the elections in Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: Implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence is a matter for the United Nations Secretary General. We have agreed to provide the signals unit for UNTAG and would consider sympathetically any requests for us to send observers.

France

45. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to attend an Anglo-French summit meeting.

Mrs. Chalker: Plans for the next Anglo-French summit are under consideration and an announcement will be made soon.

Nelson Mandela

50. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the South African authorities over the continuing imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and his colleagues sentenced at the Rivonia trial.

Mrs. Chalker: We continue to urge the South African Government to release, immediately and unconditionally, Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

53. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will report on the outcome of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe in Vienna.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Vienna meeting ended on 19 January with the adoption of substantial new measures in the field of human rights as well as co-operation in other fields. It also opened the way for new negotiations on arms control and confidence and security building measures.

Gibraltar

56. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Gibraltar.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Gibraltar on 30 and 31 January 1989. He has no plans to do so again in the immediate future.

Soviet Union

57. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Anglo-Soviet relations.

Mr. Waldegrave: Anglo-Soviet relations are much improved. Mr. Gorbachev will be visiting Britain from 5 to 7 April. Fundamental differences between us remain. But we now have an increasingly wide-ranging dialogue and an expanding programme of co-operation and exchanges with the Russians.

68. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest information he has received concerning the state of human rights in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Waldegrave: There has been progress on human rights in the Soviet Union over the past few months. But much remains to be done. We pressed the Russians for more progress most recently at the UK/USSR bilateral talks on human rights on 26 January.

97. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the bilateral human rights talks held in London recently with the Soviets.

Mr. Waldegrave: These talks were useful and wide ranging. The Soviet delegation explained their plans for fundamental legislative reform: we underlined the importance of providing full guarantees that basic human freedoms will be respected. We also pressed the Russians on a number of individual cases of particular concern. They agreed to re-examine our lists of refuseniks and prisoners of conscience.

NATO (Burden Sharing)

61. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government are making to their European partners on the need for greater burden sharing within the Atlantic Alliance.

Mr. Waldegrave: We play an active part in discussion of burden-sharing within the Alliance. For example, we contributed fully to the work on the report on enhancing collective security agreed by Defence Ministers last December.

El Salvador

62. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will visit El Salvador before March to discuss the conduct of its elections.

67. **Mr. Boyes** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will visit El Salvador before March to discuss the conduct of its elections.

Mr. Eggar: There are no present plans for a ministerial visit to El Salvador.

Mozambique

66. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Mozambique Government; and what matters he discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met President Chissano and members of his Government during his visit to Mozambique from 17 to 19 September last year. They discussed a range of bilateral and international issues.

Romania

73. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new representations he plans to make to the Government of Romania about systemisation and other infringements of human rights.

Mr. Waldegrave We will continue to protest strongly about Romanian policies which run counter to their CSCE commitments in the field of human rights at every suitable opportunity. I summoned the ambassador of Romania on 30 January to protest about the treatment both of Her Majesty's ambassador in Romania and of the Romanian citizen, Mrs. Doina Cornea.

Third World Debt

74. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet other Foreign Ministers to discuss Third world debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: As the hon. Member is aware, my right hon. and learned Friend has regular discussion with Foreign Ministers from other countries on a wide range of subjects. Debt is an extremely important issue, and is frequently raised in contacts with debtor and creditor countries alike.

Venezuela

76. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit Venezuela.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present but I have just returned from a visit to Venezuela where I represented Her Majesty's Government at the inauguration of President Carlos Andres Perez. Whilst there I held useful discussions with a number of Venezuelan Ministers and senior officials, as well as senior members of other delegations.

Southern Africa

80. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on peace developments affecting the front-line states.

Mrs. Chalker: We welcome the signature on 22 December 1988 of agreements providing for total Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola and implementation of the United Nations plan for Namibian independence, as contributing to peace and stability in the region. We also welcome the recent resumption of co-operation between South Africa and Mozambique.

Cambodia

82. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are undertaking to prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge to power in Cambodia.

Mr. Eggar: We are supporting efforts to promote a political settlement in which the Cambodian people are free to choose their own Government. We make clear our view that world opinion would not tolerate the return to power of those responsible for the atrocities of the period of Khmer Rouge rule.

Spain

85. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet his Spanish counterpart to discuss matters of mutual interest in connection with the Spanish presidency of the EEC Council of Ministers.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend met the Spanish Foreign Minister bilaterally on 6 and 7 February. They will be meeting again on 14 February at the European political co-operation ministerial meeting and on 20 and 21 February at the Foreign Affairs Council.

Kurdish People

89. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Governments of Iraq, Iran and Turkey concerning the plight of Kurdish people.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are aware of the widely felt concern at the treatment of Kurdish minorities. On representations to Iraq, I refer the hon. Member to the written reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 11 January at column *712*. We have regularly co-sponsored resolutions on human rights in Iran at both the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Commission for Human Rights. We urge that all in Turkey should enjoy the significant improvements in human rights in recent years and that Turkey abide by its international human rights obligations.

Israeli Foreign Minister

90. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet his Israeli counterpart.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Arens has accepted our invitation to visit London on 14 and 15 February.

Cyprus

92. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of the discussions concerning the future of Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers that I gave to earlier questions on this subject on 11 and 19 January at columns *721* and *255*. The talks between President Vassiliou and Mr. Denktash are continuing. They are due to review progress with the United Nations Secretary-General again in March.

Foreign Affairs Council

94. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when is the next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council, and what issues are due to be discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 31 January at column *113*.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

95. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), during his recent meeting with the Palestine

Liberation Organisation leader, sought clarification of the status of the Palestine Liberation Organisation covenant in the light of the Algiers Palestine National Council statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Bassam Abu Sharif, a senior adviser to Mr. Yasser Arafat, has said in terms that

"the Charter of the Palestine Liberation Organisation . . . has been superseded by the decisions of the PNC, the author of the Charter".

We take every opportunity to welcome this sort of moderate statement and to urge the PLO to continue to fulfil the commitments made by Yasser Arafat in Geneva.

Leonid Lubman

96. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made following representations to the Soviet authorities on behalf of Leonid Lubman.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. We last pressed the Soviet authorities about Leonid Lubman at the United Kingdom/USSR bilateral talks on human rights on 26 January and they promised to give us a response. We will be following this up with the Soviet embassy.

Philippines (Political Prisoners)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the recent report from Amnesty International highlighting the increase in torture of political prisoners, he will make representations thereon to the Philippines Government.

Mr. Eggar: We have no plans at present to do so. President Aquino is committed to democracy and the protection of human rights. Our policy is to support her efforts to fulfil these commitments.

Spain (British Residents)

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has as to the number of British nationals currently residing in Spain.

Mr. Eggar: The most recent estimate provided by Her Majesty's embassy in Madrid in January, 1988, was 160,000 British citizens permanently resident in Spain. There are many more who live in Spain for only part of the year. I am asking our embassy in Madrid for more precise figures and I will write to my hon. Friend when these are received.

Soviet Unions (Exit Visas)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will impress on the Soviet authorities the urgency of the case of George Samoilovich of Moscow who is seeking an exit visa for medical treatment in the West.

Mr. Waldegrave: We press the Soviet authorities about George Samoilovich at every possible opportunity. Her Majesty's embassy in Moscow has made repeated representations to the Soviet authorities highlighting the urgency of this case. During the recent United Kingdom/USSR bilateral talks on human rights, we underlined to Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Adamishin the need for Mr. Samoilovich to be given immediate permission to leave. He promised to re-examine the case and give us a quick response. We will continue to press hard until there is a satisfactory outcome.

Baby Seal Products

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had discussions with the European Commission on breaches of the ban on importation into the European Community of baby seal products.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister of State gave to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) on 31 January at column *112*.

Iran

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the United Nations Secretary-General about the situation in Iran.

Mr. Waldegrave: None. However, we co-sponsored and worked to secure the adoption of resolution 43/1.37 on human rights in Iran which was passed by the UN General Assembly on 8 December 1988.

East Timor

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Indonesia about the human rights of those living in East Timor.

Mr. Eggar: With our European partners, we have regularly conveyed to the Indonesian Government our views on the importance of respecting human rights and expressed our concern, on humanitarian grounds, in individual cases. There is evidence that respect for human rights in East Timor has improved in recent years.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 9 February 1989

TRANSPORT

Airlines (Licences)

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many United Kingdom airlines held licenses containing rights unused for five years on 1 January; and what was the total number of rights thus unused;

(2) how many United Kingdom airlines held route licences containing rights unused for three years on 1 January; and what was the total number of rights thus unused;

(3) what proportion of route licence rights deleted in the Civil Aviation Authority's 10/86 decision had been unused for five years or more;

(4) how many route licence rights unused for at least three years remained in the hands of United Kingdom airlines immediately following the Civil Aviation Authority's 10/86 decision.

Mr. Peter Bottomeley: This is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. I understand that the information is not readily available in the form requested. I shall draw this to the attention of the chairman of the authority so that he can let my hon. Friend have such information as can be provided.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he will be using to determine whether British Rail's proposals for the construction of a new railway line in Kent establish a commercial case for the new line; whether his Department will be taking independent economic and financial advice on such proposals; and whether he will publish any reports prepared by his Department or by independent financial advisers.

Mr. Portillo: As with all British Rail's major commercial investment, if and when British Rail submits proposals for the construction of a new line in Kent, the Department will expect that investment to earn the required rate of return and will need to satisfy itself that the proposals are financially sound. Such Departmental appraisals are not published since they inevitably contain commercially sensitive information.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discount rate he proposes to use in establishing whether British Rail's proposals for a new Kent railway line offer a commercial return; and whether he will revise the discount rate formula for this project to one requiring a rate of return equivalent to commercial rates of return for new private sector capital projects.

Mr. Portillo: I refer to my answer to the right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) on 30 Janauary, *Official Report*, column *53*.

British Rail (Investment)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the level of investment by British Rail for each year from 1978 to 1988; what percentage was invested in the east coast line during each of those years; and what percentage of the east coast investment in each year was spent on *(a)* electrification and *(b)* existing stock and system improvement.

Mr. Portillo: The level of investment by British Rail for each year from 1978 to 1988 is as follows:

Year	*£ million*[1]
1978	421
1979	433
1980	449
1981	373
1982	311
1983	302
1984-85	[2]448
1985-86	427
1986-87	414
1987-88	517

[1] £ million at 1988-89 prices.
[2] 15-month accounting period.

It is not possible to provide percentages for the level of investment in the east coast main line during each of those years. Examples of major investment projects on that line approved in recent years include:

	£ million[1]
Electrification infrastructure	238·9
New traction and rolling stock	168·8
York area resignalling	20·9
Newcastle area resignalling	35·1

[1] £ million (Q1 1989 prices).

There have also been numerous small schemes.

Roads (Construction and Maintenance)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of trunk road will be renewed in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The mileages of motorways and trunk roads renewed this year are likely to be about 52 and 106, respectively. These are lower than planned as a result of the rescheduling of capital maintenance announced on 20 June at column *455*.

I am looking to competition between contractors to contain future price increases, so far as possible.

Subject to that, we shall aim to increase the mileages to be renewed each year over the next three years to averages of 84 miles of motorway and 233 miles of trunk road. The maintenance programme for 1988-90 has not been finalised. It will be announced in March as usual.

Carossino Report

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in implementing the findings of the Carossino report regarding fair competition between European Community ports.

Mr. Portillo: The Carossino report was adopted by the European Parliament on 16 November 1988 under cover

of a resolution which instructed its president to forward it to the European Commission and Council. It is for the Commission to take any further action on the recommendations.

A380

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will designate the A380 as a trunk road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no plans to do so.

London Regional Transport (Assaults)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 45 and 65 years on London Regional Transport buses in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987;

(2) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 65 and 80 years on London Regional Transport buses in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987;

(3) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 25 and 45 years on London Regional Transport buses in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987;

(4) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 16 and 25 years on London Regional Transport buses in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987;

(5) how many children below the age of 14 years have been physically assaulted on London Regional Transport buses in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Portillo: Assaults on passengers on buses in London are dealt with by the Metropolitan police. London regional transport does not maintain a central statistical record of such assaults.

London Underground (Assaults)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many children below the age of 14 years have been physically assaulted on the London underground in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987;

(2) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 16 and 25 years on the London underground in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for 1985, 1986 and 1987;

(3) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 25 and 45 years on the London underground in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for (i) 1985, (ii) 1986 and (iii) 1987;

(4) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 45 and 65 years on the London underground in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for (i) 1985, (ii) 1986 and (iii) 1987;

(5) how many physical assaults have taken place on *(a)* women and *(b)* men between the ages of 65 and 80 years on the London underground in the last 12 months; and what were the figures for (i) 1985, (ii) 1986 and (iii) 1987.

Mr. Portillo: Available statistics distinguish the age of victims of crime on the London Underground only as between adults and juveniles (under 16). Assaults recorded on the years mentioned were as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Violence against the person	837	878	929	1,048
Per cent. Female (all ages)	14	16	16	20
Per cent. Juvenile (both sexes)	4	4	3	5

Illegal Parking

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take action in collaboration with the appropriate authorities to introduce a scheme to remove promptly vehicles parked illegally on major traffic routes in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Enforcement of parking controls in London rests primarily with the Metropolitan police who have powers to remove illegally parked vehicles throughout the Metropolitan police area.

A key objective is to keep traffic flowing on main routes.

Officials maintain regular contact with the police and London borough councils over a range of parking and related matters.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the effectiveness of the law relating to the illegal parking of vehicles on public footways, and publish such statistics as are available concerning the actions taken to implement the law.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are currently reviewing the need for changes to the law and shall make an announcement as soon as possible.

Statistics on the issue of fixed penalty notices and successful prosecutions for illegal parking on footways are not collected separately.

Fares

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler), *Official Report*, 26 January, columns *738-39*, if he has any plans to introduce differential pricing based on passenger contribution to new investment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No. It is for the operators to determine the level and distribution of fares.

Clamping

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of clamping on traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Journey times in the wheel-clamping area improve considerably.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what has been the cost to date of the four London assessment studies on roads; and what is his estimate of the total cost of the studies by the time they are completed;

(2) what has been the cost to date of the east London assessment study on roads; and what is his estimate of the total cost of the study by the time it is completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total cost of stage 1 of the studies was about £3 million. It is estimated that stage 2, which began in December 1987, will cost £4 million to complete. The east London assessment study costs are estimated at being one quarter of the total.

In comparison, personal injury accidents on roads in the east London assessment study area alone cost in the region of £50 million each year.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what he estimates will be the cost to the Government of road building and road repairs in London for 1988-89; and what estimate he has for the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cost to the taxpayer of national road building and road repairs in London in 1988-89 is expected to amount to some £200 million. This includes expenditure on construction and maintenance by the Department of Transport and the London Docklands Development Corporation, and transport supplementary grant by the Department towards capital expenditure by London local authorities on their road schemes.

It does not include any element of the block grant allocations to the London local authorities. There is no specific grant for roads maintenance.

Comparable forecasts over the next five years are not possible. Over this period work is expected to begin on 21 trunk road schemes costing approximately £600 million.

Anticipated central Government spending on road building and roads maintenance in London in 1988-89 comprises:

	£ million
DTp expenditure on trunk road construction and maintenance	88
DTp transport supplementary grant to London local authorities	42
LDDC expenditure supported by DOE on road construction and maintenance in Docklands	87
Total	217

London Regional Transport

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the allocated grant to London Regional Transport and its subsidiaries for 1988-89; and what estimates have been made for the next five years.

Mr. Portillo: The grant to London Regional Transport for 1988-89 will be £190 million. The estimated grant requirement for 1989-90 is £286·6 million. Estimates have not been made for later years.

British Transport Police

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Transport police were allocated to Liverpool street, Fenchurch street, King's Cross, Euston, Waterloo, Victoria and Paddington stations at the latest available date.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* BTP figures for uniformed patrol sergeants and constables based at these British Rail termini are in the table:

	Number
Liverpool Street	21
Fenchurch Street	Nil
King's Cross	25
Euston	35
Waterloo	25
Victoria	38
Paddington	16

These officers also patrol the rail network within the police divisions concerned. There is also a small complement of plain-clothes CID officers at each terminus.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Tigray

Sir Bernard Braine: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to verify allegations that the Ethiopian armed forces have been using napalm against the civilian population of Tigray; whether the concern already expressed to him about the continued violation of basic human rights in Tigray has yet been raised with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We take very seriously allegations of the use of napalm against civilians in the conflict in Tigray but conclusive evidence is not available. We shall raise our concerns about such reports at the current meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

European Youth Foundation

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution Her Majesty's Government makes to the European Youth Foundation, established by the Council of Europe, to enable youth organisations to undertake multilateral international youth activities.

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1988 we contributed FF 1,802,478 to the European Youth Foundation. The figure for 1989 is FF 1,861,910.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Adult Education (London)

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the future of adult education in inner London following the abolition of the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Jackson: Inner London councils have been asked to set out their intentions with regard to adult education in their development plans for education in their areas after 1 April 1990. We shall be giving careful consideration to these plans which are required to be published by the end of February 1989.

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the level of resignations of adult education lecturers in inner London.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has no data on the level of resignations of adult education lecturers in inner London. The inner London boroughs have made clear in their draft development plans their intention to provide an adult education service which is responsive to local needs, and are considering various approaches to staffing, principally through statutory transfer or block recruitment, in order to secure this provision.

Lecturers (Pay)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the average university lecturer's rise in salary for each of the last 10 years *(a)* in absolute cash terms, *(b)* in real terms and *(c)* in relation to the rise in average earnings;

(2) what is the average polytechnic lecturer's rise in salary for each of the last 10 years *(a)* in absolute cash terms, *(b)* in real terms and *(c)* in relation to the rise in average earnings;

(3) what is the average college of further education lecturer's rise in salary for each of the last 10 years *(a)* in absolute cash terms, *(b)* in real terms and *(c)* in relation to the rise in average earnings.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not readily available. The figures requested are being compiled and I will reply to the hon. Member shortly.

Lecturers

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what projections have been made of demand for lecturers for each of the next five years in *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and *(c)* colleges of further education.

Mr. Jackson: There is no central projection of lecturer numbers in either universities or polytechnics: these are determined by the aggregate decisions of institutions within the resources at their disposal. The public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 612) projects lecturer numbers in further education in 1989-90 at 58,700, implying a staff:student ratio of 9·4:1. This is consistent with progress towards implementing the recommendation of the joint government and local authority association study of efficiency in FE, published in the report "Managing Colleges efficiently", that by 1991-92 the national staff:student ratio for FE should be over 10 per cent. tighter than it was in 1985-86. Cm. 612 does not contain any projection of FE lecturer numbers beyond 1989-90.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what specific proposals there are in view of the long-term commitment to double participation in higher education, to *(a)* recruit more lecturers and *(b)* increase in real terms the resources allocated to higher education.

Mr. Jackson: The desirability of substantially widening access to higher education raises fundamental questions about its future pattern, planning and funding. These are now properly the subject of wide-ranging debate which has yet to mature. The Government will continue to review the public funding of higher education annually in the light of developing policies. Institutions will similarly review their staffing and other arrangements.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what monitoring has been undertaken of the numbers of lecturers in the following disciplines in further and higher education, who are leaving the United Kingdom to take up positions abroad, in *(a)* medicine and dentistry, *(b)* engineering and technology, *(c)* veterinary science, *(d)* mathematical science, *(e)* physics, *(f)* chemistry, *(g)* biology, *(h)* social sciences, *(i)* economics, *(j)* business studies, *(k)* accountancy, *(l)* law, *(m)* languages and literature and *(n)* arts; what numbers are recorded as having left in each of those disciplines for each of the last 10 years; and how many lecturers are under the age of 30 years in each of those disciplines.

Mr. Jackson: The available information, for universities only, is as follows:

	Non-clinical	*Clinical*	*Total*
1980	183	37	220
1981	154	29	183
1982	166	26	192
1983	100	36	136
1984	111	17	128
1985	100	18	118
1986	140	20	160
1987	129	16	145

Non-clinical lecturers aged under 30 by departmental cost-centre at universities in Great Britain

	1987-88
Education	7
Medicine, dentistry an health	101
Engineering and technology	231
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary science	48
Biological, mathematical and physical science	377
Administrative, business and social studies	325
Architecture and planning	5
Language, literature and area studies	88
Other arts	62
Libraries, museums etc.	3
Total	1,247

Donaldson Collection

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to prevent the break-up and sale of the Donaldson collection of musical instruments at the Royal College of Music; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I understand from the Royal College of Music that it has no intention of selling, either wholly or in part, its collection of musical instruments. The director made this clear publicly in a letter to the editor of *The Daily Telegraph* published on 30 January. The college is, however, exploring alternative sources of funding for the collection. No decisions have been reached yet.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the impact on the retail price index of raising £500-million in revenue in a full year from each of *(a)* tobacco products, *(b)* beer, *(c)* wine and spirits, *(d)* petrol, *(e)* value added tax and *(f)* vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that the impact on the retail price index of raising £500 million in a full year from the different excise duties and value added tax is as follows:

Raising £500 million in a full year from	*Impact effect on the retail price index Per cent.*
(a) Tobacco products	0·29
(b) Beer	0·24
(c) Wine and Spirits	0·39
(d) Petrol	0·13
(e) Value added tax	0·12
(f) Vehicle excise duty	0·13

Relocation

Mr. Cran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress Departments have made under the Government's relocation policy.

Mr. Peter Brooke: I informed the House on 31 March 1988 (columns *610-11*) that following the virtual completion of the Civil Service dispersal programme announced in 1979 the Government would set no further central targets for relocation but Departments would be reviewing their location of work with a view in suitable cases to finding locations offering advantages in terms of recruitment and retention of staff, value-for-money and other considerations relevant to service delivery and management. I placed a copy of the guidelines for these reviews in the Library of the House.

In an Adjournment debate on 9 May 1988 I explained at column 128 that these guidelines link departmental reviews of location to the scrutiny of running costs in the annual public expenditure survey so that Departments can report each year to the Treasury on their review plans and progress.

Departmental reports to the Treasury during the 1988 public expenditure survey confirm that most large Departments now have serious and substantial reviews in hand and that the remainder are making the necessary preparations. Over 34,000 Civil Service posts are being reviewed for location or relocation away from London and the south-east, representing more than 15 per cent. of all posts in that region. Many of these reviews are still at the earliest stage and no overall estimates of the future scale of movement can be given. Successful relocations need careful planning and preparation, and I should emphasise that not all the posts now under review will move. Departmental Ministers will announce their decisions once the essential processes of assessment, consultation and decision for each review have been completed.

Ministers are firm in their intention to ensure that the locations of their Departments' activities are thoroughly reviewed and appreciate the potential advantages to departmental management as well as the benefits for regional and urban policy of relocating work outside London and the south-east in all suitable cases. No further central targets for relocation or dispersal are being set, but the Government are confident that the present review process will in the coming years add very significantly to the 12,000 posts located or relocated outside London and the south-east between 1979 and 1987. Since 1987 departmental Ministers have announced new relocation decisions totalling some 3,000 posts, including over 1,000 DSS posts to Glasgow, Belfast and Wigan, and 850 Patent Office posts to Newport. Further announcements can be expected in due course as individual reviews are completed and departmental Ministers take their decisions.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his plans for the Central Office of Information.

Mr. Lawson: I have considered whether the Central Office of Information should become a next steps agency, and have concluded that it should. The aim will be to give it agency status by April 1990.

NatWest Bank

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to increase the powers of the Bank of England to investigate the responsibility of the National Westminster Bank for its subsidiary the County NatWest Bank.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 8 February 1989]:* The powers of the Bank of England are fully adequate to enable it to carry out its supervisory responsibilities.

VAT

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy not to implement value added tax standard rating of supplies to university halls of residence until balancing increases can be made in public expenditure plans on either student financial support or grants to universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 8 February 1989]:* The publication of draft clauses implementing the European Court of Justice ruling on VAT zero rates was announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on 6 February, *Official Report*, columns *548-50*. Zero rating is to be retained for supplies of construction services and fuel and power to university halls of residence.

EC (Contributions)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer where the special payment made by the United Kingdom to the European Economic Community of £670,000,000 in respect of overspending by the Community appears in the table indicating the outturn of Community payments in page 1 of Cm. 603, published in January 1988.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The 1988 intergovernmental agreement (IGA) between

member states of the European Community made provisions about supplementary finance for the 1988 Community budget. As I informed the House on 23 November 1988, *Official Report*, columns 1-2, the United Kingdom has paid a contribution of some £613 million (929 mecu) under the IGA. This contribution (£619 million at the exchange rate used for the projection published in Cm. 603 in January 1989) is included in the gross payment of £5,213 million shown on page 1 of Cm. 603: table 3.1, 1988-89 estimated outturn column. As explained in paragraph 6 of Cm. 603 the IGA also provided for a monetary reserve of 1,000 mecu (some £670 million) to which all member states would have contributed, but this was not activated in 1988. Therefore no payment was made by the United Kingdom in respect of this reserve.

THE ARTS

Volunteers

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister for the Arts what developments there have been on the use of volunteers in museums and heritage organisations.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to announce that my Department is funding a research project to be undertaken to prepare guidelines for the constructive use and management of volunteers in museums and heritage organisations.

The project will be divided into four phases:

(i) Review of the literature, existing guidelines and directives;
(ii) Current practice in the management of volunteers;
(iii) Practicalities: the practical issues in managing volunteer effort;
(iv) The preparation, piloting and publication of guidelines for management.

When the guidelines are produced they should include practical advice on a number of aspects of the use of volunteers, such as recruitment, training, responsibilities, statutory obligations and rewards. The results of the study should encourage museums' and galleries' managements to consider employing volunteers or, where they already do, to make better use of these arrangements.

The project which should be completed by March 1990, will be overseen by a steering committee which will include representatives from national, local authority and independent museums, the Ironbridge Institute, the Museums and Galleries Commission, the British Association of Friends of Museums, the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (voluntary conservation corporations), and the National Trust.

This project to examine the use and management of volunteers in museums and heritage organisations is timely in the context of my initiatives on museums training and on improving access to collections. I look forward to seeing its conclusions in due course.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

VAT Registrations

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many new businesses have registered on Merseyside for value added tax in each of the last three years.

Mr. Maude: The latest available figures for Merseyside provided by the Department of Employment are for 1986, when 2,918 new businesses registered for VAT compared with 2,905 in 1985 and 3,262 in 1984.

Pirate Radio

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to combat pirate radio interference.

Mr. Atkins: It is because of the interference caused to authorised radio users by unlicensed broadcasters that last year my Department's radio investigation service (RIS) carried out a record number (444) of raids against them. The RIS will continue to pursue unlicensed radio stations with vigour and with a view to identifying and prosecuting those responsible for the running of such stations. Furthermore in the forthcoming Broadcasting Bill the Government will be seeking additional powers to make it an offence to supply goods and services for the operation of an unlicensed station, to advertise on an unlicensed station or to solicit others to do so and to be engaged in the operation of the unlicensed station.

EC (Trade Deficit)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which European Economic Community countries are running a smaller trade deficit with the rest of the Community, expressed as a percentage of gross domestic product, than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: On the basis of the latest information available all other Community countries except Portugal and Greece are running either surpluses or smaller deficits as a percentage of GDP.

Companies Bill *[Lords]*

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received regarding the terms of the Companies Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Maude: I have received a number of detailed commentaries on the Bill, in particular from some of the major accountancy bodies, from the Law Society, and from the Law Society of Scotland.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met officials of the Society of British Aerospace Companies; and what was discussed.

Mr. Atkins: I last met representatives of the Society of British Aerospace Companies on 14 December 1988. We discussed export opportunities for the industry.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Curry: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make a statement about the payment of regional development grant.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and I have decided that the current four-month moratorium on payments of grant under the original regional development grant scheme will

be lifted tomorrow. Payments which are at present held up by the moratorium will be made as soon as practicable. This will be of immediate benefit to those companies which remain eligible for grant under the scheme's transitional provisions.

Footwear

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the British Footwear Manufacturers Association to discuss imports of footwear from south-east Asia.

Mr. Alan Clark: As I said in reply to the hon. Member's priority written question of 18 January (*Official Report*, columns *237-38*), I met the hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) and representatives of the footwear industry, including the British Footwear Manufacturers Federation, in February 1988 to discuss footwear imports from the far east. Imports from south-east Asia were also discussed.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Bernard Ingham

Q23. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister when she expects Mr. Bernard Ingham to return to a Government Department from service in 10 Downing street.

The Prime Minister: In due course.

Dunchurch and Rugby

Q172. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Dunchurch and Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Favell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 9 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Select Committees (Members' Evidence)

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what advice she has given to hon. Members who have served in the Government about giving evidence if requested to do so by a Select Committee regarding the activities or views expressed by them while a member of the Government.

The Prime Minister: None, but I hope that such hon. Members would continue to observe the established conventions relating to the disclosure of advice given by officials to Ministers.

ENERGY

Wind Energy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the impediments, in the order of importance, to the full-scale exploitation of wind energy in the United Kingdom; and what measures he is taking to resolve these impediments.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am not aware of any impediments to the full-scale exploitation of wind energy in the United Kingdom other than the need to obtain the necessary planning consents and its need to be commercially viable and environmentally acceptable.

My Department's programme of research, development and demonstration in the field of wind energy is intended to provide information to the wind energy industry and other concerned bodies. The programme is examining such areas as wind turbine design and performance in the broadest sense, through the construction and monitoring of a range of experimental and prototype wind turbine generators; this is supported by a generic programme covering, for example, materials of construction, aerodynamic behaviour, noise reduction and control methodology. It is hoped that the programme will provide a basis for the commercial exploitation of wind energy as well as giving an assessment of the acceptability of the technology to the general public.

The primary objective of the proposed experimental wind farms at Capel Cynon, Landon Common and Cold Northcott is to examine environmental impact and public acceptability.

Energy Conservation

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to assess the arguments advanced for energy conservation and energy efficiency by the chairman-designate of PowerGen on 26 January in a speech made in London.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I very much welcome Mr. Malpas' interest in energy efficiency.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, 26 January, *Official Report*, columns *994-5*, when the separated plutonium store at Sellafield became party to full physical safeguards by Euratom inspectors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Stored civil plutonium has been open to inspection since 1973.

Magnox

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 26 January, column 695, if he will make a statement on the period 4 June 1986 to 31 December 1986 to which his reply of 4 June 1986, *Official Report*, columns 594-5 does not refer.

Mr. Michael Spicer: During the period 4 June 1986 to 15 December 1986, co-processing of safeguarded and non-safeguarded Magnox fuel took place with safeguards inspectors having full access to the reprocessing plant. After 15 December 1986 the plant was washed out and since then safeguarded and non-safeguarded fuel has been reprocessed in separate campaigns.

Sellafield (Euratom Inspectors)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many Euratom inspectors have had a permanent presence at Sellafield since March 1986; how often they have reported data to Euratom headquarters; to what data they have had access; and how physical checks and assays on civil spend magnox fuels were conducted between March 1986 and 1 January 1987, when co-processing of civil and non-civil unsafeguardable spent magnox fuel was being conducted.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how Euratom inspectors verified the flows and inventories of civil nuclear materials at the Magnox reprocessing plant at Sellafield in the transitional co-processing period to 31 December 1986, to which he referred in his answer of 4 June 1986, *Official Report*, columns 594-5.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These are matters for the European Commission.

Hinkley Point (Shutdown)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the safety implications of the shutdown of the Hinkley Point reactors at the end of January.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised that Hinkley Point A reactor 1 was shut down on 23 January following difficulties during routine refuelling. Investigations revealed that two pieces of a fuel element had fallen back into the reactor. They have been recovered and work to check for, and recover, any further debris is under way. There was no hazard to the public or staff. It is hoped to resume operation of the reactor in a few days subject to the agreement of the Health and Safety Executive.

Reactor II at Hinkley Point A was shut down on 20 January for its statutory biennial inspection, having completed 700 days' continuous operation.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessments he has made of the impact of privatisation of the national electricity grid with particular reference to the technical challenge posed by the concept of a unified electricity policy by 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Electricity Bill places a statutory duty on the National Grid Company to facilitate competition in the supply and generation of electricity. Under the draft licence to be issued to the National Grid Company, authorised generators wil be able to use the grid to convey their electricity. This is in line with the objectives underlying the completion of the internal energy market in 1992.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Broadcasting Act 1981

41. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ak the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the impact of the Broadcasting Act 1981 as amended by the Broadcasting Act 1987 as it relates to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Renton: It is not part of the Government's role in relation to broadcasting to undertake such assessments. The Independent Broadcasting Authority has a responsibility under the Broadcasting Act 1981 to ensure that the commercial television companies meet the needs of the communities they serve.

Safe Deposit Centres

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute an inquiry as to the lessons derived from the Knightsbridge safe deposit centre robbery, with its terms of reference to include pursuing the request of Mr. Justice Robert Lymbery that the authorities should consider licensing such premises and their owners.

Mr. John Patten: We have made it clear that we look to the private security industry itself to provide self-regulation. We propose to discuss with the private security industry ways in which safe deposit centres might be brought into the self-regulatory framework.

Refugees

131. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refugees are currently residing in Britain; and what is their country of origin.

Mr. Renton: Information is not available on the total numbers of those who have been granted refugee status in the United Kingdom and are still living here. Available information on grant of refugee status, by nationality, is set out in an annual Home Office statistical bulletin (most recently "Refugeee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1987", issue 16/88); while information on acceptances for settlement as refugees is published in the annual Command paper (most recently "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 1987" Cm 415, Table 18), and in a quarterly statistical bulletin (most recently "Control of Immigration: Statistics—Third Quarter 1988", issue 38/88, table 3).

Key Guns

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ban the sale of key guns that unlock doors and cars and are being used for criminal purposes.

Mr. John Patten: There is no existing legislation prohibiting the sale of key guns, but it is an offence to carry such an article for use in the course of or in connection with theft. There are legitimate uses of key guns, eg. by locksmiths, and any proposals for controls on sales would need to take this into account. We are consulting the Association of Chief Police Officers about the effectiveness and availability of key guns and other similar devices, and have asked what problems they have caused police forces.

Courts (Bradford)

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to respond to the application by Bradford metropolitan council for new court accommodation for the Keighley petty sessional division.

Mr. John Patten: Before a final decision can be made, it will be necessary to assess the relative merits of all the 22 bids for approval of new accommodation which have been received in the Department. This assessment will be carried out as quickly as possible and authorities informed of the outcome before the end of March.

COMECON (Travel)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions permission for emigration to, or travel within, the Soviet Union or other COMECON eastern bloc countries has been denied to applicants formerly employed at MI5.

Mr. Hurd: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 26 January at column *704*.

Human Organ Sales

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take about the letter dated 1 July 1988 sent by the kidney transplant centre to the immigration service to facilitate the entry to the United Kingdom of a Turkish man whose kidney was sold for a transplant at the Wellington Humana hospital.

Mr. Renton: On the information so far available it does not appear that there has been any contravention of the immigration legislation.

Police Cells

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently being held in police cells; and which police stations are holding the prisoners outside the Metropolitan police area for the latest date available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At unlocking on Tuesday 7 February, 272 prisoners were held in police cells in England and Wales. Of these, 80 were held at the following police stations outside the Metropolitan police area:

Cheshire
Chester

Essex
Basildon
Chelmsford
Colchester
Clacton
Grays
Southend

Hertfordshire
Welwyn Garden City
Letchworth

Kent
Ashford
Canterbury
Margate
Rochester

Merseyside
Liverpool (Main Bridewell)

Surrey
Guildford

Sussex
Horsham

Drugs

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison establishments have implemented the Home Office circular issued on the 25 September 1987 entitled "Through Care of Drug Misusers in the Prison System"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A police statement and guidelines prepared in discussion between the prison department and probation service for the introduction at all establishments of a more co-ordinated and positive response to drug misusers were issued on 25 September 1987. This policy, which also advocates increased involvement by prisons of counselling facilities in the community, was welcomed by the advisory council on the misuse of drugs.

Pressures on the prison system militate against immediate and wholesale implementation, but there is no lack of evidence that efforts are being made to secure improvement. I shall look for further signs of progress at the end of the year.

Military and Police Training

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any guidelines are issued to immigration officers on whether to allow entry to people coming in to attend private military or police training courses.

Mr. Renton: The general position is that any overseas national who can satisfy the immigration officer that he is genuinely seeking entry for only a limited period, and that he can maintain and accommodate himself during his stay, may be admitted for a temporary period unless in a particular case there are specific grounds for his exclusion. Certain overseas military personnel may be exempt from immigration control under the provisions of the Immigration Act, 1971 relating to members of visiting forces.

Prisons (Facilities)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking in respect of recommendations by the chief inspector of prisons that all prison cells should have in-cell toilet facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons report on prison sanitation will be published on 21 February. We will respond to the recommendations in the report when it is published.

Police Powers

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Home Department if he will set out in the *Official Report* the current powers of a police officer to stop and require a member of the public to give his name and address.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Unless the police have reasonable grounds to suspect that a person is committing or has

committed a criminal offence they can stop him and require him to give his name and address only if he is the driver of a motor vehicle (under the Road Traffic Act 1972) or arriving at a port (under the Prevention of Terrorism (Supplementary Temporary Provisions) Order 1984 and its Northern Ireland equivalent).

Crime Statistics

Mr. Maples: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of homicides recorded by the police in the Metropolitan police district in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Hurd: The numbers of recorded homicides in the Metropolitan police district during the last 10 years are as follows:

	Number
1978	118
1979	179
1980	204
1981	131
1982	192
1983	149
1984	164
1985	187
1986	210
1987	193
1988	[1]148

[1] provisonal.

AIDS

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration is being given to testing for AIDS and the HIV virus persons convicted of soliciting for immoral purposes.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* At present we do not see a balance of argument in favour of compulsory HIV testing for prostitutes, or others convicted of soliciting offences. Available tests cannot be relied upon to detect infection acquired less than three months before the test. In any case a person who is free from infection when tested may become infected soon thereafter. Identifying a number of infected individuals would be likely to have no more than a marginal effect on the general risk of infection through intercourse with prostitutes.

WALES

Housing Plans

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will publish tables on the plans for Welsh housing in a similar form to that of table 9.1, table 9.3, table 9.4, table 9.5, table 9.8, table 9.9 and table 9.12 in Cm. 609.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) on 31 January by my right hon. Friend and to Cm. 617 which was laid before the House on 30 January. Information on local authority lettings is set out in the table and more detailed information will be provided in "Public Expenditure in Wales 1989-90—1990-91—A Commentary by the Welsh Office", which is to be published shortly.

Local authority lettings

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
1. Total lettings to local authority[1] tenants (thousands)	23	25	23	21	22
2. Total to new tenants (thousands)	14	15	14	13	13
3. Existing tenants (thousands)	9	9	8	7	7
4. Homeless households as percentage of new tenants	11·5	11·7	15·5	15·3	14·0
5. Vacant dwellings (thousands)	3	3	3	3	3
6. Total stock of dwelings (thousands)	260	255	251	252	247
7. Vacant as percentage of total	1·3	1·1	1·1	1·3	1·4

[1] Includes exchanges with other local authorities.

Baglan-Lonlas Road

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he now expects work to commence on the Baglan to Lonlas road; if he will consider letting the contract in two stages so that a bridge has the first priority; and when he expects the road to be completed.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Work on the Earlswood to Lonlas section is expected to start towards the end of 1989-90 and be completed in 1992. The crossing of the river Neath will be part of the second phase, which is expected to take three years and is planned for completion simultaneously with the final phase. This phasing minimises the disruption to traffic using the A48 and is the most cost effective.

Public Libraries

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for the public library service in Wales in the light of the response to the Green Paper on the library service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The powers we propose in the Local Government and Housing Bill will preserve the core of the public library service—the borrowing of books and other written materials and the use for reference and consultation purposes of all such materials, microfilm materials or any catalogue of the authority's own holdings. The free service will cover Welsh as well as English language materials in these categories. It is my intention that public library authorities in Wales should have discretionary charging powers comparable to those proposed for introduction in England which were announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts in his statement yesterday.

Many of the 70 individuals and organisations in Wales who commented on the Green Paper supported the proposals for joint ventures with the private sector. I would encourage both the private and public sectors to pursue their interest in such ventures. I shall continue to observe the progress of the incentive funding scheme introduced in England by my right hon. Friend the

Minister for the Arts under which pump-priming funds are to be provided for such ventures there. I shall then consider whether it would be desirable to introduce such a scheme in Wales.

Mr. Alan Bellwood

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he intends to bring a prosecution under the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987, or any other regulations against Alan Belwood, formerly of Isfryn, Aber, near Cwrfnewydd, who, until recently, operated an unlicensed mink farm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* I have considered the circumstances of the case very carefully and have concluded that no useful purpose would be served in undertaking a prosecution.

ReChem Plant (Discharges)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will instigate an inquiry into the incidents of alleged pollution and alleged illegal discharges of polychlorinated biphenyls and heavy metal pollutants at the ReChem plant, Pontypool

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 8 February 1989]:* No. I am content for the WWA to continue to give consent to, and monitor, discharges to public sewers in line with their responsibilities.

DEFENCE

Front-line Units (Women)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends deploying women in front-line units of the three services.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Members for York (Mr. Gregory) and for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) on 7 February 1989.

Royal Naval Dockyards (Radioactivity)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of environmental clean-up of *(a)* Rosyth dockyard, *(b)* Devonport dockyard, *(c)* Faslane dockyard and *(d)* the former Chatham dockyard from radioactivity arising from the use of these ports by nuclear-powered Royal Navy ships.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 2 February 1989 at columns *405-6*.

Radioactivity (Holy Loch)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what specific arrangements exist with the United States Government to cover the cost of the environmental clean-up of the Holy Loch military naval complex in the event of an accident involving the release of significant quantities of radioactive material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The memorandum of understanding which governs the use of the Holy Loch by United States missile-carrying nuclear-powered submarines is classified. Her Majesty's Government are satisfied with the provisions of this agreement, including those which relate to financial liability.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has estimated the financial cost of environmental clean-up and environmental protection from the processing and reprocessing of nuclear materials prepared at Springfields, Capenhurst, Sellafield, Aldermaston, Burghfield and Caerwent for the United Kingdom nuclear warhead programme since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: British Nuclear Fuels plc has, I understand, made provison in its long-term costings for the costs of clean-up and other decommissioning expenses related to the processing and reprocessing of materials for the United Kingdom nuclear warhead programme at all sites at which relevant work takes place. Likewise, MOD has made provision for its own sites.

Nuclear Weapons (Environmental Monitoring)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what monitoring of the aquatic, aerial and land environment surrounding bases; *(a)* storing nuclear warheads, *(b)* manufacturing nuclear warheads and *(c)* handling nuclear-powered ships or submarines is conducted by his Department or on behalf of his Department; at what annual cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Environmental monitoring is performed at all MOD sites as appropriate. It has, however, been the policy of successive Governments for reasons of national security neither to confirm nor to deny the presence of nuclear weapons at any place. The costs of the monitoring operations could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nuclear Weapons Test Sites

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to date for the environmental clean-up of radioactive contamination on *(a)* Christmas Island, *(b)* Monte Bello and *(c)* Maralinga nuclear weapons test sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: On completion of the United Kingdom atmospheric testing and related programmes and as part of the whole operation, the United Kingdom undertook extensive radiation surveys and rehabilitation work in areas which may have been affected. The costs of these operations to the United Kingdom cannot be separated from the overall expenditure on the whole test series which cannot be published for reasons of national security.

Nuclear Accidents (Sellafield)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been to date the total cost of the environmental clean-up arising from nuclear accidents in 1973, 1976, 1979, 1983 and 1986 at Sellafield during the processing of nuclear materials for the nuclear warheads programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: The cost of cleaning up after incidents that have occurred at Sellafield is the responsibility of BNFL. I can neither confirm nor deny the involvement of nuclear materials for the warhead programme in any particular incident.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport West, *Official Report*, 25 January, column 653, on the holding of chemical warfare agents by his Department, he will list the location of each of the chemical agents held.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not MOD policy to disclose such detail.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many information exchange agreements the Atomic Weapons Establishment has with United Kingdom universities or other institutions of higher education.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Atomic Weapons Establishment does not have any information exchange agreements with United Kingdom universities or other institutions of higher education.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many research contracts or agreements the Atomic Weapons Establishment has placed with universities and other institutions of higher education in each financial year since 1979-80; and what was their total worth in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Sainsbury: The numbers of research contracts and agreements let by the Atomic Weapons Establishment over the last five years, together with the amount expended in each year, is as follows:

Financial Year	*Number of contracts/ Agreements operative*	*£'000*
1984-85	32	223
1985-86	30	261
1986-87	37	344
1987-88	41	355
[1]1988-89	39	330

[1] Estimated

Comparable information for the years 1979-80 to 1983-84 is not available.

Nuclear Submarines

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any recent communication from the new Canadian Defence Minister on the prospective purchase of British Trafalgar class nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role his Department is playing in the feasibility study for the construction of new nuclear power stations which might replace existing ones at Calder Hall and Chapelcross; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. The feasibility study has been launched as a commercial initiative by British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Uranium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to whether the health and safety standards for workers at uranium mines, uranium milling plants, and uranium tailing waste disposal facilities from which the United Kingdom has obtained its unsafeguarded uranium for defence uses remain comparable in safety terms with those standards applied to the armed services and British Nuclear Fuels plc work force in the United Kingdom who process military nuclear materials.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. The last delivery of uranium ore concentrate to the United Kingdom for defence purposes was in 1973.

Military Aircraft (Accidents)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Woolwich on 25 January, *Official Report*, column *651*, if he will give the numbers of military aircraft destroyed or severely damaged by accident during each of the years 1980 to 1985 in the form given in the annual statements on the Defence Estimates for 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Neubert: This information is available in the relevant statements on the Defence Estimates (SDE) as follows:

1980
SDE 1981, Vol. 1 page 103 (Cmnd. 8212-I)
Vol. 2 page 56 (Cmnd. 8212-II)

1981
SDE 1982, Vol. 1 page 53 (Cmnd. 8529-I)
Vol. 2 page 50 (Cmnd. 8529-II)

1982
SDE 1983, Vol. 1 page 49 and 50 (Cmnd. 8951-1)
Vol. 2 page 50 (Cmnd. 8951-II)

1983
SDE 1984, Vol. 1 page 55 and 56 (Cmnd. 9227-1)
Vol. 2 page 49 (Cmnd. 9227-II)

1984
SDE 1985, Vol. 1 page 67 (Cmnd. 9430-1)
Vol. 2 page 49 (Cmnd. 9430-II)

1985
SDE 1986, Vol. 1 page 77 (Cmnd. 9763-1)
Vol. 2 page 46 (Cmnd. 9763-II)

Common Service Discipline Act

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to there being a common service discipline Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: Consideration has been given to this from time to time. Given the need, for operational reasons, to preserve differences in the statutory provisions for the different services, and that provision for these differences would continue to have to be made even within a common service discipline Act, our judgment, weighing the considerable effort and upheaval that such a change would

involve against the benefits to be gained, is that there is not a sufficient case for changing the present statutory framework of service discipline.

Nuclear Shells

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what future plans he has to scrap obsolete nuclear shells; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All the nuclear shells deployed with NATO forces are the property of the United States Government, and it is a United States, not a United Kingdom, responsibility to make plans for disposing of any which become obsolete.

Small Arms

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the disposal of surplus small arms.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been decided that in order to rectify an anomaly in the present rules the special restriction which currently applies to the sale of small arms surplus to service requirements will be lifted. Consequently the export of such weapons will in future be handled in exactly the same way as new weapons, and the same stringent export control measures will apply.

Transmitters (Nuclear Explosions)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Droitwich BBC low frequency transmitter has been, or will be, hardened to resist the *(a)* blast and *(b)* electromagnetic pulse effects of a nuclear explosion.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply. The transmitter has not been hardened, and there are no plans to do so.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees (Membership)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give details of the members of *(a)* the Treasury and Civil Service and *(b)* Education, Science and Arts Select Committees from 1979 with membership dates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Membership of Select Committees for Sessions 1979-80 to 1986-87 inclusive is given in the Select Committee sessional returns for those years. The information sought for the period since the beginning of the 1987-88 Session is as follows:

Treasury and Civil Service Committee
Higgins, Mr. Terence L. (Chairman)
Beaumont-Dark, Mr. Anthony
Beith, Mr. A. J.
Budgen, Mr. Nicholas
Hamilton, Mr. Neil
Quin, Ms. Joyce
Radice, Mr. Giles
Sedgemore, Mr. Brian
Townend, Mr. John
Watts, Mr. John
Winnick, Mr. David

Education, Science and Arts Committee
Raison, Mr. Timothy (Chairman)
Armstrong, Hilary (added 8 March 1988; discharged 18 January 1989)
Evennett, Mr. David
Flannery, Mr. Martin
Greenway, Mr. Harry
Griffiths, Mr. Win
Hicks, Mrs. Maureen
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Steinberg, Mr. Gerry
Thompson, Mr. Jack (discharged 8 March 1988)
Thornton, Mr. Malcolm
Turner, Mr. Dennis (added 18 January 1989)
Vaughan, Sir Gerald

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* all nuclear waste currently excluded from the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 under the exemption Order 1986.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Radioactive Substances (Substances of Low Activity) Exemption Order 1986 exempts all very low level solid wastes, less than 0·4 bq/g, and organic solvent wastes containing only carbon-14 or tritium at total concentrations of less than 0·4 bq/ml, from consideration under the Act. It also exempts gaseous wastes which have a half-life of less than 100 seconds.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what remedial action has been taken at the low level radioactive waste disposal sites at *(a)* Drigg, *(b)* Dounreay, *(c)* Harwell and *(d)* Amersham to ensure the presence of chelating agents assisting the migration of radionuclides off site is minimised; and what has been the cost to date in 1989 pound sterling to implement this policy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The presence of chelating agents in wastes disposed of at the British Nuclear Fuels low-level radioactive waste disposal site at Drigg are excluded, as far as practicable, by means of the authorisation issued by the joint authorising Departments and the BNF "conditions of acceptance". No chelating agents have been disposed of at the Harwell and Amersham sites. Questions relating to Dounreay are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's pollution inspectorate and his Department's radioactive waste division seek to ensure that generators of nuclear waste separate aggregated waste into streams by half-lives of the radionuclide or transuranic.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Radioactive waste is disposed of in accordance with authorisations issued under section 6 of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 which stipulate disposal routes, activity limits and other conditions designed to ensure that any dose to the general public is below the maximum permissible as recommended by the International Commission on Radiological Protection. In setting limits etc, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution takes account of the half-lives of radionuclides in the wastes but does not require their separation.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by volume, curie content and

location all known amounts of the radioactive waste products of *(a)* nickel 59, *(b)* nickel 63, *(c)* niobium 94, *(d)* cobalt 60, *(e)* americium 241, *(f)* caesium 137, *(g)* molybdenum 99, and *(h)* technetium 99.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Except for molybdenum 99 which has a half-life too short to be of significance, and is therefore not recorded, information as requested on the other radionuclides listed is contained in the 1987 United Kingdom radioactive waste inventory a copy of which will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be in receipt of Nirex's recommendations concerning suitable sites for the disposal of low and intermediate-level nuclear waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to receive Nirex's proposals for a radioactive waste disposal facility shortly.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables showing *(a)* the proportion by volume of low level radioactive waste produced annually arising from nuclear power plants, reprocessing spent fuel, industrial radioisotope production and medical radioisotope use and *(b)* the proportion by curie content of the low level wastes produced in the categories set out under *(a)*.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The figures are contained in the latest edition of the waste inventory, a copy of which is being placed in the House Library.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the disposal of United Kingdom-generated toxic wastes in west and central African countries; and if he will make it his policy at the next council of European Economic Community Environment Ministers to raise the matter of the illegal export of European Economic Community origin toxic wastes to the countries of west and central Africa.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No United Kingdom generated toxic waste has been sent to African countries for disposal, as far as the Government are aware. Proposals to do so would be subject to the Transfrontier Shipment of Hazardous Waste Regulations 1988.

The Government oppose the export of toxic waste to countries which do not possess suitable facilities for its safe disposal. The matter has been discussed several times at the Environment Council. The Government have no plans to raise the issue at the next meeting.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amounts, in terms of volumes and curie content, of radioactive waste from the Medical Research Council's radon source materials exist at Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire; and what are the present plans to dispose of this radioactive waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since the Radioactive Substances Act of 1960 has been in force there has been no authorisation to store radioactive waste from the Medical Research Council's radon source materials at Barton-le-Clay. I understand that radioactive materials were used there between 1939 and 1948. I am seeking confirmation from the council that no such materials remain.

Rats

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what figures are available as to the present number of rats and the numbers in the most recent two years;

(2) what arrangements are being made to monitor the changes in the number of rats.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not held centrally on rat numbers. The Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, places a general duty on local authorities to ensure that their districts are kept free from rats and mice so far as practicable.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek a report from water authorities on the action they are taking to repair sewers as a means of controlling the public health nuisance from rats.

Mr. Howard: In 1987-88, water authorities spent some £308 million on maintaining and extending their sewers and sewage treatment facilities—an increase of 30 per cent. in real terms on 1981-82. The extent to which sewer condition affects the size of the rat population is not, however, clear. Water authorities also carry out rodent control exercises in sewers and along river banks.

Council Houses (Rochester-on-Medway)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has received from the Rochester-on-Medway council about the proposed management buy-out of council housing stock; and what steps he will take to ensure that an independent expression of views by tenants is made before considering any consent to transfer under the Housing and Planning Act 1986.

Mr. Trippier: The council has informed us that it has resolved to sell its entire housing stock and has given us a preliminary indication of its plans. If it decides at a later date, having consulted its tenants, to apply for the Secretary of State's consent to dispose of the stock, my right hon. Friend will of course consider the application on its merits.

Schedule 3A to the Housing Act 1985 (as inserted by schedule 1 to the Housing and Planning Act 1986) requires the council to consult its tenants before applying to the Secretary of State for consent. My right hon. Friend is obliged by the terms of the schedule not to entertain an application from Rochester-on-Medway council until it has consulted tenants in accordance with the schedule.

Water Supplies

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what forecasts he has received from water authorities in England and Wales about the adequacy of water supplies in their area during the coming nine months; and what steps are being taken to limit abstraction from areas and ground water sources in anticipation of a drought.

Mr. Howard: I have received no forecasts from water authorities about the adequacy of water supplies for the

coming nine months. However, a review of water resources early in January showed that in most areas water storage levels were satisfactory, but that in some of the drier southern areas levels were below normal. Since the exceptionally dry winter weather has continued, I am watching the situation closely by way of arrangements made with the organisations that represent the water undertakers. Two applications under the provisions of the Drought Act 1976 have been received from water undertakers.

Devon Structure Plan

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has made to the Devon county council to cater in its structure plan for a large immigration of population into Devon during the period up to 2001; and if he will make a statement as to the part currently played by his Department in suggesting what should be included in county structure plans.

Mr. Chope: The Department was consulted by Devon county council on its document "Devon in 2001" but made no representations about the level of population growth. It is for county councils to decide what alteration they propose to their structure plans. General advice on the content of structure plans is to be found in the memorandum accompanying circular 22/84. The new series of planning policy guidance notes and minerals policy guidance notes introduced last year provide national guidance on planning policy. My right hon. Friend has also published regional planning guidance for some regions in response to proposals from conferences or groupings of local planning authorities.

Landfill

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify the landfill sites in the South-East known to have dangerous or potentially dangerous concentrations of methane gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution wrote to all waste disposal authorities in England and Wales on 15 August 1988 requesting them to carry out detailed surveys of both closed and operational landfill sites in connection with landfill gas.

They were asked to establish information on the amount and composition of gas, the geology of the site and its surroundings, the location of any sewers or other services through which gas might migrate, the location and proximity of any housing or other developments, the extent, nature and efficacy of any existing gas control measures and to establish what extra measures may be required.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is analysing the results. We expect to receive its report shortly.

Radionuclides

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what radionuclides have been measured off-site at Drigg, Dounreay, Harwell and Amersham International, formerly the radio-chemical centre, traceable to the low-level nuclear waste disposal sites; at what distances and in what quantities these migrating radionuclides have been discovered; and whether any site licence regulations have ever been breached by off-site migration.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information required for the British Nuclear Fuels low-level radioactive waste disposal site at Drigg can be found in the recent report by British Nuclear Fuels on "Radioactivity and Monitoring of the Environment 1987", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. No radionuclides traceable to low-level nuclear waste disposal have been measured off the Harwell and Amersham sites. No conditions in the authorisations issued by the joint authorising Departments have been breached by off-site migration. Questions relating to Dounreay are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce details of the guaranteed standards scheme for domestic customers of the privatised water industry.

Mr. Howard: The Government's proposed guaranteed standards scheme which I am setting out today is a no-nonsense, no-quibble scheme providing a spur to management to ensure the best commercial practices. Customers who suffer inconvenience will receive an automatic entitlement to a payment or credit of £5 for every day, or each occasion, that a breach of one of the standards or service occurs. This will avoid the frustration customers at present experience because they cannot obtain any compensation in such cases. The scheme covers delays beyond the period notified by the company for restoring water supplies following a planned interruption of supply; delays of more than 24 hours in restoring water supplies following an unplanned interruption which has been notified to the company; appointments which are not kept on the day specified by the company to the customer; failure to answer all reasonable written inquiries about bills or requests for alternative method of payment which take more than 10 to 20 working days depending on the need for further investigation; failure to answer reasonable written complaints about water supply or sewerage services within a specified period.

I am discussing detailed targets with the industry before we lay the draft regulations.

I also welcome today's announcement by the Water Authorities Association and the Water Companies Association of their three draft codes of practice.

The outline model general code of practice for customers, on which the new companies will base their codes of practice for customers, will clarify the services to be provided and their terms and conditions. It also contains useful advice on enquiries and complaints procedures.

The code of practice on leakages sets the terms under which metered domestic customers will be entitled to a one-off discount against a higher than expected bills as a result of an undetected leak from a supply pipe. The discount is conditional on the customer repairing the leak within a specified period.

The revised code of practice on disconnection provides valuable advice and new safeguards for customers who have difficulty paying their bills. It sets out procedures to

be followed before disconnection. I welcome the water industry's continued efforts to ensure that the occasions on which disconnection occurs should be kept to the absolute minimum of those customers who can pay but refuse to do so.

These new rights for water customers are in addition to the new framework of individual statutory rights for customers and the companies' duties to provide service. They add to the protection provided by the director general who ensures that customers are not over charged or suffer loss of service quality, and also to our proposals for customer representation and investigation of complaints.

I will be making copies available in the House Library of the guaranteed standards scheme and, with the agreement of the industry, copies of the three draft customer codes of practice.

International Organisations

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those international organisations on which his Department is represented and the total cost of these commitments.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley: My Department shares in the work of representing the Government on a number of international bodies, in particular the European Community, the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Commonwealth, and the Council of Europe. Among its other international commitments, my Department also subscribes to or is represented on the following international organisations:

International Association on Water Pollution and Control;
International New Towns Association;
International Solar Energy Society;
International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources;
Paris Commission on Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land Based Sources.

In addition, it is represented on a number of other international organisations in the field of building research.

Vote X, 2 of the Department's Supply Estimates 1988-89 gives details of subscriptions paid by the Department to international organisations. Figures on the total cost of participation in these bodies, which would include staff time and travelling expenses, are not held separately and are not available other than at disproportionate cost.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde of 1 February, *Official Report*, columns 217-8, whether he has received a letter from Millwall football club regarding the list of incidents of hooliganism annexed to his letter of 21 December 1988.

Mr. Moynihan: The chairman of Millwall football club wrote to me on 5 January about the arrest and ejection figures included in the list of incidents of football hooliganism in 1988-89, annexed to my letter of 21 December to parliamentary colleagues. The figures for the Millwall v Newcastle match on 19 November 1988 were as reported by the police soon after the game. These were subsequently revised by the police and a revised version of the illustrative incidents list was made available on publication of the Football Spectators Bill. I have exchanged letters with the chairman of Millwall on the point.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1989-90 his estimate of the number of male and female employees in respect of whom employers are expected to pay national insurance contributions at the 9 per cent. and 10·45 per cent. rates, together with the forecast amount of the employers' contributions at each rate.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates for 1989-90 have been provided by the Government Actuary's Department and are as follows:

National insurance contribution rates (secondary class 1)	*Number of employees (in millions)*			*Estimated yield £ billion*
	Male	*Female*	*All*	
9 per cent				
Contracted in	1·0	1·2	2·2	1·6
Contracted out	0·5	0·9	1·4	0·6
Total	1·5	2·1	3·6	2·2
10·45 per cent				
Contracted in	3·0	0·7	3·7	4·9
Contracted out	5·9	1·9	7·8	9·6
Total	8·9	2·6	11·5	14·5

The figures include employers' contributions in respect of married women and widows who pay contributions at the reduced rate, whether contracted in or contracted out.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for 1989-90 his estimate of the numbers of male and female employees expected to pay national insurance contributions at the 5 per cent., 7 per cent., and 9 per cent. rates, together with the forecast amount of the employees' contributions at each rate; and if he will divide the figures between those contracted in and those contracted out.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Estimates for 1989-90 have been provided by the Government Actuary's Department and are as follows:

National Insurance Contribution Rates (Class 1)	Number of employees (in millions)			Estimated yield (£ billion)
	Male	Female	All	
5 per cent.				
Contracted in	0·4	1·3	1·7	0·3
Contracted out	—	0·1	0·1	—
Total	0·4	1·4	1·8	0·3
7 per cent.				
Contracted in	0·4	1·4	1·8	0·6
Contracted out	0·1	0·2	0·3	0·1
Total	0·5	1·6	2·1	0·7
9 per cent.				
Contracted in	4·0	1·7	5·7	5·0
Contracted out[1]	6·4	2·6	9·0	8·8
Total	10·4	4·3	14·7	13·8

[1] The figures shown for contracted out employees include employees contributing to personal pension schemes.

Benefits

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which aspects of the benefits system introduced in 1988 are being monitored by means of *(a)* special research programmes, *(b)* special inquiries of local authorities and *(c)* voluntary agencies.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on Friday 27 January at columns *802-03*.

Sickness Benefit

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving sickness benefit who are currently residing in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Currently, 50 claimants in the Republic of Ireland are being paid sickness benefit from the Department's overseas branch at Newcastle upon Tyne. There could be a small number of claimants being paid by the Department's local offices but the numbers involved, if any, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Benefit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if low-income families with children who apply for housing benefit are assumed to be receiving family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The housing benefit regulations allow a source of income that would be available to a claimant if he or she were to apply for it to be taken into account as a notional source of income. Family credit will be assumed to be in payment to a housing benefit claimant from a date that allows time for a claim to be determined but only where the claimant appears to meet all the conditions for family credit yet has not claimed it. The applicant will be informed accordingly. In cases where family credit has already been claimed it will not be taken into account until actually received.

Benefits (Uprating)

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in receipt of social security benefits will receive less than the full amount of April's benefit upratings because they are receiving transitional protection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available. It is estimated, however, that around 770,000 income support recipients who are in receipt of other social security benefits may receive less than the full amount of April's benefit uprating because of transitional protection.

Disabled People (Benefits)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, pursuant to his answer of 6 February to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, *Official Report*, column *624*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the detailed information about benefits for disabled people which the right hon. Member requested from him.

Mr. Scott: The available information is as follows.

All the benefits provided specifically for disabled people more than retained their value between November 1979 and April 1988 with real increases ranging from 0·6 per cent. to 9·4 per cent.

I regret that information about the number of disabled people who lost free prescriptions and free school meals is not available.

It is estimated that about 30,000 income support recipients getting the disability and higher pensioner premiums will still require transitional protection after the uprating in April 1989; the vast majority of disabled people will get an increase.

Most disabled people on housing benefit gained or saw no change in their benefit as a result of the April 1988 reforms. About 50,000 are estimated to have lost some or all of their benefit.

Transitional protection was introduced for vulnerable groups of claimants to restrict their losses as a result of the 1988 reforms to £2·50 per week. This included disabled people who qualify for the disability premium or who qualified for the handicapped needs allowance in the old housing benefit scheme. Those dependent on social security benefits will still see an overall increase in their benefit income after the transitional payments have been

reduced by £2 per week in April 1989. Special arrangements have been made for those who would not otherwise do so.

Water Charges

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify the figure referred to in his reply to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North on 21 January, *Official Report*, column *848*, as being used for the calculation of the element of income support levels for April 1988 in consideration of water charges.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As explained in paragraph 5 of the explanatory notes to "The Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits", the calculations were based on the actual water charges paid by claimants (suitably uprated) where these were recorded in the annual statistical inquiry, and on an uprated average value of £1·65 per week for other cases in the sample.

RPI Error

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if there are any further disbursements planned to charities following the error in the retail prices index.

Mr. Scott: Further to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 3 May 1988 at columns *422-24*, I am pleased to announce a further disbursement to charities of £2·8 million. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland will be making their own arrangements.

I have placed a list of those organisations that are to receive payments in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Quality

Mr. Alton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of his Department's officials are engaged in matters relating to the maintenance of the quality of foods sold by retailers.

Mr. Ryder: Many officials throughout my Department are engaged to some extent in work that is directly or indirectly related to the maintenance of the quality of food. The inquiries that would be necessary to assess the percentage of time spent on such activities would be disproportionately costly and cannot be justified.

RSPB

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; and what was discussed.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend and I met the chairman of the RSPB council on 17 November last year. We discussed the RSPB's consultation paper on the reform of the common agricultural policy. I also had an introductory meeting with the chairman on 3 November, and discussed a wide range of matters with him.

Third World

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the research being done by his Department or commissioned by his Department on the development and testing of seeds and the development and testing of agro-chemicals, intended for use in Third world countries.

Mr. Ryder: My Department is neither conducting nor commissioning research specifically on the development and testing of seeds or agro-chemicals intended for use in Third world countries.

Fisheries

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the fishing industry regarding Government funding of fisheries and research and development.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have recently held discusions about the Government's policy on funding of fisheries research and development with the Sea Fish Industry Authority and representatives of the fish industry sector and I await their response.

Pesticides

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the type and name of pesticides, which are banned in *(a)* France, *(b)* West Germany and *(c)* the Netherlands, but permitted in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Council directive 79/117/EEC, prohibiting the placing on the market and use of plant protection products containing certain active substances, and its amending directives (183/131, 85/298, 86/214, 86/355, 87/181 and 87/477) list those pesticides that are prohibited throughout the European Community. A copy of this directive is available in the Library of the House.

Member states may also approve or prohibit other pesticides nationally, but there is no central register of such actions. The United Kingdom Government approve only pesticides that are submitted for specific uses within its territory and are supported by appropriate safety and efficacy data. Advice on these matters is given by an independent expert committee, the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, to the six authorising departments, the Department of Health, the agricultural Departments and the Health and Safety Executive. Lists of approved pesticides are likely to differ between member states due to differing climatic and environmental conditions, the types of crops grown and differing agricultural practises.

Salmon Poaching

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what statistics he has received from water authorities in England and Wales about the incidence of salmon poaching in 1987 and 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my right hon. Friend to the reply given on 11 January 1989 concerning the number of prosecutions brought by water authorities. It is not possible to quantify the incidence of poaching which takes place.

"Planning Permission and the Farmer"

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the cost to his Ministry

of producing the recent HMSO publication "Planning Permission and the Farmer" and of producing and distributing to all farmers the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food leaflet promoting the publication.

Mr. Ryder: The time spent by Ministry, Department of the Environment and Welsh Office officials in preparing the guide "Planning Permission and the Farmer" and the leaflet giving the key points in the guide cannot be identified separately from their other work and so no estimate of the overall cost is possible. Those elements of the production and distribution costs, falling to this Ministry, which can be identified amount to some £16,000, or some 7p per farmer in England and Wales. Because the guide is an HMSO publication, the printing and publication costs are not borne by this Ministry: such costs should be recovered by HMSO through revenue from sales.

Woodland Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications have been received for the farm woodland scheme to date in England and Wales; and what is the area involved.

Mr. MacGregor: By 31 January 1989, almost 500 applications for the farm woodland scheme had been received by agriculture departments in England and Wales. These applications covered an area of more than 3,000 hectares.

Beef

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian on 6 February, concerning production and intervention buying of beef, if he will now give the relevant figures for Great Britain, excluding Northern Ireland.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The beef production figure provided in the earlier answer for the United Kingdom and EC total are Commission estimates. No separate estimates are made for Great Britain. Northern Ireland production accounted for about 15 per cent. of United Kingdom production in 1988 and if we take account of this, production in Great Britain would be 820,250 tonnes (10·7 per cent. of EC production). Intervention purchases in 1988 were 7,000 tonnes (1·8 per cent. of total Community production).

Food Industry

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the standing of the British food industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The British food industry is one of the most efficient in the world providing the consumer with an extensive variety of high quality foodstuffs at reasonable prices. My Department works closely with the industry and consumers to encourage improvements in the production and marketing of food, and to ensure high standards of food safety and quality. The Department carries out an extensive scientific programme to monitor the most important fundamental aspects of the food industry's performance, and in particular operates a thorough and comprehensive system of surveillance to check on the safety and quantity of foods. The work has been described in detail in my Department's food surveillance reports including the latest one on the food chain, "Food Surveillance 1985-88".

Bovine Somatotropin

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any advice or recommendations from his veterinary products committee following appeals by any of the companies involved in the experimental farm trials into the use of bovine somatotropin in cows.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The veterinary products committee provides advice in confidence to my Department at any stage of a product licence application, if appropriate.

River Esk (Pollution)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what data his Department has on radioactive contamination of the River Esk near Ravenglass, Cumbria, including by isotopes of Americium and caesium; how and by whom the monitoring is carried out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Data obtained from my Department's monitoring work on radioactivity, including from isotopes of Americium and caesium, around the River Esk are published in aquatic environment monitoring reports which are available in the Library of the House. My Department also collects such data in respect of soils, grass and milk from the Ravenglass area, the results of which were summarised in a paper "The Science of the Total Environment" volume 35, pages 267-283 in 1984. Further data are published as the results of my Department's terrestrial environment monitoring programme which are available in the Library of the House. My Department also receives such data from British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) summaries of which are published by BNFL in reports entitled "Radioactive Discharges and Monitoring of the Environment" which are also available in the Library of the House.

I am satisfied, on the basis of this substantial monitoring work, that doses of radiation to members of the public in this area are well within the internationally required limits. My Ministry's monitoring shows that the dose to those few members of the public receiving the highest external exposure in 1987 in West Cumbria, allowing for the addition of dose from other pathways, was 0·11mSv as compared with the National Radiological Protection Board level of 0·5mSv per year.

Listeria

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research projects he is funding into listeria monocytogenes and the research establishments where these projects are undertaken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[pursuant to his reply, 19 January 1989, c. 319]:* The research projects my Department is funding on listeria monocytogenes and the research establishments

where these are being carried out are set out in the table. These projects form part of the extensive ongoing research programme on food safety which my Department undertakes.

Projects Funded by MAFF on Listeria Monocytogenes

A. Projects specifically on L.monocytogenes

1. Effect of heat and irradiation on survival of Listeria in chicken (Leicester University).
2. Effect of microwave cooking on the survival of *L.monocytogenes* in cooked and chilled foods. (Campden Food and Drink Research Association—CFDRA).
3. The thermal death characteristics of *L.monocytogenes* in foods (CFDRA).
4. Survey of Listeria in foods (MAFF, Food Science Laboratory).

B. Projects including L.monocytogenes

1. Growth characteristics of food poisoning organisms at sub-lethal temperatures (CFDRA).
2. Investigate combinations of sub-lethal temperatures to preserve processed foods (CFDRA).
3. Recovery and detection of sub-lethally injured pathogens (CFDRA).
4. Microbial antagonism to increase the safety and stability of chilled foods (CFDRA).
5. Influence of food components and preservative factors on food borne pathogens (Institute of Food Research—Norwich).
6. Microbiological hazards in domestic and institutional handling of food (IFR—Norwich).
7. Influence of food components and preservative factors on food borne pathogens (IFR—Norwich).
8. Safety and quality of poultry products in relation to processing (IFR—Bristol).
9. Define factors controlling microbial growth and develop predicture models (IFR—Bristol).
10. Heat induced tolerance of microorganisms (IFR—Bristol).
11. Bacteria and hygiene in abattoirs (IFR—Bristol).
12. Improve classification and identification of food microorganisms and maintain the National Collection of Food Bacteria (IFR—Reading).
13. Low socium chloride foods/microbiological safety and technological characteristics (British Food Manufacturing Industry Research Association—BFMIRA).
14. Shelf-life prediction of chilled foods—food spoilage and poisoning (BFMIRA).
15. Rapid methods to assess the microbiological quality of foods (BFMIRA).

Mineral Hydrocarbons (Food)

Mr. Neale: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has received from the Food Advisory Committee on the use of mineral hydrocarbons in food.

Mr. Ryder: Following a review of new toxicological data by the Department of Health's Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment, the Food Advisory Committee has advised that mineral hydrocarbons are no longer acceptable for food and should be removed from direct food use and from food processing as quickly as practicable.

I propose to introduce regulations as soon as possible under the Food Act 1984 to implement the advice of the Food Advisory Committee to ban the use of these substances as food additives and in food processing. I should stress, however, that there is no evidence that these substances have to date produced adverse effects in humans.

Mineral hydrocarbons are permitted by regulation for use on dried fruit such as prunes and currants to stop them sticking together, on citrus fruit to replace the natural wax coating lost in washing, on the protective rind of some cheeses, as a glazing agent on some sugar confectionery, and may occur as residues from the processing of foods such as confectionery, jellies, bread and sausages.

One further use, in chewing gum bases, is being separately reviewed and the FAC has also been asked to review their use in the manufacture of food packaging materials.

I will make a further announcement about their use in chewing gum and food packaging materials when the Committee's further advice is received.

SCOTLAND

Football Grounds (Arrests)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many arrests there were for offences committed inside Scottish football grounds in each of the past five seasons.

Mr. Rifkind: Figures for the period prior to the 1987-88 season are not held centrally and chief constables have indicated that it would be very difficult to compile the information at this stage. During the 1987-88 season 845 arrests were made.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial assistance has been given by his Department or the Scottish Development Agency to *(a)* Standard Fireworks Ltd. and *(b)* Scottish Heritable Trust.

Mr. Lang: None.

Rating Reform

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide a complete list of subsections of sections and paragraphs of schedules to the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 which have been, or are proposed to be in legislative proposals before Parliament, amended, substituted or inserted by later legislation, including those themselves the subject of further alteration; and if he will provide the derivation and the date of the coming into force of each alteration listed.

Mr. Lang: The amendments and repeals which have been made to the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 are detailed in schedule 12 part II, paragraphs 15-38 and schedule 13 to the Local Government Finance Act 1987. The dates from which these provisions take effect are laid down in the Local Government Finance Act 1988 Commencement (Scotland) Order 1988 (SI 1988/1456).

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list all orders made under the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, including any subsequently revoked;

(2) if he will list all paragraphs of orders made under the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, including any subsequently revoked, which have been the subject of later amendment, substitution or insertion; and if he will provide the derivation and the date of the coming into force of each alteration listed.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is as follows:

Statutory Instrument	*Statutory Instrument No.*	*Date of coming into force*
The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 Commencement Order 1987	1987/1489	18 August 1987
The Non-Domestic Rates and Community Charges (Timetable) (Scotland) Regulations 1987	1987/2167	7 January 1988
The Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1987—now revoked	1987/2179	8 January 1988
The Abolition of Domestic Rates (Domestic and Part Residential Subjects) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—these revoke and replace SI 1987/2179	1988/1477	15 September 1988
The Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—now revoked	1988/157	26 February 1988
The Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Regulations 1988—these revoke and replace SI 1988/157	1988/1539	1 October 1988
The Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) (No. 2) Amendment Regulations 1988—these correct mistakes in regulation 7 of and Schedule 3 to SI 1988/1539	1988/1611	1 October 1988
The Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/631	20 April 1988
The Standard and Collective Community Charges (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 1988—these amend regulations 2 and 3 of SI 1988/631	1988/1540	1 October 1988
The Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—now revoked	1988/632	20 April 1988
The Personal Community Charge (Students) (Scotland) Regulations 1989—these revoke and replace SI 1988/632	1989/32	3 February 1989
The Community Water Charges (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1538	1 October 1988
The Personal Community Charge (Exemption for the Severely Mentally Impaired) (Scotland) Regulations 1988—now revoked	1988/1541	1 October 1988
The Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989—these revoke and replace SI 1988/1541	1989/63	9 February 1989
The Community Charges (Levying, Collection and Payment) (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1880	22 November 1988
The Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1904	24 November 1988
The Local Government (Non-Domestic District Rates and District Community Charge) (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1963	2 December 1988
The Community Charge (Information concerning Social Security) (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1889	23 November 1988
Revenue Support Grant (Scotland) Order 1988	1989/69	12 January 1989
Housing Benefit (Social Security Act 1986 Modifications) (Scotland) Regulations 1988	1988/1483	21 September 1988

Investment Projects

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of inward investment projects brought to *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole by Locate in Scotland in each year since 1982, giving the number of jobs involved and the volume of expenditure.

Mr. Lang: (a) There have been 10 decisions to locate or expand inward investment projects in Greenock and Port Glasgow since 1982. Details of planned investment remain commercial in confidence.

(b) The following table shows the number of decisions to locate or expand inward investment projects in Strathclyde in the years 1982-83 to 1987-88.

	Number of projects	*Planned jobs*	*Planned investment (millions)*
1982-83	15	2,608	98
1983-84	26	2,279	82
1984-85	38	5,801	432
1985-86	33	3,304	315
1986-87	26	2,957	345
1987-88	62	6,302	226

(c) The following table shows the number of decisions to locate or expand inward investment projects in Scotland as announced in the years 1982-83 to 1987-88.

	Number of projects	*Planned jobs*	*Planned investment (millions)*
1982-83	46	5,400	186
1983-84	54	6,900	166
1984-85	69	9,443	689
1985-86	58	8,217	562
1986-87	50	5,084	427
1987-88	88	11,852	337

Community Care

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations of the Griffiths report concerning community care and the needs of carers and what extra resources he intends to make available to achieve these objectives.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Griffiths report made a number of potentially far reaching recommendations which require careful consideration. My right hon. and learned Friend and I are currently studying the report carefully.

Teachers (Dismissal)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the number of cases considered by education authorities in each year since 1983 under section 88 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 which *(a)* resulted in dismissal and *(b)* did not result in dismissal.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on 17 January 1989 at columns *163-64*.

Birds (Shetland)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has of the level of breeding success for the red-throated diver, Arctic skua, great skua, puffin and kittiwake in Shetland in 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the total population size of Arctic terns in Shetland in 1980; and what proportion this represents of the British and EEC populations, respectively;

(3) what information he has on research conducted or commissioned to identify the key factors that have influenced the breeding success of Arctic terns in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will list the estimated number of young that the Shetland Arctic tern population has successfully reared in each of the last five years; and what the breeding success of this bird has been in other areas in the United Kingdom over the same period.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am seeking up-to-date information from the Nature Conservancy Council and I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Licensing Laws

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for amendments to the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 with particular reference to any steps to overcome the nuisance of persons consuming alcohol in inappropriate public areas to the detriment of local amenity; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The recent review of the 1976 Act has revealed a large measure of support for a number of the reforms canvassed in the consultation paper issued in 1986 and I hope to be in a position to state the Government's intentions in that regard shortly. Meantime, however, I have to say that there is much disquiet about the easy availability of alcohol to young people, including under-age purchasers, through some supermarkets and other off-licences; and we propose tighter controls on these outlets. We have also received many representations about the proliferation of regular late night extensions; and we propose a much tighter control in that regard, for example, by requiring that applicants shall show good reason why the particular locality needs or would benefit from such extension. We shall also consider a stricter regime for residential areas; and we propose to ban repeated applications within two years of any unsuccessful application.

So far as the consumption of alcohol in public places is concerned, our consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland) show a strong preference for an experiment in the use of precisely targeted local bye-laws; and we shall now embark on detailed discussions with these bodies as to how this may best be taken forward. This would not, however, require legislation since local authorities' existing powers would suffice to cover the making of such instruments.

A1 (Traffic Flow)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest available figures for traffic flows at peak times on the A1 road between *(a)* Edinburgh and Tranent, *(b)* Tranent and Haddington, *(c)* Haddington and Dunbar and *(d)* Dunbar and the English border, and if he will make a statement on the growth trend of traffic on the A1 over the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 February 1989]:* Information on traffic flows is contained in the following table:

1987 Average Daily Peak Flows[1]
(vehicles per hour)

	AM	*PM*
Edinburgh-Tranent	1,450	1,700
Tranent-Haddington	1,050	1,300
Haddington-Dunbar	750	850
Dunbar-National Boundary	450	500

[1] For Haddington-Dunbar single day count.

Information on traffic growth is not available for the last ten years but the statistics held show annual growth rates of 4·9 per cent. between Tranent and Haddington in the period 1980-86; 5·3 per cent. between Haddington and Dunbar in the period 1981-87; and 3·3 per cent. between Dunbar and the national boundary in the period 1978-88. With the opening of the Musselburgh bypass in December 1986 a comparison between traffic flows prior to and since that date, on the section from Edinburgh to Tranent, is inappropriate.

These figures compare with the nationally recorded growth of 3·4 per cent. per annum over the period 1976-87.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when he last met the Chairman of Harland and Wolff to discuss the proposed management/employee buy-out bid; and if he will make a statement.

30. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of Harland and Wolff.

Mr. Tom King: I last met the chairman of Harland and Wolff on Monday to discuss his proposal for a management-led buy-out. Other discussions with possible acquirers are also continuing. It is clear that under public ownership there can be no future for the yard and it is therefore a matter of urgency to try and achieve a private sector solution to Harland and Wolff's problems.

Human Rights

12. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if it is the policy of his Department to consult the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights before introducing new legislation which affects human rights in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Yes.

Shorts plc

13. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of Shorts plc.

Mr. Tom King: The Government believe that the best prospects for Shorts are in the private sector. An information memorandum was issued on 10 January to a number of prospective purchasers inviting them to submit preliminary proposals. From these a short list of potential buyers will be drawn up and detailed negotiations will start as soon as possible.

At the request of a number of interested parties, the date for receipt of preliminary proposals has been extended from 10 February to 17 February.

Political Reform

14. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made towards the establishment of a cross-community devolved assembly in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Clearly, there needs to be agreement between the political representatives of the two communities before such an assembly can be convened. Over the past year, the leaders of all the main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland have told my hon. Friend that they support the objective of devolved institutions involving both communities. We hope that ways can be found to enable the parties to make progress in discussions between them.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

15. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to be completed.

Mr. Tom King: Work is continuing on the review of the working of the intergovernmental conference under article 11 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is not possible, at this stage, to say when it will be completed.

22. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to complete the review of the workings of the inter-governmental conference set up under the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

23. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the completion of the review of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

33. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the review of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I have had discussions with Irish Ministers about the review of the workings of the intergovernmental conference under article 11 the Anglo-Irish Agreement at the meetings of the conference on 2 November, 14 December and 8 February.

36. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the review of the operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I have received a number of contributions from members of the public, political parties and other interested bodies in response to my invitation to them to submit views on the working of the intergovernmental conference under article 11 of the agreement. Contributions are still coming in. They will all be carefully considered.

Proscribed Organisations

16. **Mr. Maginnis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what changes he has recently considered making to the list of paramilitary and associated organisations presently proscribed under the Emergency Provisions (Northern Ireland) Act.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The status of a number of organisations in Northern Ireland is kept under close review.

Students (Age Participation)

17. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the age participation rate for students from Northern Ireland in higher education in 1979, the latest such figure and his projection for the year 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The age participation rate in Northern Ireland in 1979-80 was 16·3, and in 1986-87 was 20·6. No projection has yet been made for the year 2000.

These figures incorporate both a continuing improvement in the academic standards achieved by school leavers in Northern Ireland and an increased willingness to enter higher education.

Criminal Justice (Pressure Groups)

19. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met a pressure group in the criminal justice field; and what was discussed.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Secretary of State regularly meets representative groups in Northern Ireland to discuss a wide range of issues. If the hon. Member has a specific group in mind, I will endeavour to provide the particulars requested.

Century Newspapers (Transfer)

20. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the proposed transfer of ownership of Century Newspapers to Thomson Regional Newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend has received two representations about the proposed transfer of ownership which has been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Watercourses (South Antrim)

21. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the designated watercourses within the South Antrim constituency.

Mr. Viggers: The list of designated main, minor and urban watercourses within the South Antrim constituency is lengthy, and I will write to the hon. Gentleman with the requested information.

Education Pressure Groups

24. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from education pressure groups.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received a large number of representations, written and oral, on a wide range of educational topics. These include representations on the proposals on education reform, school development proposals, the consultative paper on the public library service, the introduction of a student loans scheme, the transfer procedure and funding for the provision of sport, recreation, arts, museums, libraries, youth and community services. I have had meetings with representatives from interested groups on many of these subjects.

28. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from education pressure groups.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received a large number of representations, written and oral, on a wide range of educational topics. These include representations on the proposals on education reform, school development proposals, the consultative paper on the public library service, the introduction of a student loans scheme, the transfer procedure and funding for the provision of sport, recreation, arts, museums, libraries, youth and community services. I have had meetings with representatives from interested groups on many of these subjects.

29. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent meetings he has held with education pressure groups.

Dr. Mawhinney: During the past three months I have met various representatives from education pressure groups. These have included the Association of Head Teachers in Secondary Schools, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, the National Association of Head Teachers (NI), the Association of Governing Bodies of Grammar Schools in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Youth Forum, the Northern Bishops and a delegation from Ballymena boys and girls high schools.

Criminal Justice

25. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the judiciary in Northern Ireland to discuss criminal justice in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Secretary of State has not met the judiciary for this purpose.

Prison Reform

26. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met a pressure group campaigning for a reform of the prison system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I meet various statutory and other bodies with an interest in prison matters from time to time. The last such occasion when prison matters were raised was not by a pressure group but during a meeting between my right hon. Friend and the statutory Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights on 16 January 1989.

Terrorism Legislation

27. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from the judiciary in Northern Ireland concerning the Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1988 and the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill 1988.

Mr. Tom King: Any representation which I might receive from judges in Northern Ireland would be confidential.

Fibre-Optic Links (EC)

31. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding the provision and modernisation of fibre-optic links in Northern Ireland to improve links with the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I have not received any such representations. Under the STAR programme we have agreed with the European Community that funding will be available from the European regional development fund for:

(i) an optical fibre ring within Northern Ireland;
(ii) an optical fibre link from Northern Ireland to Great Britain; and
(iii) an optical fibre link between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Security

32. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation.

34. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security position in Northern Ireland.

40. **Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

Privatisation

35. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made in implementing Her Majesty's Government's policy on privatisation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: Negotiations are continuing with parties interested in acquiring Harland and Wolff. An information memorandum was issued on 10 January to a selected number of possible acquirers of Shorts and more detailed discussions will take place with them. The Government are at present considering a report by consultants on the options available for privatising Northern Ireland Electricity, and it will make its proposals known in due course.

Police-Military Co-operation

37. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is taking steps to improve

the level of co-operation between police and military in Northern Ireland; and what assessment he has made of whether there are sufficient joint headquarters.

Mr. Tom King: Close co-operation between the police and Army is essential if anti-terrorist operations in Northern Ireland are to be fully effective. This matter is kept under careful review and is regularly discussed at security meetings under my chairmanship. The Chief Constable of the RUC and the General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland have recently established a number of joint operations rooms in order to enhance the present high level of co-operation. Others will be in operation shortly.

Republic of Ireland (Ministerial Meetings)

38. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will next have meetings with Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Ireland; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Tom King: I met Irish Ministers at the meeting of the intergovernmental conference in London yesterday; a copy of the joint statement issued after the meeting, which also lists the subjects discussed, has been placed in the Library.

Terrorism

39. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the steps he is taking within the Province to combat the ability of terrorist groups to act outside the Province.

Mr. Tom King: The Royal Ulster Constabulary and Garda Siochana maintain close liaison to combat terrorism. In particular the Chief Constable of the RUC, the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana and senior members of both forces have regular discussions on security matters under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference. There is also regular contact between the RUC and other law enforcement agencies in Britain, United States of America and Europe.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about Libya's sponsorship of IRA terrorism.

Mr. Tom King: We have firm evidence that Libya has been responsible in the past for supplying substantial quantities of weapons and explosives to the Provisional IRA. This connection has been well illustrated during the last three years by recoveries of arms both in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland which can clearly be traced back to Libyan origins.

Both this Government and the Irish Government are committed to working together unremittingly to deny the terrorists and their weapons a hiding place anywhere in Ireland. It is also vital to maintain and increase international co-operation in the fight against state-sponsored terrorism in our efforts to prevent further weapons of death and destruction reaching their destination in Ireland, or elsewhere.

It is a credit to the security forces on both sides of the border that a significant quantity of Libyan supplied arms and explosives have been recovered in recent years.

Conway Mill

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate the Government's policy on public funding of projects in Conway Mill with particular regard to applications for assistance from the International Fund for Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Government policy on the payment of public funds to community groups, where there is evidence that such payments could directly or indirectly further the aims of a paramilitary organisation, is set out in the parliamentary statement of 27 June 1985 by the then Secretary of State. The nature and extent of paramilitary influence within Conway Mill is such that this policy has been applied to groups operating in or out of the Mill. Whilst I have reviewed the situation I am satisfied from the information available to me that influence remains such as to justify the continued withholding of funds to such groups in accordance with the terms of the parliamentary statement.

Article 3 of the bilateral agreement of 18 September 1986 between the Governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland on the International Fund for Ireland provides that disbursements from the Fund shall be consistent with the economic and social policies and priorities of the respective Governments. I have accordingly indicated to the board of the fund that it would be inconsistent with the social and economic policies of this Government if the fund were to provide assistance to any body operating in or out of Conway Mill.

It is, on the other hand a most important aspect of our policies to stimulate development and activity in the more deprived areas of Belfast, including, of course, west Belfast. In this context, we welcome the initiatives taken by the International Fund for Ireland, within its programmes, to provide extra help for disadvantaged areas, including west Belfast. I understand that they have further proposals to that end under consideration.

Public Housing

Mr. McCusker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the public authority housing built in Northern Ireland since 1960 which has been demolished, or is scheduled for demolition, by district council area.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the chief executive has advised me that the information requested is as follows:

	Dwellings
Antrim Borough Council	
Parkhall Estate	4
Stiles Estate	4
Armagh District Council	
Drumarg Park	6

	Dwellings
Ballymena Borough Council	
Doury Road	14 including 4 Flats
Ballykeel Estate	5
Belfast City Council	
Ballysillan/Benview	200 Flats and Maisonettes
California Close	58 Flats and Maisonettes
Divis	699 Flats and Maisonettes
Eglinton Street	65 Flats and Maisonettes
Moyard	308 Flats and Maisonettes
Sherbrook Way/Upper Townsend Street	225 Flats and Maisonettes
Springhill Estate	194
Sheridan Street	30 Flats and Maisonettes
Turf Lodge	294 Flats and Maisonettes
Unity	315 Flats and Maisonettes
Springmartin	19
Manor Street	19
Forthriver Road	32 Flats
Carrickfergus Borough Council	
Greenisland Estate	1
Craigavon Borough Council	
Churchill Park, Portadown	100
Ennis Close, Lurgan	81 Flats and Maisonettes
Ardowen, Brownlow	40
Drumbeg North, Brownlow	4
Drumbeg South, Brownlow	14
Legahory Green, Brownlow	81
Rathmore, Brownlow	272
Rosmoyle, Brownlow	116
Maylinn, Brownlow	194
Derry City Council	
Rossville	178 Flats
Meenan Square	15 Flats
Carranbane Walk	5 Flats
Moyola Drive	24 Flats
Down District Council	
Dreenan Place, Downpatrick	13
Dungannon District Council	
Ballygawley Road, Dungannon	6
Fermanagh District Council	
Derrin Park, Enniskillen	48 Maisonettes
Lisburn Borough Council	
Drumbeg Drive, Old Warren	7
Newry and Mourne District Council	
Derrybeg Park, Newry	30
Newtownabbey Borough Council	
Derryhill, Rathcoole	20 Flats
Erskine Park, Ballyclare	11
North Down Borough Council	
Bloomfield Estate, Bangor	1
Strabane District Council	
Drumrallagh Estate	7

Deaf People (Services)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many qualified social workers with specialist training for work with people who are deaf are currently employed in Northern Ireland by *(a)* health and social services boards, *(b)* voluntary organisations and *(c)* other bodies; how many have completed training in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 February 1989]:* The numbers of qualified social workers with training for work with deaf people currently employed in health and social services boards are shown in the table:

	Number
Eastern	12
Southern	3
Western	1
Northern	4

Information is not held centrally on the numbers employed in voluntary organisations and other bodies.

In each of the years 1984 and 1985, one member of staff completed a post qualifying course. No post qualifying training has been available since the closure of the course at Moray house, Edinburgh, in 1985, but the Department of Health will be providing financial assistance for the development of a course at the Open university, which is expected to start in 1991. Considerable interest is already being expressed in Northern Ireland in an Open university course.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many interpreters for the deaf are employed by public bodies in Northern Ireland; how many have been trained in each of the last five years; what action he is taking to increase their number; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 February 1989]:* There are no interpreters for the deaf employed on a full-time basis by public bodies in Northern Ireland. There are, however, four qualified interpreters who provide a service to the deaf in addition to their normal employment or duties. Two other people (not employed by public bodies) have passed stage III examinations in communication skills set by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People, and it is expected they will go on to undertake specialist interpreters training. A local branch of the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People was set up in Northern Ireland in 1987 with the help of a £35,000 seeding grant from the Department of Health and Social Services. It is working in partnership with health and social services boards to improve the communication skills of staff and there are now over 20 classes providing courses for a range of interests including social workers, nurses, day centre staff, other professionals and interested members of the public. British sign language courses have increased in number, and the first lip reading course was held last September.

Police and Criminal Evidence Order

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to complete his deliberations on the proposed draft Police and Criminal Evidence Order 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Since some responses to the proposal for a draft Police and Criminal Evidence Order published last July were not received until towards the end of the year, I am still in the process of considering them. I expect to complete the task within the next few weeks.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to lay the Police and Criminal Evidence Order before the House.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen.)

After consideration of responses is completed, some time will be needed for checking and printing the text, but I hope the whole process will not take more than two or three months in all.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training Scheme (Cheshire)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in Cheshire are now participating in the Government's employment training scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: At 27 January 1989 there were 2,340 trainees on employment training in Cheshire.

Retired People (Re-employment)

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider initiatives to encourage people at or over the conventional age of retirement to seek re-employment on a part-time or full-time basis.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government have no current plans to introduce initiatives of this nature.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the rate of women's unemployment for 1979 and 1988.

Mr. Lee: The annual average rates of unemployment, consistent with the current coverage, among women in the United Kingdom for the years 1979 and 1988 were 4 per cent. and 8·1 per cent. respectively.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of unemployment on Merseyside.

Mr. Lee: In December 1988 the unemployment rate for Merseyside was 15·9 per cent.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of employees in employment who were receiving training in the appropriate survey period from the labour force survey and as a percentage of all employees for each of the standard regions, Scotland and Wales in each of the years 1983 to 1987, inclusive.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* Estimates from the 1983 labour force survey of employees receiving training are not available on a comparable basis with later years. Estimates from labour force surveys for the years 1984 to 1987 inclusive, as requested, are shown in the table:

Employees of Working Age Receiving Job-Related Training—Great Britain, Spring Estimates

thousands and per cent.

Region	1984 Employees of working age receiving job-related training thousands	1984 As percentage of all employees of working age per cent.	1985 Employees of working age receiving job-related training thousands	1985 As percentage of all employees of working age per cent.	1986 Employees of working age receiving job-related training thousands	1986 As percentage of all employees of working age per cent.	1987 Employees of working age receiving job-related training thousands	1987 As percentage of all employees of working age per cent.
Northern	91	8·7	95	9·3	120	11·3	136	12·6
Yorkshire and Humberside	153	8·6	165	9·4	178	10·1	194	11·1
East Midlands	137	9·3	152	10·3	170	11·3	156	10·6
East Anglia	60	8·4	82	11·5	96	12·9	87	11·6
South East	696	10·5	793	11·8	799	11·9	888	13·2
South West	160	10·4	192	11·9	171	10·8	204	12·3
West Midlands	146	8·0	170	9·1	201	10·4	222	11·7
North West	172	7·8	224	9·9	216	9·6	268	11·9
Wales	67	7·7	74	8·3	91	10·2	87	9·7
Scotland	143	7·9	144	7·8	135	7·5	139	7·7
Great Britain	1,826	9·2	2,090	10·4	2,177	10·8	2,382	11·7

1. Men aged 16-64, women aged 16-59.
2. Those who in the four weeks prior to interview had taken part in any education or training connected with their job, or a job that they might be able to do in the future.

Source: Labour Force Surveys.

Employment Training

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the part being played by the employment training programme in training the unemployed for jobs in the tourism industry.

Mr. Nicholls: Employment training is playing a valuable part in training unemployed people for jobs in tourism. Several training managers in tourist areas have identified placements with employers in the tourism industry, and are already helping trainees to get training in hotels and catering and related leisure activities. I am pleased with the progress so far.

Safety (Agriculture)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to amend the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act to allow for the appointment of safety representatives within the agriculture industry.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 already allow for the appointment of safety representatives within the agriculture industry.

Horse Racing

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions for breaches of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act have been brought against companies involved in the equestrian and horse racing industry in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Nicholls: During the period 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1988 there were two prosecutions—one in 1986, and one in 1987—brought against companies involved in the equestrian and horse racing industry.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits have been made to horse racing and equestrian establishments by the health and safety inspectorate, in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not separately recorded and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers from the equestrian and horse racing industry have been permanently disabled as a result of accidents at work, in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Disabled People

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to strengthen the quota system for the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Lee: The quota scheme is among the matters being considered in the internal review of services to people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many Health and Safety Executive inspectors are permanently dedicated to all aspects of work on the Channel tunnel;

(2) how many health and Safety Executive inspectors are based at the Channel tunnel complex of works.

Mr. Nicholls: Health and Safety Executive inspectors who have inspection responsibility for the Channel tunnel complex are based in the executive's south-east area local office at Ashford, Kent.

Three inspectors are engaged mainly on Channel tunnel work. They have site inspection responsibilities and also, together with specialists from the executive's technology division based at East Grinstead, advise the Translink Joint Venture consortium on health and safety standards during construction of the tunnel.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the industrial accidents which

have occurred during work on the construction of the Channel tunnel giving, respectively, the dates, details of the accidents, the names of people injured and the results of any investigations carried out.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to receive the Health and Safety Executive report on the accident which led to the death of Andrew McKenna in January on a Channel tunnel construction site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are still investigating the circumstances which led to the death of Andrew McKenna on 23 January 1989. The investigation will continue until all available evidence has been considered.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he proposes to take to reduce the dangers facing construction workers on the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Nicholls: The responsibility to provide safe working conditions at the Channel tunnel rests with the contracting companies. The Health and Safety Executive will continue to pursue its inquiries to the highest levels and any enforcement action with determination where safety measures do not achieve the standards required.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will ask the Health and Safety Executive to publish an interim report within two weeks on the inquiry they announced into the accident which killed John Symes, a construction worker on the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement on the result of the existing inquiry.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive are carrying out an investigation into the circumstances of the accident in the Channel tunnel on 6 February 1989. Information from the investigation will be made available to the employer, employees' representatives and to the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the death of John Symes as a result of a recent accident on a Channel tunnel construction site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: John Symes was crushed between an overhead travelling crane and the fixed steelwork of the tunnel boring machine frame on 6 February 1989. Inspectors from the Heath and Safety Executive have begun an investigation into the incident.

Working Conditions

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives have been undertaken by the Government to comply with the European Commission programme of action to *(a)* study rules on working conditions in the United Kingdom, *(b)* establish a standard form of contract, *(c)* improve procedures on informing and consulting workers and *(d)* improve contracts of employment and employment relationships not relating to full-time employment of indefinite duration.

Mr. Lee: The Commission of the European Community is undertaking a comparative study on working conditions and labour relations in the Member states. On the other issues, there are no proposals currently being considered by the Council of Ministers.

HEALTH

General Practitioners

42. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner practices currently employ practice managers; and what his estimate is of the number of general practitioner practices which would employ practice managers to administer budgets as proposed in the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We do not collect centrally figures relating to the employment of practice managers by general practitioners. However, a survey in 1986 indicated that in Great Britain there were about 3,000 practice managers working approximately 30 hours a week. Over a quarter of all practices employed practice managers: this ranged from 10 per cent. of single-handed practices to almost 60 per cent. of practices with five or more doctors. We would expect these figures to have increased in the intervening period.

It will be for general practitioners themselves to decide on the level of support required to administer their practice budgets and whom to employ.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the future changes in general practitioners' list sizes if the proportion of income attributable to capitation fees is increased from 46 per cent. to 60 per cent., as proposed in the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We expect GPs' list sizes to settle at levels which enable GPs to provide good quality care to their patients. Patients will be able to judge that care and the service they receive for themselves and will be free to transfer between practices as they choose.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there will be a maximum number of patients a general practitioner can have on his/her list under the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: At present, the maximum number of patients an individual general practitioner can have on his/her list is 3,500 or, if he/she is in partnership, 4,500 subject to an average of 3,500 for each of the partners in the practice.

The current arrangements are being considered within the context of the primary care White Paper "Promoting Better Health".

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether patients of a budget-holding general practitioner practice as proposed under the White Paper, "Working for Health", will be able to top up the budget *(a)* individually or *(b)* collectively.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The White Paper, "Working for Patients", makes clear that general practitioner practices participating in the practice budget scheme will be allocated NHS resources for the treatment of patients. I

have no plans to allow patients individually or collectively to make a personal contribution to the NHS practice budget.

National Association of Health Authorities

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has considered the recommendations made to his Department in the National Association of Health Authorities' report entitled "Action not Words"; and if he will make a statement.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received a copy of "Action Not Words: A Strategy to Improve Health Services for Black and Minority Ethnic Groups", published by the National Association of Health Authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: When I spoke at its launch last November I welcomed the report and its constructive criticism. In responding to the recommendations addressed specifically to the Department, I said that we

1. had already begun to integrate ethnic minority health into the review process and that henceforth it would be a standard feature;
2. saw the value of ethnic monitoring of service delivery and were exploring how it could be developed;
3. had demonstrated the importance we attached to training;
4. had taken positive steps to ensure that black and minority ethnic groups were represented on health authorities and FPCs;
5. acknowledged that the proposed central resource unit had some attractions but needed to consider whether establishing a separate unit was the best way forward.

In these and other ways we shall continue to seek to improve health services for people from ethnic minorities.

Social Workers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many social workers approved in connection with the Mental Health Act 1983 have been appointed in each social services authority *(a)* under transitional assessment arrangements, *(b)* by examination between 1983 and 1987 and *(c)* since the examination was discontinued.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not collected centrally. It is for individual social services authorities to determine how many approved social workers they need to appoint in the light of local circumstances.

Mental Illness

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what factors determined the reduction in the proportion of funds allocated by his Department for directly commissioned research relevant to mental illness from 9·3 per cent. in 1987-88 to 8·2 per cent. in 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: The relative scale of research relevant to mental illness commissioned by the Department varies from year to year in the light of existing and emerging research knowledge, the development of relevant services, and changes in the need for research on other subjects. In 1988-89 £1,307,900 has been made available for directly commissioned research relevant to mental health. In 1987-88 the comparable sum was £1,267,000. Because the total health and personal social services budget has grown, the sum set aside for 1988-89 is a lower percentage of total funds than in 1987-88.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to the reply of 1 December 1988, *Official Report*, column 383, to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), if he will make it his policy to ensure that staff of community care hostels receiving discharged psychiatric patients receive information about the illness from which they previously suffered, or continue to suffer, regardless of the constraints of medical confidence or the wishes of the patient.

Mr. Mellor: When a patient is discharged to a hostel in the community, there should be a continuing care plan agreed by hospital staff and those who will be caring for him in the community, and this will usually include information about the patient's illness. The basis of successful care is, however, mutual trust between patients and those involved in their treatment. Giving community care hostel staff information about an individual patient against the wishes of that patient would not be appropriate as it would vitiate that trust.

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will specify each donation which his Department has made in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Freeman: The Department provides financial support to a variety of voluntary organisations whose activities may include raising funds by public appeal. However, it is not the policy of the Department to make donations directly into such funds.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he has taken following publication of the results of the survey funded by his Department in 1987 into the integration of mentally handicapped people into local communities.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the summary of a survey undertaken for MENCAP (The Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults) which appeared in the editor's introduction to "Mental Handicap in the Community", edited by Alan Leighton, 1988. The survey was largely funded by the Department as part of its continuing consideration of what it can do to encourage public acceptance of the increasing number of people with a mental handicap receiving care in the community. The survey was in the nature of a pilot project and it would be wrong to over-estimate its reliability. The great majority of people with a mental handicap have always lived in the community and are well accepted there and experience has shown that local action is generally successful in extending this acceptance to others who move into residential care in the community.

Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Centres

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the specialist sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemia centres receive mainstream funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not collected centrally on local funding arrangements for these clinics.

Otosporin

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many bottles of Otosporin were purchased by the National Health Service during the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 from Burroughes Wellcome in *(a)* 5ml. sizes and *(b)* other quantities; and what was the cost in both cases.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have information in the form requested. The latest information relates to prescriptions assessed by the prescription pricing authority during the calendar year 1987, and is derived from a sample of one in 200 National Health Service prescriptions dispensed by retail pharmacy contractors. Usage by the hospital service, and prescriptions dispensed by dispensing doctors, are excluded. On that basis, the total list price of Otosporin purchased was £1,868,000; separate figures are not available for 5ml. or other sizes of Otosporin.

RAWP System

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the effect on each health region of the cessation of the resources allocation working party system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The arrangements set out in the White Paper "Working for Patients" meet the need to replace RAWP with a simpler method of allocating resources. They retain however the broad principle of relating funding to population; and they will ensure hospitals are funded directly and quickly for treating patients from other regions. The effect of the change will therefore be dominated by population changes and general growth in resources over the next three years; and will be influenced by the arrangements regions negotiate with each other to pay for cross-boundary flows. The pace of change will be carefully managed.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration has been given to the need for variations in computer software systems related to wage and salary payments of his proposals to introduce variable regional pay levels in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities are responsible for paying their own employees. Any adjustments needed to the computer software assisting them in that process is for them to consider.

Renal Dialysis

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients living in East Cumbria health district attend Newcastle hospital for renal dialysis treatment.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may however wish to write to the chairman of Newcastle health authority for the information.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are for East Cumbria health district patients needing hospital renal dialysis to receive this treatment in East Cumbria.

Mr. Freeman: The Northern regional health authority has approved in principle the provision of renal services at Cumberland infirmary, Carlisle. The scheme is one of a number competing for funding within the health authority's development programme.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimate of the number of people prescribed benzodiazepines for depression over the last five years who are still taking them.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally.

Human Organ Sales

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Bloomsbury health authority inquiry into the sale of kidneys to the Wellington Humana has revealed who billed each recipient for the kidney they received as distinct from the operation or the stay in the hospital.

Mr. Freeman: The Bloomsbury health authority inquiry so far has not revealed the identity of anyone who may have billed recipients for kidneys received in the cases investigated. Inquiries are continuing.

"Working for Patients"

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the percentage change in the time general medical practitioners who work in budget holding practices will devote to administration under the proposals in the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I recognise that general medical practitioners may look to other disciplines for the skills associated with managing and controlling budgets. Many large practices already employ practice managers and other administrative support staff. As proposed in the White Paper, "Working for Patients" each practice budget will include a fee, which the Government intends to set at a realistic level, to recognise the management and other costs. This will avoid the need for GPs to spend additional time on administration at the expense of caring for patients.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many administrators are *(a)* currently employed in the National Health Service and *(b)* would be employed under the proposals in the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: "Administrators" has been interpreted as administrative and clerical staff in post.

At 30 September 1987, there were 114,600 whole time equivalent administrative and clerical staff in post in England.

It is not yet possible to say what effect the White Paper proposals might have on these figures.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether medical audit, as proposed under the National Health Service White Paper, will be extended to private hospitals;

(2) what steps he intends to take to ensure that medical audit, as proposed under the National Health Service White Paper, is carried out in private hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall be publishing a working paper shortly on the development of medical audit with professionals.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) who in a district will make the decision about whether a patient can be referred to supra-regional services or supra-district services;

(2) under the White Paper "Working for Patients", whether prior approval would have to be sought from the patient's district of residence before a patient could be referred to a supra-regional or supra-district service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The responsibility for referring patients to hospital will continue to rest with GPs and, in the case of referrals from one hospital service to another, with consultants. The Government's proposals for funding supra-regional and supra-district services will be set out in more detail in a working paper which I will be publishing shortly.

Over-60s

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the population is over 60 years *(a)* currently, *(b)* in 2000 and *(c)* in 2020.

Mr. Freeman: The most recent estimate of the population of England and Wales indicates that at mid-1987 20·9 per cent. of the population of England and Wales was over 60. The Government Actuary's 1987-based projections indicate that the corresponding percentages for 2000 and 2020 are 20·4 and 23·7 respectively.

Life Expectation

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current number of years of expectation of life at birth for *(a)* males, and *(b)* females in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: The latest available data from the Government Actuary's Department indicate that for the period 1984-86 the life expectancy at birth in the United Kingdom was 71·7 years for males and 77·5 years for females.

Infant Deaths

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current number of deaths in the United Kingdom per 1,000 live births of *(a)* infants under one year old, and *(b)* children under five years old.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table. The latest year for which data are available is 1987.

Number of deaths and rates per 1,000 live births for (a) infants under one year old, and (b) children under five years old—United Kingdom

	Number	[1] *Rate*
Under 1	7,077	9·1
0-4 years	8,284	10·7

[1] Per 1,000 livebirths.

Community Health Councils

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether extra resources will be provided to support community health councils to represent local community interests once local authority representatives have been removed from health authorities, as proposed in the National Health Service White Paper.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I do not accept that health authority members appointed by local authorities were intended to fulfil the role described. As the White Paper says, the interests of the local community will continue (as they have in the past) to be represented by community health councils which act as a channel for consumer views. They receive adequate resources for that purpose and the White Paper does not impose any additional duties or burdens upon them.

Waiting Lists

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the median waiting times for each district health authority in England and Wales for *(a)* hip replacements, *(b)* hernia operations and *(c)* cataract removals.

Mr. Mellor: Reliable information about median waiting times for specific procedures is not yet available under the new hospital episode system (HES). The sample numbers under the old hospital in-patient inquiry (HIPE) system were too small for reliable estimates to be made about individual procedures at district level.

Questions about Wales are for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Out-of-area Health Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were treated outside their district of residence in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: In 1985, the latest year for which this information is available centrally, an estimated 1·38 million people were treated in NHS non-maternity, non-psychiatric hospitals outside their district of residence.

AIDS

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the numbers of AIDS patients reported in each of the following health authority areas: Riverside, Parkside, Bloomsbury, West Lambeth, Hampstead, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Camberwell; and what are the major hospitals in each district.

Mr. Mellor: The table shows the cumulative total of AIDS cases and deaths up to the end of December 1988 in each of the districts requested. These data are by health authority of the reporting doctor. The major hospitals listed in each district are those from which 10 or more cases were first reported to CDSC by the end of January 1989.

	Cumulative total of cases	*Deaths*	*Major hospitals*
Riverside	477	220	Charing Cross St. Stephen's Westminster West London
Parkside	287	152	St. Mary's
Bloomsbury	210	115	University College and Middlesex
West Lambeth	69	32	St. Thomas'
Hampstead	43	16	Royal Free
Tower Hamlets	43	28	The London (Whitechapel)

	Cumulative total of cases	Deaths	Major hospitals
Wandsworth	36	18	St. George's
Camberwell	35	20	St. Giles'

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice is given to health authorities about the disposal of clinical waste from AIDS patients;

(2) what precautions are taken for the disposal of sharps used in the treatment of AIDS patients.

Mr. Mellor: A code of guidance produced by the Health and Safety Commission for the safe dispersal of clinical waste has been sent to all health authorities with health notice HN(82)22, a copy of which is in the Library. Health authorities were required to review their policies for the handling, transporting and disposal of clinical waste which includes infectious waste and sharps used in the treatment of AIDS patients.

Genetic Diseases

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, in view of the recent allocation of additional funds for research and development, he will change the criteria of the supra-regional services advisory group to include laboratory services as well as clinical services and take steps to promote recognition of the supra-regional services in the field of genetic metabolic diseases at Guy's hospital.

Mr. Freeman: No. The present arrangements for designating and funding supra-regional services were agreed after extensive discussions between the Department, regional health authorities and the joint consultants committee. I would not expect changes to the supra-regional services except those that may occur as a result of the implementation of the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what arrangements have been made within the National Health Service to diagnose and treat patients with genetic diseases after the closure of the purine research laboratory at Guy's hospital in March;

(2) what information he has about the availability in other western European countries of diagnostic and research services related to purine disorders; and whether it is his intention that work in this field should continue in the United Kingdom;

(3) what arrangements he is making to ensure that after the closure of the purine research laboratory at Guy's hospital in March the work now being done to achieve the first human gene implant involving the purine disorder adenosine deaminase deficiency will be continued.

Mr. Freeman: Purine disorders include a wide range of metabolic diseases (e.g. phenylkelonuria, gout). It is likely that most western European medical teaching centres provide some diagnostic and research facilities for diseases included in this category. In this country decisions as to facilities for diagnosis are a matter for local health authorities in the light of their assessment of local needs and priorities. The main Government agency for the promotion of medical research is the Medical Research Council. I understand that they are conducting research into purine.

No firm decision has yet been taken on the cessation of the diagnostic and treatment service provided by the purine research laboratory at Guy's hospital. The laboratory's research work, which is separately funded through grants, is continuing.

Clinical Waste Disposal

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he proposes to take against the company Specialist Waste Management; and if he will require health authorities to instigate an investigation into the clinical waste disposal practices of the contractors they are using.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities are responsible for the arrangements to dispose of their clinical waste and any action that needs to be taken against a waste disposal contractor is a matter for the contracting health authority.

We believe that such waste should be incinerated and we understand that the contract between Riverside HA and Specialist Waste Management required the contractor to incinerate its clinical waste. The contract has been terminated.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have died through food poisoning where the cause of the illness has been traced to the consumption of untreated milk in the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Confirmed reports to the public health laboratory service show that during the last five years in England and Wales there has been only one outbreak of food poisoning resulting in deaths where the consumption of raw milk was responsible for or contributed to the deaths. This was in 1984 when there were eight deaths.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the provisional 1988 figures for the number of people suffering food poisoning where the cause of the illness has been traced to the consumption of untreated milk;

(2) how many people have suffered food poisoning in each of the last five years for which final records are available where the cause of the food poisoning has been traced to the consumption of untreated milk.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Confirmed reports to the PHLS show that numbers of cases of food poisoning associated with the consumption of raw milk in England and Wales in the years from 1982 to 1988 are as follows:

Year	Number of cases
1982	612
1983	283
1984	406
1985	233
1986	347
1987	366
[1]1988	22

[1] Provisional.

White Paper (Costs)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the money allocated to the launch of the National Health Service White Paper has been spent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The sum of £1,250,000 has been allocated and spent on the launch of the White Paper.

Thyroid Cancer

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the incidences of thyroid cancer were within a 10-mile radius of *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Faslane, *(c)* Holy Loch, *(d)* Rosyth, *(e)* Southampton, *(f)* Plymouth, *(g)* Portsmouth, *(h)* Cardiff and *(i)* Barry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* The exact information requested is not readily available.

Data are readily available for county/metropolitan county districts, and the table shows data for those districts containing the requested locations in England and Wales. Registration data are given for 1984, which is the latest available, and mortality data are shown for that year and for 1987.

Data for areas in Scotland are the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Number of (a) newly diagnosed cases, (b) death registrations (underlying cause of death) for malignant neoplasm of the thyroid ICD (9) 193[1] by area of usual residence and sex, 1984, 1987

County district/Metropolitan county district of usual residence	*1984 Registrations*		*1984 Deaths*		*1987 Deaths*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Liverpool	4	8	1	2	1	5
Southampton	0	0	0	0	0	1
Plymouth	1	1	0	1	2	1
Cardiff	0	2	0	1	1	0
Vale of Glamorgan (includes Barry)	1	2	1	0	0	0

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ninth revision). Figures are for all ages except 1987 (at age 28 days and over).

NHS (Inspectors)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will consider the establishment of Her Majesty's inspectors to monitor National Health Service facilities.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 20 January 1989]:* No. As explained in the White Paper "Working For Patients" it is for district health authorities to ensure that their population has access to a comprehensive range of high quality services. Regional health authorities are responsible for monitoring the performance of their DHAs.

Abortions

43. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women presenting for abortions in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available had already had previous abortions.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 24 January 1989]:* The notification form for abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 requires information about previous abortions to the woman concerned to be recorded, distinguishing between spontaneous miscarriages and legal terminations.

The number of notifications for England and Wales in 1987 (the latest available year) where at least one previous legal termination to the woman had taken place is 33,294. This represents 19·1 per cent. of all notifications for that year. These previous legal terminations, which include previous legal abortions under the 1967 Act, also include those which occurred outside Great Britain and were therefore not carried out under the Act.

The number of notifications for England and Wales in 1987 where at least one previous spontaneous miscarriage to the woman had taken place is 12,249. This represents 7 per cent. of all notifications for that year.

Notifications having at least one previous spontaneous miscarriage and also at least one previous legal termination, and women having more than one abortion under the Act in 1987 will be counted more than once in the statistics.

Mill Road Artificial Appliance Centre, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the upgrading of facilities at the Mill road artificial appliance centre, Liverpool

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 31 January 1989]:* These are matters for the Disablement Services Authority, to which the hon. Member should address this question.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 10 February 1989

WALES

Health Authorities (Land)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health authority *(a)* the square footage of unused properties and *(b)* the square footage or acreage of unused land and the estimated value of each category as a percentage total land and property and as a percentage of the total land and property value of each authority; and if he will make a statement as to his Department's policy on the sale of unused land and property.

Mr. Grist: This information is not recorded in the form requested and it could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information about the acreage of the land held by the National Health Service in Wales including the surplus land no longer needed for health purposes is available and is summarised in the following table:

District health authority	*Total estate (acres)*	*Surplus area (acres)*	*Percentage surplus*
Clwyd	113·0	20·80	18·40
East Dyfed	189·0	1·65	0·87
Gwent	369·0	28·50	7·72
Gwynedd	358·0	107·00	29·89
Mid Glamorgan	694·0	48·00	6·92
Pembrokeshire	41·6	4·50	10·82
Powys	236·0	77·00	32·63
South Glamorgan	500·0	48·00	9·60
West Glamorgan	81·0	23·00	28·40
TOTAL	2,581·6	358·45	13·90

The Department's policy is that surplus land will be sold in a publicly acceptable manner for the best possible price and the sale proceeds will be used for the benefit of health care in Wales.

The chief valuer of the Inland Revenue estimated the open market value of all National Health Service land and property in Wales in March 1988 to be approximately £219 million.

Further Education

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many fifth form pupils have moved into full-time education in each of the last three academic years giving the figures in numerical and percentage terms and for each standard planning region.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested. The figures in the following tabie relate to leavers aged 15 at the beginning of the academic year who intended to proceed to a course of full-time further education.

16-year-old pupils[1] from Welsh schools moving into full-time further education[2]

Year	*Number ('000)*	*Percentage of all leavers aged 16[1]*
1984-85	6·4	21·7
1985-86	5·8	20·6
1986-87	6·8	22·8

[1] Aged 15 at 31 August ie the beginning of the academic year.
[2] The figures shown relate to school leavers only and as such do not include those pupils who continue their education in schools. Students on higher education courses are also excluded.

Curriculum and TVEI

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed in the Training Commission in Wales dealing with the curriculum in schools and the extension of the technical and vocational education initiative; and of those so employed how many have teaching or education training qualifications.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are currently 10 staff employed by the Training Agency to support the development of TVEI in Welsh local education authorities. This team includes three specialist advisers who are head teachers on secondment to the Training Agency, and who have considerable experience in curriculum development.

All three have a range of professional qualifications in education. The remaining seven members of the TVEI unit provide administrative support.

Training Agency advisers work closely with HMI Wales, the WJEC and the Welsh Office education department in all matters concerning the development of TVEI in Wales.

Tourism

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a contract for educational research to promote tourist visits to Wales with the countryside interpretation unit, presently located at the Open university, Milton Keynes.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to do so.

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will specify each donation made by his Department in response to public appeals for financial aid during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since 1979-80 the Department has made no such donations.

History Curriculum

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list those he has appointed to the working party on the history curriculum in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has appointed the following to serve as members of the history committee for Wales:

Members	Designation
Mr. Peris Jones-Evans	Head of history, Ysgol y Berwyn, Bala, Gwynedd
Mrs. Ruth Powell	Deputy head teacher, Cwmtawe secondary school, Pontardawe, West Glamorgan
Mr. Richard Waller	Head teacher, Overmonnow junior school, Monmouth, Gwent
Mrs. Gill Foley	School teacher, Cyfartha junior school, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan
Mr. David Maddox	LEA Adviser, Mid Galmorgan
Dr. Gareth Evans	Lecturer, Department of Education, University College of Wales, Aberystwyth
Dr. Gareth Elwyn Jones	Reader in education, Department of Education, University College of Wales, Swansea
Mr. Malcolm Jones	Assistant principal, Education Department, Trinity College, Carmarthen
Dr. William Lambert	Deputy examination secretary, WJEC
Mr. Robert Morris	Senior lecturer, Bangor Normal College, Gwynedd
Mr. Jon Vodden	Senior producer, BBC Radio Wales (Schools)
Mr. Roy Harrison	Head of staff training, education and development, British Coal plc

Note: Professor Rees Davies, Professor of History and Vice Principal of University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, will chair the committee.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the trunk road construction contracts *(a)* that will have been let by his Department during 1988-89 and *(b)* that his Department expects to let during 1989-90.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1988-89, the following contracts were let:

Structural renewal
A48 Earlswood-Lonlas resurfacing
A48 Chepstow old bridge repainting
A465 Llandarcy-Aberdulais salting viaduct
A470 Bridge waterproofing
A55 Penmaenbach resurfacing

Small schemes
M4/A449 filter lane at Coldra interchange
A55 Pen-y-Clip anchored retaining wall
A487 Aberaeron-Aberarth improvement
A483 Beulah improvement
A470 Carno bridge reconstruction
A483 Dolfor road improvement
A44 Aberystwyth area, milestones 15-16

I expect to let the contract for the A483 Chirk bypass and the A55 Travellers Inn improvement shortly.

Details of the major scheme contracts to be let in 1989-90 will be announced in the Welsh commentary on the public expenditure White Paper and in the forthcoming edition of "Roads in Wales." Further contracts will be let under the structural renewal and small schemes programmes.

Welsh Language

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessments he has made of the availability of trained teachers of the Welsh language.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A survey of secondary school teachers' qualifications and deployment was conducted in January 1984 the results of which were published in 1986 in Welsh Education Statistics Bulletins Nos. 1 and 2. A new secondary school staffing survey is being undertaken at present.

A survey of the staff in primary schools was carried out in March 1987 and the results published in Welsh Education Statistics Bulletin No. 5 in 1988. The surveys were designed to assess the numbers of Welsh speakers amongst teachers in Wales as well as those who have qualifications in Welsh. The above publications are available in the Library of the House.

Tourism

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total of Government support for the tourist industry in 1988 prices for each year from 1960 to 1988 for Wales; and what is the projected amount for the next five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The principal tourism agency in the Principality is the Wales tourist board. Information on the board's net expenditure at 1988 prices is set out in the following table.

Future plans are set out in the 1989 Public Expenditure White Paper (Cm. 617).

Wales tourist board net expenditure 1988 prices

	£000
1969-70	0·413
1970-71	1·909
1971-72	5·187
1972-73	7·727
1973-74	14·258
1974-75	4·641
1975-76	4·776
1976-77	4·855
1977-78	5·037
1978-79	6·374
1979-80	6·407
1980-81	6·519
1981-82	5·869
1982-83	7·176
1983-84	6·245
1984-85	7·524
1985-86	8·753
1986-87	8·648
1987-88	9·165
[1]1988-89	9·211

[1] Provisional.

ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department participated in the inter-governmental range on climate change held at Oxford between 24 and 26 January.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department of the Environment provided £8,751 to cover the costs of the first meeting of working group I of the inter-governmental panel on climate change. Additionally, the Department provided one member of staff for secretarial support and two officials attended as observers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment attended during the first day.

Rats

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to control and to reduce the rat population; and what advice he has given on rat control strategies to local authorities and water authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Duties to control rats rest with district councils, London borough councils, the common council of the city of London and port health authorities under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. This legislation is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the resources available to enable local authority environmental health officers and pest control officers to deal with rat infestations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for each local authority todecide what resources to make available to its environmental health department. The need for expenditure on public health is taken into account in assessing grant-related expenditure for the purposes of the rate support grant.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what figures are available as to the number of rats in Derbyshire, the numbers for the previous two years, and the anticipated numbers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available.

Local Government Superannuation Regulations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will amend the local government superannuation regulations so as to provide that employees of local authorities seeking early retirement on medical grounds have access to an independent medical examination.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Decisions about the retirement of employees currently in post are a matter for the employing authority and do not come within the scope of the superannuation regulations. A retired employee who believes that he or she should have been granted additional benefits on account of retirement on grounds of ill health would however have a right of appeal to my right. hon. Friend under the regulations. Such appeals are determined by reference to independent medical advice.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the operation by Gedling borough council of those parts of the local government superannuation regulations which relate to medical examination of those seeking early retirement on health grounds as they relate to Mrs. Elizabeth Laurence.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have received no representations relating to the case of Mrs. Elizabeth Laurence.

Mortgage Repossessions

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many families in the north west of England and each of the metropolitan boroughs in the north west of England have been admitted into local authority homeless accommodation from the year 1979 to the present due to repossession arising from mortgage arrears.

Mr. Trippier: I have today placed in the Library a table giving the available information.

New Towns

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to consult the tenants of the Commission for New Towns through a ballot on the question of the transfer of the management of their homes.

Mr. Trippier: The management of the rented housing stock is a matter for the Commission for New Towns.

Warrington

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make an official visit to meet the residents of Grappenhall and Appleton in Warrington.

Mr. Trippier: I have no present plans to do so.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why a revised code of guidance is in preparation for sites of special scientific interest; and what changes and new proposals he expects this to include.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A revised code of guidance is being prepared to take account of the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 and the Wildlife and Countryside (Service of Notices) Act 1985. It is expected to be submitted for approval by Parliament later this year.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce further legislation to provide adequate protection for the residents of mobile homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have no plans to do so.

CFC Refrigerants

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the report published by the Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association entitled, "Safe Disposal of CFC Refrigerants", which was presented to him on 23 January.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on 3 February, *Official Report*, column *427*.

Drinking Water

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce proposals for regulations on drinking water quality, as provided for in the Water Bill.

Mr. Howard: Safeguarding the high standard of water supplied to consumers is a prime objective of the Government's Water Bill.

This is why I publish today two consultation papers setting out a comprehensive new system for safeguarding and improving the quality of water supplies.

The papers explain how we will meet the requirements of the EC Drinking Water Directive and go beyond that with additional measures of our own. The papers also point to more frequent and accurate sampling, a new procedure for approval of chemicals and other substances used in supplying water, and the technical details of how water suppliers should implement the regulations.

What is more, water suppliers will be required to provide full information to consumers on the quality of water coming from their taps.

Once these stringent regulations are in force both local authorities, and the Government's new drinking water quality inspectorate, will closely check that all requirements are being met.

All in all this adds up to a comprehensive system for safeguarding and improving supplies of drinking water.

I have placed a copy of the two papers with a summary of their contents in the Library of the House. We shall, of course, be glad to receive suggestions from local authority associations and other interested bodies.

Flow Country

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the cost to the Exchequer, through grants payable by the Nature Conservancy Council under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, of protecting areas of conservation value from afforestation in the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 8 February 1989]:* I understand that the Nature Conservancy Council has not received any applications for grant under section 38 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 related to possible afforestation in the flow country of Caithness and Sutherland. NCC's estimates for 1989-90 include a sum of up to £750,000 to pay both for possible compensation under management agreements in the flow country and for additional staff for work related to SSSI designations in the area. Provision of £1 million has also been made in the planned allocations to NCC for both 1990-91 and 1991-92 to cover similar expenditure.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Staff

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for altering manning levels in the vehicle inspectorate and traffic commissioner enforcement sections of his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no such proposals for traffic examiners or in the vehicle inspectorate agency. Small reductions will be made in the number of clerical support staff in the traffic area offices following streamlining of duties and the introduction of new technology.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to reduce the manpower levels in his Department's vehicle inspectorate and traffic commissioner enforcement sections.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no such proposals for traffic examiners or in the vehicle inspectorate agency. Small reductions will be made in the number of clerical support staff in the traffic area offices following streamlining of duties and the introduction of new technology.

Bus Lanes (London)

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the purpose of bus lanes in London and take steps to ensure that they do not become parking places for coaches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Priority to buses can be justified when the benefit to bus users exceeds the cost to other road users.

The Department has issued guidance in traffic advisory unit leaflet 2/88 on the use of with-flow bus lanes; further advice is in preparation.

Violation of bus lanes—whether by parked or moving vehicles—is a matter for police enforcement.

One-man Operated Buses

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has conducted any studies to assess the effect of one-man operated buses on the free movement of other road users.

Mr. Portillo: TRRL studies have shown that lengthy boarding times can diminish potential savings from one-person operation of buses and add to general traffic delays. London Regional Transport takes into account congestion effects on bus services in their cost-benefit appraisals of conversions to one-person operation.

Toxic Wastes

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, during the meeting of European Community Transport Ministers on 13 February in Murcia, he will make it his policy to initiate a European Communitywide survey of the hazards of transporting toxic and radiotoxic materials within and out of Community member states.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No such survey is needed. The transport of dangerous goods, including radioactive materials, is required to comply with international standards laid down by United Nations bodies. The regulations are kept under continuous review.

Traffic Speeds (London)

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the current average speed by road, of traffic in central London; and by how much he hopes to increase this over the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Current average speed is about 11 mph throughout the 7 am to 7 pm period. It is not expected that speeds will change significantly over the next five years.

Public Vehicle Inspectors

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of public vehicle inspectors his Department employed in (i) 1984 and (ii) at the current time.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of vehicle examiners in May 1984 was 316; it is currently 472. Changes in the professional and technology grading structure and in the range of duties undertaken by the staff of the vehicle inspectorate mean that these two figures are not directly comparable.

PSO Licences

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has any plans to change the current requirements which operators of public service vehicles must satisfy before being granted an operator's licence.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is reviewing the operator licensing requirements for goods and passenger vehicles. There would be consultation on any proposals for change.

South Wales Traffic Commissioner

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that the office of the South Wales traffic commissioner will not be moved from Cardiff.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no intention of closing the traffic area office in Cardiff.

Escalators (London Underground)

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chairman of London Underground on the number of escalators at London Underground stations currently not in operation; how many such escalators have been out of action during the past 12 months; what proportion each of these categories comprises of the total number of escalators in the London Underground system; why one or more of the escalators at St. John's Wood station has been out of operation frequently and for prolonged periods; what action he intends to take to remedy this situation; and if he will publish the contents of this report in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Portillo: The operation, repair and maintenance of escalators is a matter for the board and management of London Underground to whom the right hon. Member should address his questions. However, I understand that the need to take escalators out of service to carry out safety-related works recommended in the Fennell report has been a factor in the reduced availability of escalators in recent weeks.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisons

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give capital expenditure on prisons for each year since 1974.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Figures for total capital expenditure are given in the "Report on the Work of the Prison Service" which is published annually. Total capital expenditure on the Prison Service, net of receipts, in the financial years from 1974 was as follows:

Financial year	*Capital expenditure*[1]
1987-88	108
1986-87	110
1985-86	105
1984-85	74
1983-84	61
1982-83	46
1981-82	32
1980-81	33
1979-80	26
1978-79	26
1977-78	27
1976-77	28
1975-76	32
1974-75	22
1973-74	19

[1] £ million to the nearest million at outturn prices.

It should be noted that the definition of total capital expenditure has changed during the period covered: the figures are not, therefore, directly comparable.

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will list all dates on which persons have been refused admission to the Unied Kingdom on the grounds of actual or suspected infection with HIV and the citizenship or country of origin of each such arriving passenger.

Mr. Renton: Government policy is that evidence of HIV infection is not of itself justification for a recommendation by a port medical inspector that a passenger should be refused entry to the United Kingdom on public health grounds. Passengers coming here for medical treatment, or who are likely to require treatment during their stay, including treatment for AIDS or for symptoms associated with HIV infection, are required to satisfy the immigration officer that they can meet any charges which might be made for such treatment and show that they can otherwise support themselves without recourse to public funds.

Identity Cards

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will initiate a study into the practicality of extending the plastic national insurance card into an identity card containing name, address, date of birth, sex, photograph and place for signature.

Mr. John Patten: The information recorded on the plastic national insurance card is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Police National Computer

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many private survey and other research organisations have access to the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Organisations of this kind do not have direct access to the PNC. But chief officers of police

may, from time to time, provide information from police records, including records held on the PNC, to assist such organisations in particular projects, where this is clearly in the public interest.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what safeguards there are against non-governmental organisations and private organisations using the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Measures taken to prevent access to the PNC by unauthorised bodies, such as non-governmental and private organisations, include restrictions on access from public telephone lines, and regular checks centrally and in forces on accesses to the information held on the PNC. These measures are being reviewed in the light of recent cases, although these cases involved the misuse of the PNC by personnel who were authorised to have access.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons British Telecom has access to the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British Telecom does not have direct access to the Police National Computer. It does, however, receive from the police details of convictions of members of its staff, and some of this information is held on the PNC.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons the BBC has access to the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The BBC does not have direct access to the PNC. It may, however receive from the police information held on the PNC in the course of carrying out the security procedures referred to recently in my hon. Friend's reply to questions from the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) on 1 February 1989 at column *254*.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-governmental organisations have access to the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No non-governmental organisations have direct access to the PNC, but arrangements exist for information from police records, including the records held on the PNC, to be disclosed to selected organisations where this is clearly in the public interest —for instance, the arrangements which enable local authorities and other bodies to obtain information on those seeking to work with children.

Police Stations

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will invite environmental health officers to inspect police stations, including cells and canteens.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Environmental health officers already have powers to inspect police kitchens and canteens in the provinces. In the Metropolitan police district, the premises are regularly inspected by the public health engineers branch of the Metropolitan police. Lay visitors are already invited to visit police cells to ensure that the conditions of detention conform to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 codes of practice.

Race Relations

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when considering the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis' annual strategy document, he will take into account the recommendations made in Greater London Action for Race Equality report "Fair Cop, Policing and Racial Equality", on the case for a policy to tackle discrimination in police services to black Londoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend discussed the Commissioner's strategy statement with him on 18 January and it was published on 24 January. Copies are available in the Library of the House. The strategy recognises the duty of the Metropolitan police to meet the policing needs of all sections of the community and gives priority to preventing and detecting offences such as racial attacks. In formulating his strategy, the Commissioner takes into account the views of a wide range of organisations, including Greater London Action for Racial Equality. The Metropolitan police maintain regular contact with GLARE, and the Commissioner met representatives of GLARE on 20 June 1988 to discuss the "Fair Cop" report.

Contracts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all his Department's contracts with *(a)* Zeus and *(b)* Securipol Ltd. since 1979; and if he will give the purpose of each contract.

Mr. Hurd: Records are readily available only from April 1984. They include no contracts placed with, nor payments made to, Zeus or Securipol Ltd. by or on behalf of my Department during that period.

Abdullah Hassan Yousef

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to deport Abdullah Hassan Yousef pending his solicitor's representations on the grounds of the European convention on human rights.

Mr. Renton: No.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet a deputation to discuss Her Majesty's Government decision to deport Mr. Abdullah Hassan Yousef.

Mr. Renton: I wrote to the hon. Member on 8 February and I have subsequently arranged to meet him on 15 February. Directions have been served for Mr. Yousef's removal on 24 February.

Illegal Parking

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the income for the latest available year from parking fines and wheel clamps in London; and what targets he has for the next five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is estimated that fixed penalty payments in respect of parking offences in London produced revenue of around £20 million to £25 million in 1987, and that income from fines imposed following court proceedings amounted to a further £250,000.

The Metropolitan police received £2,710,548 from wheel-clamping charges in the 1987-88 financial year, and the City of London received £100,250 from wheel-clamping charges in 1988.

We do not have targets for income of this nature.

Parking Restrictions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) of 3 February, *Official Report*, column 422, concerning enforcement of parking restrictions, he will outline the safeguards for those motorists who feel they have been treated unreasonably.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any person who has been issued with a fixed penalty notice, whether or not the vehicle in question has additionally been clamped or removed, may make representations to the appropriate chief officer of police, or may opt to challenge the matter before the courts.

Juvenile Court

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to ensure that all cases relating to children in the juvenile court are heard on consecutive days.

Mr. John Patten: The date to which the hearing of a case should be adjourned is for the court to decide with the advice of its clerk, having regard to the availability of the magistrates and to other factors. Often it would not be practicable to resume a hearing on the following day.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many cases under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, which were concluded in the inner London juvenile court during 1987 and 1988, were completed within a time scale of eight weeks;

(2) how many cases under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 and similar proceedings, which were concluded in the inner London juvenile court during 1987 and 1988, and which involved final hearings of more than one day in length;

(3) how many cases under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 and similar proceedings, which were concluded in the Inner London juvenile court during 1987 and 1988, and which involved final hearings of more than one day in length, were heard on consecutive days;

(4) how many cases under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 and similar proceedings, which were concluded in the Inner London juvenile court during 1987 and 1988, and which involved final hearings of more than one day in length, involved hearings in respect of which more than 14 days elapsed between the first day of the hearing and the last.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally on the time taken for cases under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969; to obtain such information from individual courts would involve disproportionate cost.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 and similar proceedings were concluded in the Inner London juvenile court during 1987 and 1988.

Mr. John Patten: Records available to my Department, which may be incomplete, show 684 such proceedings in 1987. Data for 1988 are not yet available.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has undertaken of the types of proceeding most appropriately undertaken in *(a)* the domestic magistrates court and *(b)* the juvenile court.

Mr. John Patten: The Government's general intention is that all family proceedings (including care proceedings) heard in magistrates courts under the provision of the Children Bill should be heard in the domestic court.

Television (Ownership)

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to preclude one person from owning two ITV stations through control of a company which bids successfully for two contracts; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to prevent a newspaper group from having an interest in more than one United Kingdom television company; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has any plans to prevent a newspaper organisation from holding a stake exceeding 20 per cent. in a United Kingdom television company; and if he will make a statement;

(4) If he has any plans to prevent non-EEC companies from holding a stake exceeding 12 per cent. in a United Kingdom television company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to paragraphs 6.48-6.53 of the White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s, Competition, Choice and Quality" which set out our proposals for the formulation of rules to prevent the concentration of ownership of television companies. As my right hon. Friend has made clear, the White Paper sets out a range of principles and not a full set of rules. We shall be looking particularly carefully at arguments advanced for limiting newspaper interest in regional Channel 3 licences and for preventing anyone from controlling two large regional Channel 3 franchises. We would welcome any views on the scope and formulation of these rules during the consultation period on the White Paper which ends on 28 February.

Immigration

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people currently living in Great Britain have an immigration status which would subject them to the public funds test for income-related social security benefits.

Mr. Renton: The immigration rules require all overseas nationals coming to this country, except those with the right of abode and asylum seekers, to be able to maintain and accommodate themselves and any dependants or to be maintained and accommodated by a sponsor here without recourse to the public funds specified in the rules. The funds specified are those which are both means-tested and non-contributory.

Military and Police Training

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any training was given to police or military personnel from Turkey or Chile during 1988; and whether there are any plans to give training in 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* No police officers from Turkey or Chile visited the United Kingdom for training in 1988. Some 40 police officers from Turkey are at present attending English language training courses in this country, which will be followed by training programmes in various aspects of police work. I have no information on training for military personnel.

Mrs. Maltman

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects that Mrs. Maltman of 97 Carlton road, Derby, is likely to receive an answer either to the letter she wrote to him on 1 January 1988 or to the letter sent on to his office by the private secretary to Her Majesty the Queen on 21 November 1988, concerning her disentitlement to United Kingdom citizenship.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* I believe the question relates to Mrs. Dorthy Maltman. Her application for British citizenship has been approved, as have the similar applications for her two sisters. I have written to the hon. Member to explain the position.

Prevention of Terrorism Act

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act since 1 December 1988; what areas of the United Kingdom and other countries they were from; for what period they were held before being charged; and how many were subsequently charged.

Mr. Hurd *[pursuant to his reply, 13 January 1989, c. 760]:* The available information relates to persons detained in December 1988 and is given in the table.

Persons detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, by country of permanent residence and period of detention

Great Britain, December 1988 *Number of detentions*

Period of detention	*Country of permanent residence*				
	England	*Northern Ireland*	*Republic of Ireland*	*Lebanon*	*Total*
Less than two hours	—	—	—	—	—
Two hours and less than four	—	—	—	—	—
Four hours and less eight	3	—	—	—	3
Eight hours and less than 12	1	—	—	—	1
12 hours and less than 24	1	[1]3	—	1	[1]5
24 hours and less than 36	—	2	3	—	5
36 hours and less than 48	—	2	—	—	2
Total under 48 hours	5	[1]7	3	1	[1]16
Two days and less than three	1	—	—	—	1
Three days and less than four	—	—	—	—	—
Four days and then less five	1	—	—	—	1
Five days and less than six	—	—	—	—	—
Six days and less than seven	[2]1	—	—	—	[2]1
Seven days	—	—	—	—	—
Total 48 hours or more	[2]3	—	—	—	[2]3
All periods	[2]8	[1]7	3	1	[3]19

[1]Two of these persons were charged with an offence.
[2]One of these persons was charged with an offence.
[3]Three of these persons were charged with an offence.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Patrick Haseldine

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date Mr. Patrick Haseldine was suspended on full pay; what further disciplinary action has been taken since that date; what further action he proposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Haseldine was suspended on full pay on 7 December 1988. In accordance with diplomatic service regulations, the matter will shortly come before a disciplinary board.

Consular Fees

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to increase any of the consular fees.

Mr. Eggar: Yes, an Order in Council (the Consular Fees Order 1989) was made on 7 February which provides for increases in certain consular fees with effect from Saturday 1 April 1989 and a rationalisation of the consular shipping fees, reducing them in number from 30 to 10. It has been the policy of this and previous Governments that the cost of consular services should as far as possible be borne by the users.

PRIME MINISTER

Fraud (Tax and Social Security)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister how much money Her Majesty's Government estimate has been lost in each year since 1979 as a result of fraudulent tax claims and of social security claims; and how many persons have been successfully prosecuted in England and Wales.

The Prime Minister: Reliable estimates are not available of the cost of fraudulent tax or social security claims.

Information about the number of persons successfully prosecuted for benefit fraud in England and Wales by the Department of Health and Social Security is held only in respect of each year since 1984-85, as follows:

	Number
1984-85	6,132
1985-86	6,045
1986-87	5,462
1987-88	6,228

The numbers of successful Inland Revenue prosecutions in respect of false accounts or returns and false claims to personal allowances, expenses and repayments in England and Wales are:

	Number
1978-79	59
1979-80	58
1980-81	56
1981-82	38
1982-83	20
1983-84	34
1984-85	22
1985-86	23
1986-87	19
1987-88	15

London Underground

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister when she last travelled on official business as a passenger on a London Underground train; whether she will cause an inquiry to be set up into the London Underground system in the light of criticisms made of it since its removal from management and ownership by the Greater London council; and what action she intends to take to remedy the squalor, graffiti and litter on the London Underground system and the increasing tendency of certain passengers to place their feet on the seats in the trains.

The Prime Minister: It is impracticable for me to use the Underground for official business. Immediately on taking responsibility for London regional transport from the GLC the Government charged the board to bring forward a programme of investment to modernise the public transport systems, making them more attractive to passengers and more efficient. The Government have approved steadily increasing investment in the Underground which next year will be the last year attributable to the GLC. There can be no reason for an inquiry.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Children Bill

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General if the procedures to be established under clause 69 of the Children Bill *[Lords]* will be the same regardless of which court is hearing the procedures.

The Attorney-General: The Government are considering how far, given the different constitutions and structures of magistrates' and county courts and the high court, the procedure under the Bill in those courts can be aligned.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General if the procedures to be established under clause 69 of the Children Bill *[Lords]* will follow the procedures currently followed in matrimonial proceedings and under the Guardianship of Minors Acts.

The Attorney-General: The procedures relating to proceedings under the Bill are still under consideration but will be designed to protect the interests of all those who may be affected and to ensure an expeditious disposal of the issues in the light of the fullest evidence using, where appropriate, procedures currently employed in cases affecting children.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General if the rules to be made under clause 70 of the Children Bill [*Lords*] will provide for children and parents to be made parties automatically in all proceedings governed by the Bill.

The Attorney-General: No. Where parents wish to make an application or their legal position may be affected by proceedings they will be given the right to be joined in those proceedings. Children are to be parties automatically to proceedings relating to care, supervision and emergency orders. In other proceeding they will be parties if they are applying for an order in those proceedings and in other cases the courts will have power to join them as parties.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General if the rules to be made under clause 70 of the Children Bill [*Lords*] will provide for all other persons who are either entitled to make applications within the Bill or given leave to make applications within the Bill, to be made parties automatically in all proceedings in which they are making the application.

The Attorney-General: Yes.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to seek to ensure that all cases in all courts relating to children are heard on consecutive days.

The Attorney-General: It is the intention that all cases relating to children will be dealt with expeditiously and that a system of court management should ensure that such cases are heard on consecutive days. In the high court such a facility already exists. In the county courts the further development of continuous hearing centres and the deployment of circuit judges and registrars with special responsibilities for child care cases should also ensure that cases are heard to their conclusion.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General if he has proposals to increase the number of magistrates and judges available in higher courts with experience of cases relating to children.

The Attorney-General: The Government recognise that cases involving children need to be handled with particular sensitivity. There are already many magistrates and judges with experience of dealing with such cases. The judicial studies board is currently considering the need for training in this area.

Rudolf Hess

Mr. David Young: To ask the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will take steps to bring into the public domain all documents bearing on the captivity and death of Rudolf Hess.

The Attorney-General: No. Any United Kingdom public records relating to Rudolf Hess that are more than 30 years old have either been made available in the Public Record Office, or are withheld from access under the provisions of the Public Records Act 1958 in accordance with the established criteria set out in paragraphs 24 to 31 of the White Paper "Modern Public Records", Cmnd. 8531, March 1982. Access to records less than 30 years old which have not yet been transferred to the Public Record Office is the responsibility of individual Departments.

Land Registry

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Attorney-General what is the average time taken by the Land Registry to *(a)* register a title for the first time, *(b)* transfer a registered title, *(c)* transfer a part registered title and *(d)* grant a new lease; and what is the current backlog for each of the above categories.

The Attorney-General: The average completion times for the categories stated are:

(a) 34 weeks,
(b) 9 weeks,
(c) and *(d)* 33 weeks.

Having regard to the registry's target completion time of 14 weeks for category *(a)*, 4 weeks for *(b)*, and 12 weeks for *(c)* and *(d)*, the backlog of applications for each of the above categories is:

(a) 240,000,
(b) 267,000,
(c) and *(d)* 136,000.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Third World (Education)

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his Departments' responsibilities for the financial support and furtherance of education on Third world development issues in schools, universities and through the media; and in what specific ways those responsibilities are currently being discharged.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Overseas Development Administration has no direct responsibility for the furtherance of education on Third world development issues in schools and universities in Britain. However, under its public information programme the Overseas Development Administration disseminates a wide range of material on development issues to schools, universities, the media and interested organisations and groups.

As part of this programme we are providing annual grants to the Centre for World Development Education and the Scottish Education and Action for Development of £125,000 and £6,000 respectively.

I also agreed last year to contribute £70,000 to the Council of Europe's north-south interdependence campaign. Many groups, including local development education centres, have been able to use these funds.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Products Committee

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to receive the advice of the Veterinary Products Committee concerning the possible licensing of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The committee offers advice whenever appropriate but it will not make a final recommendation until it has received and assessed all pertinent information, including the data being generated in the current field trials and the conclusions of the Community's committee on veterinary medicinal products. I cannot forecast when this might be.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning veterinary products undergoing licensing considerations by the Veterinary Products Committee.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I frequently receive such representations from non-members, other individuals and organisations representing the consumer, trade and other interests, and sometimes from applicant companies.

Research and Development

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about the future of agricultural research and development.

Mr. Ryder: The Government's position is well known. We will continue to fund strategic and public good research while looking to industry to take on support for near market research, which is work which offers the prospect of commercial application or exploitation as product, process or system with a reasonable time scale.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on why grooms who are working on establishments which are both equestrian centres and farms are not covered by Agricultural Wages Board orders.

Mr. Ryder: The orders made by the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales apply only to workers in agriculture as defined in the Agricultural Wages Act 1984. The definition relates to activities carried out by the worker rather than to the type of establishment.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider extending the Agricultural Wages Board order to cover private gardeners, estate workers, gamekeepers and equestrian workers.

Mr. Ryder: I have no plans to extend the scope of the Agricultural Wages Board.

Horses

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to re-classify the horse as an agricultural animal.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. The horse is treated as an agricultural animal when it is used for the purpose of farming of land.

Contaminated Beef

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has had from the Irish Government concerning the import of contaminated beef.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Irish veterinary authorities have now confirmed that they have reviewed procedures at the Republic's export-approved meat plants and are satisfied that Community rules are being observed. In addition, they have issued instructions to veterinary inspection staff that in future all carcases exported to the United Kingdom should be from good quality cows and should be able to withstand a journey of three to four days and the temperature fluctuations which occur when parts of a consignment are unloaded at different destinations.

I welcome those assurances. The Irish Government are as anxious as we are that consignments of meat from the Republic should reach their destinations in the United Kingdom in first class condition.

Laying Flocks (Zoonoses Order)

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Minister fo Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he intends to make in respect of laying flocks subject to notices served under the Zoonoses Order 1975.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall very shortly be making an order under section 29 of the Animal Health Act 1981 to provide where necessary for the compulsory slaughter of laying flocks in which salmonella has been confirmed. Compensation will be paid as required under the provisions of the Act.

Milk

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that all milk, including goats' milk, is subject to hygiene control testing.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The production and processing of cows milk is already subject to strict controls, and new tests were introduced on 1 January 1989. As a result, the United Kingdom has been granted step 2 status under the heat treated milk directive and this means that we can apply the same high standards to imported milk. I set out the position on goats milk in the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Bar (Mr. Rooker) on 8 February.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Merseyside Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Alton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to meet the chairman of the Merseyside chamber of commerce.

Mr. Atkins: I do not at present have any plans to meet the chairman of the Merseyside chamber of commerce but such a meeting could well be accommodated within a future visit to Liverpool

Exchange Rate

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what advice his Department is giving to export industries concerning the exchange rate of the £ sterling.

Mr. Alan Clark: Our consistent advice to exporters has been that they should consider protecting themselves against the risk of exchange rate fluctuation and to consult experts, primarily the banks, about the best way of doing this.

East Midlands Business Survey

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has received a copy of the east midlands business survey and its analysis for the prospects of the textile industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am aware of the survey's conclusion that the textile and clothing industry is optimistic about employment prospects over the next six months notwithstanding the survey's findings that the industry has performed less well than other sectors in the last six months.

Regional Assistance

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will provide the figures for spending on regional selective assistance and regional development grants for the north west of England for each year from 1978-79 to the present and estimated figures for 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92 in cash at 1987-88 prices;

(2) what is the total estimated expenditure on regional development grants and regional selective assistance in the north west of England for each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: Gross expenditure at current and constant (1987-88) prices on regional development grant (RDG) and regional selective assistance (RSA) in the north west region in the financial years 1978-89 to 1988-89 is shown in the table. Figures for RDG and RSA provision in future years are not available at the regional level.

Expenditure at current prices

£ millions

	RSA[1]	*RDG*[2]
1978-79	40·1	64·3
1979-80	23·3	58·7
1980-81	19·3	105·7
1981-82	14·6	143·4
1982-83	18·3	97·3
1983-84	13·6	83·0
1984-85	13·7	79·9

	RSA[1]	RDG[2]
1985-86	12·7	62·1
1986-87	18·4	101·3
1987-88	19·6	45·7
1988-89	[3]14·8	[3]37·2

Expenditure at constant (1987-88) prices

	RSA[1]	RDG[2]
1978-79	82·3	132·0
1979-80	40·9	103·0
1980-81	28·6	156·6
1981-82	19·7	193·5
1982-83	23·0	122·5
1983-84	16·4	100·0
1984-85	15·7	91·6
1985-86	13·8	67·6
1986-87	19·4	106·6
1987-88	19·6	45·7
1988-89	[3]14·1	[3]35·5

[1] Expenditure on RSA industrial and training grants only. Figures for the business improvement services and exchange risk guarantee schemes are not available at the regional level.

[2] RDG figures incorporate expenditure under the original and revised schemes.

[3] To end-December 1988 and provisional.

Church Organisations (Meetings)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for 1988 and 1989 to date the contacts his Department has had with church organisations on rural area matters; what were the subjects for discussion in each case; and what meetings are planned in the near future.

Mr. Atkins: I am not aware of any such contacts.

South Africa (Investment)

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department has received any request for guidance from, or supplied any advice to, RTZ plc concerning the Government's voluntary ban on new investment in South Africa, in the light of RTZ's recent acquisition of BP's mineral division.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* Contacts between this Department and United Kingdom companies are treated as commercial-in-confidence. The Office of Fair Trading is at an early stage in its consideration of the RTZ corporation's proposed acquisition of certain of BP's mineral interests and will report to the Secretary of State in due course.

Export Licences

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many licences for the export of leg-irons, shackles and gallows were granted during 1988; and what were the destinations of goods to which licences were given.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* It is our general policy not to issue licences for the export of leg-irons, shackles and gallows. No licences for such equipment were issued during 1988.

SCOTLAND

Public Appeals

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify each donation which his Department has made in response to public appeals for financial assistance during each financial year since 1979-80.

Mr. Rifkind: Donations were made as follows:

	1988-89 £
Scottish Television's Telethon Trust—in response to the Telethon '88 Appeal.	120,000
Lockerbie Air Disaster Appeal Fund.	150,000

Local Authority Housing

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers of local authority housing stock, by district council area, as at *(a)* 1 April 1979 and *(b)* 30 September 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table. The figures are taken from different sources and may not be strictly comparable. Estimates for authorities which failed to submit returns have been included.

Local Authority dwelling stock, Scotland

	31 March 1979	30 September 1988
Local Authority Total	900,644	808,521
Berwickshire	2,861	2,455
Ettrick and Lauderdale	4,998	4,010
Roxburgh[2]	6,272	5,450
Tweeddale[2]	1,629	1,470
Clackmannan	9,671	8,568
Falkirk[1]	33,572	29,413
Stirling[1]	13,131	11,825
Annandale and Eskdale[1]	4,939	4,821
Nithsdale	8,365	7,360
Stewartry	2,519	2,308
Wigtown	4,705	4,256
Dunfermline	23,143	19,141
Kirkcaldy[2]	26,850	22,973
North East Fife[1]	7,831	6,475
Aberdeen	38,680	36,869
Banff and Buchan	12,552	11,446
Gordon	6,111	5,444
Kincardine and Deeside	3,613	3,532
Moray	10,556	10,035
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,048	1,046
Caithness[2]	4,250	3,800
Inverness	7,013	6,469
Lochaber	3,350	2,893
Nairn	1,115	1,064
Ross and Cromarty	6,181	6,078
Skye and Lochalsh[2]	684	780
Sutherland	1,706	1,702
East Lothian	16,274	13,919
Edinburgh	57,478	49,237
Midlothian	13,032	10,868
West Lothian	22,525	19,985
Argyll and Bute	8,205	7,852
Bearsden and Milngavie	1,895	1,715
Clydebank[2]	12,413	11,030
Clydesdale	9,634	9,215
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	4,356	4,035
Cumnock and Doon Valley	10,327	9,445
Cunninghame	23,536	21,332
Dumbarton	13,174	11,817
East Kilbride	1,622	1,282

	31 March 1979	30 September 1988
Eastwood	2,038	1,731
Glasgow	180,209	160,309
Hamilton	22,822	21,562
Inverclyde	20,071	17,945
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	18,226	16,187
Kyle and Carrick	18,398	16,011
Monklands	28,716	27,251
Motherwell	40,209	37,117
Renfrew	39,645	36,325
Strathkelvin	10,893	9,426
Angus	14,513	12,640
Dundee	40,479	37,842
Perth and Kinross	16,343	14,355
Orkney Islands[2]	1,432	1,416
Shetland Islands	2,475	2,578
Western Isles[1]	2,359	2,411

Source: 1979—SDD S1 returns.
Source: 1988—SDD rent returns.
[1] Estimated figure—District return outstanding for 1979.
[2] Estimated figure—District return outstanding for 1988.

Cattle Semen

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on his future intentions with regard to the proposals to deregulate the supply of cattle semem to farms in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1 February 1989]:* In July 1988 the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland invited interested organisations to comment on proposals for changing the regulations governing the sale and supply of cattle semen for artificial insemination. These paralleled similar consultations being undertaken in England and Wales.

Seven responses were received by the Department. In addition, representations were made to my noble Friend the Minister of State by 10 hon. Members. Further discussions have taken place with a number of interested parties. The views expressed are currently being considered.

Hill Lambs (Radioactivity)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further tests of hill lambs for radioactivity resulting from Chernobyl have been taken in the past year; what have been the results; and what action he is taking as a result.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* Information on the level of radioactivity in sheep in Scotland resulting from the Chernobyl accident is published on a regular basis by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. The measured levels of radiocaesium in live sheep tested in 1988 in those areas in which restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep are in force range from 53 becquerels per kilogram to 3,683 becquerels per kilogram. Readings taken from sheep in slaughterhouses throughout Scotland in 1988 range from 2 becquerels per kilogram to 145 becquerels per kilogram. The mark and release arrangements ensure that sheep which may be contaminated to levels above the 1,000 becquerels per kilogram safety level may not be removed from the restricted areas unless they are painted the appropriate colour and that such sheep may not be slaughtered unless they are marked with a tag to show that they are below this level. Monitoring and the related restrictions are designed to protect the public from the risk of eating sheep meat contaminated to an unacceptably high level and they will continue until it has been demonstrated that there is no longer any cause for concern in this respect.

THE ARTS

Consultants

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish a table showing the names of all management and arts consultants commissioned by *(a)* the Office of Arts and Libraries, and *(b)* the Arts Council giving their fees, in each of the past two years.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 7 February 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 19 May 1988 at column *566* and the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) on 14 July 1988 at column *328*.

In respect of the Arts Council, I am unable to add further to the answer that I gave the hon. Member on 11 May 1988 at column *126*.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the average annual percentage change in GDP(E), at 1985 prices, per head of the United Kingdom working population, including both employed and unemployed people, from *(a)* 1959 to 1979 and *(b)* 1979 to 1987 inclusive.

Mr. Major: Between 1959 and 1979 the annual average percentage change in GDP(E), measured at constant factor cost, per head of the United Kingdom work force was 2·1 per cent. Between 1979 and 1987 the average annual percentage change was 1·0 per cent. Over both of these periods whole economy productivity rose on average by 2·1 per cent. a year.

Strip Searches

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many strip searches were made of females at Customs during each month of 1988, giving the number of persons involved; what dutiable items or unlawful imports were discovered in any search; in how many cases persons who were asked to undergo a strip search asked for review of that request by a justice of the peace or senior customs officer; how many of those who sought such review were subsequently strip searched and how many were not; on how many occasions persons declined to be strip searched before such review and after such review; and what was the outcome in each case.

Mr. Lilley: Customs set up central records on search of person in July 1987 but these records do not identify separately searches of men and women.

For the period 1 July 1987 to 31 March 1988 (the latest period for which figures are available) the number of persons strip searched was 16,023. Drugs were recovered in 586 instances, dutiable goods in 180 instances and other prohibited or restricted goods in 57 instances. In addition

there were 2,019 instances of smuggled goods found before the search and 119 afterwards (for example, concealed internally by smugglers but recovered only after the search).

Appeals against strip search to a justice of the peace or senior customs officer totalled 71, of which 17 were upheld. There are no recorded instances of persons declining to be searched once having exercised their appeal rights.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Staff (Child Care)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what child care provision the Northern Ireland Office provides for pre-school age children of the Department's employees; what child care provision, for school holiday or after-school care, is provided for employees' children aged five and over; what plans there are for increasing provision in the next five years; and how these are to be funded.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In accordance with the commitment in the circular "Equal Opportunities for Women in the Northern Ireland Civil Service" published May 1986, the Northern Ireland Civil Service has considered the provision of child care facilities and in particular workplace nurseries. It concluded that such nurseries could be provided only if there was a substantial injection of capital to meet start-up costs and a continuing subsidy from Government towards running costs. The use of public funds for this purpose has not so far been considered justifiable in relation to other needs.

However, the Northern Ireland Civil Service is anxious to assist staff in making other suitable child-minding arrangements and recently introduced a scheme to assist staff to find suitable registered childminders. In addition it is considering with the trade unions the provision of other facilities such as day care for pre-school age children, after-school care for older children, and holiday play schemes.

The home Civil Service part of the Northern Ireland Office, which comprises about 180 staff divided between London and Belfast, does not provide child care facilities, but gives sympathetic consideration to the individual needs of staff with young children.

Social Security Transitional Payments

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the number of people receiving social security transitional payments under the schemes announced on 27 April 1988 and the likely expenditure in the current financial year.

Mr. Needham: At 17 December 1988, the latest date for which information is available, transitional payments were being made to some 5,665 beneficiaries. It is estimated that the total expenditure in the current financial year will be in the region of £1 million and this is being met by repayable advances from the civil contingencies fund pending parliamentary approval of a Supplementary Estimate.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Colleges of Further Education

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the numbers of full-time and part-time teachers in each college of further education in Derbyshire for each year since 1979, together with the average number of hours worked by part-time teachers in each college.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following table gives the available figures for Derbyshire colleges of further education. It shows full-time teaching staff numbers and full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers of part-time teaching staff. Figures are not readily available for the period before the academic year 1983-84 and there are data for only a sample of Derbyshire colleges from 1983-84 to 1986-87.

Full-time and part-time FTE teaching staff: Derbyshire colleges of FE

	Academic years									
	1983-84		*1984-85*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*		*1987-88*[1]	
	Full-time	*Part-time FTE*	*Full-time*	*Part-time FTE*	*Full-time*	*Part-time FTE*	*Full-time*	*Part-time FTE*	*Full-time*	*Part-time FTE*
Chesterfield College of Technology and Arts	209·5	28·4	264·4	45·8	263·1	63·9	n/a	n/a	249·0	62·5
The North East Derbyshire College of Further Education	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	78·2	33·9
The South East Derbyshire College	n/a	n/a	140·4	39·2	147·1	61·4	164·2	0·0	143·3	48·3
High Peak College of Further Education	n/a	n/a	104·4	34·1	111·2	23·5	n/a	n/a	104·4	24·7
Derbyshire College of Further Education	n/a	n/a	320·4	60·0	325·8	69·4	341·4	68·8	352·6	63·2
Derbyshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	38·0	3·9
Derbyshire College of Higher Education	319·3	14·4	304·6	13·7	285·8	15·9	274·0	23·3	266·1	23·1

[1] Provisional.
Source: annual monitoring survey.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of changes in the balance between full and part-time teaching in colleges of further education since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available data are listed below. The number of part-time lecturer hours worked in higher and further education in polytechnics and other LEA-maintained establishments in England has been converted to the full-time equivalent (fte) number of lecturers and is expressed in the table as a percentage of the total fte lecturer numbers.

Part-time lecturer fte numbers shown as a percentage of total fte lecturer numbers:

Academic year	*Number*
1980-81	11·7
1981-82	10·9
1982-83	12·3
1983-84	13·0
1984-85	14·2
1985-86	14·9
1986-87	16·2

Source: Annual Monitoring Survey.

Pre-school Education

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of those aged three and four years in each of the educational authorities in the north west of England in nurseries, pre-school playgroups or other forms of education *(a)* at the latest available date, *(b)* five years ago, *(c)* 10 years ago and *(d)* 15 years ago, expressed numerically and as a percentage of the age group; what was the national average for these figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total number of pupils under five and the percentage of the age group attending maintained nursery and primary schools in each local education authority in the North West and in England in January 1973, 1978, 1983 and 1988 is given in the following table. Information on pupils under five in playgroups is not available centrally.

January each year

	1973		*1978*		*1983*		*1988*	
	Pupils	*Percentage*	*Pupils*	*Percentage*	*Pupils*	*Percentage*	*Pupils*	*Percentage*
Cheshire	7,049	23	8,521	34	8,236	35	12,787	53
Lancashire	12,933	31	10,415	29	14,598	43	17,404	48
Bolton	3,716	41	4,424	60	4,345	62	5,054	69
Bury	1,190	20	2,005	40	1,998	44	2,492	56
Manchester	8,181	49	7,952	72	7,395	69	9,112	75
Oldham	2,540	33	3,063	49	3,360	56	4,041	65
Rochdale	3,246	46	3,464	57	3,411	57	3,809	62
Salford	3,435	38	3,921	61	4,378	78	4,964	85
Stockport	2,834	28	3,259	43	3,013	42	3,277	45
Tameside	2,102	28	2,980	49	3,740	69	4,277	75
Trafford	1,782	24	784	14	875	17	1,175	22
Wigan	3,678	31	4,295	46	4,212	53	4,768	59
Knowsley	1,143	16	1,919	36	2,372	46	3,466	70
Liverpool	7,072	40	8,227	65	9,065	76	10,128	83
St. Helens	2,062	30	2,846	50	2,473	52	2,917	62
Sefton	3,062	31	3,975	53	4,036	59	4,310	61
Wirral	2,536	22	3,876	43	3,898	46	4,312	50
ENGLAND	355,780	24	415,065	35	458,197	40	532,933	45

The percentage figures are the number of children under five attending maintained nursery and primary schools expressed as a percentage of the estimated three and four-year-old population.

Languages (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for each school in the county of South Yorkshire the foreign languages which are taught.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not available centrally.

Opting Out

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what leaflets and booklets have been published by his Department on opting out for maintained schools; what was their cost; and by what means they were distributed.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has published a booklet "School Governors: How To Become A Grant-Maintained School" and circular 10/88 "Education Reform Act 1988: Grant-Maintained Schools". Copies were sent by post to the chairman of governors of all county and voluntary schools in England, local education authorities and other interested parties. The cost of printing and distribution was approximately £46,000.

Teacher Training Bursary Scheme

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students receive bursaries under the teacher training bursary scheme.

Mrs. Rumbold: A total of 2,405 students have received shortage subject bursaries in the current academic year 1988-89.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many people qualifying under the teacher training bursary scheme are recorded as taking employment as school teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: Independent evaluation conducted by the university of Bath indicates that 88 per cent.—1,148—of those in receipt of trainee teacher bursaries in 1986-87 took up employment as school teachers.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total cost of the teacher training bursary scheme for each year of operation; and what is the cost in respect of those qualifying under the scheme who do not become school teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total cost of the scheme for each of the two full academic years of its operation is £1·76 million for 1986-87, and £2·8 million for 1987-88. The cost in respect of those receiving the bursary who do not become school teachers is estimated to be £210,000 for those qualifying in 1987. Figures for those qualifying in 1988 are not yet available.

Student Numbers

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the number of *(a)* overseas students and *(b)* students over 25, excluding post-graduates, in higher education for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: Readily available information for years 1979, 1983 and 1987 are shown in the following table.

First year full-time students in higher education in Great Britain
Thousands

	Academic year beginning in		
	1979	*1983*	*1987*
Students from abroad	28·0	24·8	32·8
Undergraduates aged 25 and over	24·2	26·0	30·5

Higher and Further Education (Places)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the total number of non-degree places for each of the last 10 years in (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics and (iii) colleges of further education;

(2) what is the total number of first degrees places for each of the last 10 years in (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics and (iii) colleges of further education;

(3) what was the total number of higher degree places for each of the last 10 years in (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics, and (iii) colleges of further education.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the number of available places is not held centrally.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds have secured a first degree placd in (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics, and (iii) colleges of further education for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: Readily available information for years 1979, 1983 and 1987 are shown in the following table.

Percentage of 18 to 24 year olds entering first degree courses, Great Britain

	Academic year beginning in		
	1979	*1983*	*1987*
University	1·28	1·06	1·06
Polytechnics and colleges	0·67	0·83	0·86

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of 18 to 24-year-olds have secured a non-degree place in (i) universities, (ii) polytechnics and (iii) colleges of further education for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: Readily available information for years 1979, 1983 and 1987 are shown in the following table.

Percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds entering sub-degree higher education courses, Great Britain

	Academic year beginning in		
	1979	*1983*	*1987*
University	0·006	0·004	0·004
Polytechnics and colleges	0·460	0·570	0·560

Higher and Further Education (Staff)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many academic and non-academic staff in higher education have (i) taken early retirement and (ii) accepted redundancy for each of the past 10 years; and what was the total cost for each year.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is only partially available.

For universities in Great Britain, 4,400 academic and academic-related staff and 2,770 non-academic staff took early retirement during the currency of the University Grants Committee's 1981-84 premature retirement compensation scheme at a total cost of £153 million. During the present 1986-91 restructuring programme, the Committee estimates that some 2,760 academic and academic-related staff and 870 non-academic staff will take early retirement with compensation at a cost of £122 million.

Estimates of HE lecturers taking premature retirement from polytechnics and colleges maintained or assisted by local education authorities in England are available only as follows:

	Number
1982-83	800
1983-84	840
1984-85	950
1985-86	930
1986-87	930

In those years, local education authorities claimed reimbursement from the premature retirement compensation pool of the following expenditure on the costs of prematurely retiring HE staff in their institutions:

	£ million
1982-83	3·4
1983-84	6·2
1984-85	6·4
1985-86	8·5
1986-87	10·7

For voluntary and direct grant colleges (excluding the Royal College of Art and Cranfield Institute of Technology), expenditure on redundancy and early retirement of academic and non-academic staff since 1982 has been as follows:

Financial year	*£ million*
1982-83	0·767
1983-84	0·727
1984-85	1·170

Financial year	£ million
1985-86	0·782
1986-87	0·697
1987-88	0·695

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the staff-student ratio for each of the last 10 years in *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics, and *(c)* colleges of further education.

Mr. Jackson: The data required are given below. Figures for polytechnics and other maintained establishments cover England and figures for universities cover Great Britain.

Student:staff ratios (SSR)

	Universities	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments
1978-79	9·3	[1]8·3	[2]7·6
1979-80	9·3	8·4	8·8
1980-81	9·4	8·8	8·8
1981-82	9·7	9·7	9·0
1982-83	10·1	10·3	9·3
1983-84	10·2	11·1	9·4
1984-85	10·3	11·6	9·8
1985-86	10·3	12·0	10·2
1986-87	10·5	12·4	10·6
1987-88[3]	10·7	12·9	10·8

[1] Higher education SSR only.
[2] Includes Welsh colleges.
[3] Provisional.

National Advisory Body

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was his Department's total allocation to the National Advisory Body for each year since 1982.

Mr. Jackson: The National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education (NAB) advised the Secretary of State for Education and Science on the allocation of the capped Advanced Further Education (AFE) pool. Since 1982 the AFE pool has been determined by the Secretary of State as follows:

Financial year	Total capped AFE pool (£ million)
1982-83	539·0
1983-84	560·5
1984-85	580·5
1985-86	620·0
1986-87	661·0
1987-88	716·5
1988-89	781·0

University Grants Committee

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was his Department's total allocation to the University Grants Committee for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: Recurrent and capital grants made to universities in Great Britain on the advice of the University Grants Committee have been:

Financial years	£ million
1979-80	816·3
1980-81	1,040·8
1981-82	1,071·1
1982-83	1,283·0
1983-84	1,325·3
1984-85	1,359·9
1985-86	1,400·8
1986-87	1,450·3
1987-88	1,592·8
1988-89	[1]1,725·0

[1] Estimated

Students

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was total Government spending *(a)* per student and *(b)* per graduate for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Jackson: The available data are listed below. The figures show the net institutional expenditure per student in universities (Great Britain), polytechnics (England) and in further education and higher education at other maintained establishments (OMEs) in England.

Net institutional expenditure[1] per student

	Financial year								
	1978-79[3] £	1979-80 £	1980-81 £	1981-82 £	1982-93 £	1983-84 £	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £
Universities	5,126	5,139	5,541	5,361	5,508	5,541	5,516	5,351	5,276
Polytechnics[2]	2,153	2,506	2,988	3,121	3,157	2,990	3,030	3,150	3,325
OMES (FE)[2]	1,166	1,335	1,644	1,898	1,924	2,095	2,190	2,320	2,430
OMES (HE)[2]	1,807	2,069	2,548	2,725	2,822	3,010	3,120	3,020	3,170

[1] The figures for universities are based on recurrent expenditure financed by UGC grants and tuition fee income for home and overseas students. The figures for polytechnics and OMEs are net recurrent institutional expenditure per full-time equivalent student. Institutional expenditure includes direct and indirect costs of providing tuition but excludes financing cost of capital expenditure.
[2] Standard weightings have been used to calculate numbers of full-time equivalent students.
[3] The polytechnics and OMEs figures for 1978-79 cover England and Wales.

Provisional estimates of costs per qualifier are available only for higher education as a whole in calendar year 1984.

Current expenditure per HE qualifier (United Kingdom): 1984

	£
All expenditure	14,700
Excluding student support and welfare	11,700
Excluding student support and welfare, and research and development	9,100

Third World Development

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are his Department's responsibilities for the financial support and furtherance of education on Third world development issues in schools, universities and through the media; and in what specific ways those responsibilities are currently being discharged.

Mr. Jackson: Education on Third world development issues in the school curriculum is covered by section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988, to the extent that it helps to contribute to the moral and cultural development of pupils in preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experience of adult life.

The United Kingdom Education Departments provide an annual grant of some £40,000 to support the activities of the Council for Education in World Citizenship, which organises conferences for schools and colleges and distributes material on third world issues amongst others.

My right hon. Friend grant-aids the Standing Conference on Education for International Understanding currently at the rate of £6,000 a year, to promote education on international understanding at all levels of the education service.

Universities receive public funds on the advice of the University Grants Committee. Drawing on these and other funds at their disposal they make the provision they judge appropriate for Third world development studies.

Grant-maintained Status

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the procedures under the Education Reform Act 1988 relating to applications by schools for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am concerned at suggestions that some local education authorities may be seeking to deter or hinder governing bodies and parents from exercising the rights given to them under the Education Reform Act to seek grant-maintained status for their children's school. My Department will therefore be writing in the near future to all local education authorities to draw their attention to their responsibilities under the Education Acts. Copies of the letter will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Teachers' Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the Government Actuary's report on the teachers superannuation scheme for the period 1981 to 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: As required under the Teachers' Superannuation Regulations I have arranged to lay the Government Actuary's report before both Houses today.

The report specifies a normal contribution rate of 13·3 per cent. and a supplementary contribution of 0·75 per cent.—a total of 14·05 per cent. The current contribution rates are 13·7 per cent. and 1·75 per cent. In accordance with the requirements of the regulations, therefore, there will be a reduction in employers' contributions of 1·4 per cent. from 1 April 1989.

The Government's plans for spending by local authorities on education, which I announced in November, assumed a reduction of about 1 per cent. in the rate of employers' contributions.

GCSE

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he yet has an indication of the effect of GCSE examinations on staying on in full-time education and on the attainments of those taking the examination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The preliminary indications are encouraging. There has been a significant increase, from 46 per cent. to 49 per cent. between 1987 and 1988, in the proportion of 16-year-olds staying on in full-time education. There has been a similar increase, from an estimated 25 per cent. to some 27·5 per cent. in the proportion of all 16-year-olds gaining five or more results at grade C or above in the GCSE compared with the equivalent examinations in the previous year; and increases in the proportion of 16-year-old school leavers generally obtaining graded results. The increases have been particularly notable in French and in mathematics, for both sexes, and among girls in the physical sciences. Further details are contained in the tables.

The evidence from Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the School Examinations and Assessment Council is that the GCSE examining groups, and in particular their chief examiners, have been at pains to maintain in the GCSE the standards set in previous examinations. These results therefore strongly suggest that the improvements in teaching and learning learning observed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate have been reflected in higher levels of attainment in the GCSE. There is, however, undoubtedly room for further improvement at all levels of attainment. I look to schools, with the support of the examining groups and others concerned, to secure these.

School Leavers in England

Percentage of pupils of minimum school leaving age staying on in full time education—school or FE

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*[1]1987-88*
15 year olds on 31 August previous academic year[2]							
Boys population (000's)	397·5	390·6	380·5	375·5	365·7	369·8	345·7
Girls population (000's)	375·9	367·4	360·0	356·0	345·7	350·7	325·8
Boys and Girls population (000's)	773·4	758·0	740·4	731·6	711·4	720·5	671·6
Percentage staying on in school							
Boys	33·6	31·5	30·9	30·8	30·7	31·0	32·9
Girls	34·8	32·7	31·5	31·3	30·8	31·3	33·6
Boys and Girls	34·2	32·1	31·2	31·1	30·8	31·1	33·2
Percentage staying on in HE or FE							
Boys	8·8	9·0	9·3	10·0	10·6	11·4	11·9

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	[1]1987-88
Girls	17·9	17·8	17·9	18·4	18·8	18·8	19·4
Boys and Girls	13·2	13·2	13·5	14·1	14·6	15·0	15·6
Percentage staying on in school, HE or FE							
Boys	42·4	40·5	40·3	40·9	41·3	42·3	44·8
Girls	52·6	50·5	49·3	49·7	49·5	50·0	53·0
Boys and Girls	47·4	45·3	44·7	45·2	45·3	46·1	48·8

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Derived from GAD estimates of the population.

Annex A—table 2

School leavers in England
Examination achievements in the summer session of year of leaving for leavers aged 15
Percentage of leavers with different levels of qualification

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88[1]
Boys (000's)	263·9	267·4	262·8	259·8	253·3	255·2	232·1
Five or more results at F[2] or better							
5 or more higher[3] grades	6·8	7·0	7·3	7·9	8·4	8·3	9·4
1-4 higher grades	23·8	24·3	24·1	24·0	23·8	24·8	25·8
No higher grades	20·9	21·2	20·6	21·2	20·2	20·7	18·0
Total	51·4	52·5	52·0	53·1	52·4	53·7	53·2
Four or more results[4], four at F or better	8·0	7·9	8·3	7·7	8·0	7·2	6·9
One or more results, three or less at F or better	23·6	23·7	24·3	24·2	24·6	24·3	24·3
No graded result	16·9	16·0	15·5	15·0	15·0	14·8	15·6
Total	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Girls (000's)	245·2	247·1	246·7	244·5	239·3	241·1	216·2
Five or more results at F[2] or better							
Five or more higher[3] grades	9·2	9·0	9·7	10·6	11·0	11·4	15·0
1-4 higher grades	28·1	29·5	29·3	29·6	29·4	30·5	31·8
No higher grades	19·8	20·9	20·8	19·9	19·8	19·4	16·7
Total	57·1	59·3	59·7	60·1	60·2	61·2	63·5
Four or more results[4], four at F or better	9·0	8·8	8·3	8·4	8·3	7·8	6·6
One or more results, three or less at F or better	20·7	20·4	20·6	20·1	20·1	20·0	19·0
No graded result	13·2	11·5	11·3	11·5	11·4	10·9	10·9
Total	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
Boys and Girls (000's)	509·1	514·5	509·5	504·3	492·6	496·3	448·3
Five or more results at F[2] or better							
Five or more higher[3] grades	7·9	7·9	8·4	9·2	9·6	9·8	12·1
1-4 higher grades	25·9	26·8	26·6	26·7	26·5	27·5	28·7
No higher grades	20·4	21·0	20·7	20·6	20·0	20·1	17·4
Total	54·2	55·8	55·7	56·5	56·2	57·4	58·2
Four or more results[4], four at F or better	8·5	8·3	8·3	8·1	8·2	7·5	6·8
One or more results three or less at F or better	22·2	22·1	22·5	22·2	22·4	22·2	21·7
No graded results	15·1	13·8	13·5	13·3	13·3	12·9	13·3
Total	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] GCSE grades A-F, O level grades A-E, CSE grades 1-4.
[3] GCSE grades A-C, O level grades A-C, CSE grade 1.
[4] GCSE grades A-G, O level grades A-E, CSE grades 1-5.

Annex A—Table 3

School Leavers in England
Examination achievements in the summer session of year of leaving for leavers aged 15
Percentage of leavers achieving a grade result[1] in selected subjects

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	[2]1987-88
Boys (000's)	263·9	267·4	262·8	259·8	253·3	255·2	232·1
Percentage with graded result in:							
English	72·9	73·6	73·7	74·1	73·7	74·3	75·5
Maths	64·3	64·8	65·4	66·0	65·8	67·0	69·4
Physics	37·7	38·7	37·1	36·9	36·0	35·9	35·5

	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	[2]1987-88
Chemistry	17·2	18·1	18·3	18·5	18·0	18·8	19·0
Biology	18·3	18·4	19·1	19·5	18·8	19·5	17·8
Craft, design, technology	56·0	56·0	53·9	53·0	51·7	49·5	47·3
Other science	14·0	14·6	15·0	15·2	15·1	16·0	18·7
French	11·3	12·2	12·3	13·4	13·9	14·8	17·0
History	26·1	25·6	25·5	25·1	24·9	25·4	24·6
Geography	37·3	38·4	38·0	38·1	37·5	37·7	37·4
Creative arts	28·1	28·2	28·3	28·2	28·3	29·0	28·9
Commercial and domestic subjects	9·2	10·2	11·3	12·7	13·4	15·9	17·8
Girls (000's)	245·2	247·1	246·7	244·5	239·3	241·1	216·2
Percentage with graded result in:							
English	81·0	82·6	82·9	82·8	82·9	83·1	84·7
Maths	65·4	66·7	67·1	67·6	67·2	68·6	70·4
Physics	9·0	10·4	9·7	10·7	11·1	11·5	11·8
Chemistry	11·9	13·3	13·9	15·0	15·3	15·8	16·2
Biology	42·7	44·8	45·6	45·1	43·4	43·1	41·1
Craft, design, technology	5·4	6·0	5·7	6·4	8·0	8·5	11·3
Other science	9·5	10·4	11·2	11·3	11·8	13·2	16·8
French	27·8	29·2	29·4	30·2	30·2	30·2	33·0
History	30·5	30·4	30·2	28·9	28·3	27·5	27·8
Geography	28·2	29·2	28·3	28·2	27·9	27·2	27·7
Creative arts	31·7	32·4	32·7	33·3	33·5	34·9	34·3
Commercial and domestic subjects	55·8	56·4	56·9	55·6	55·5	56·2	55·1
Boys and Girls (000's)	509·1	514·5	509·5	504·3	492·6	496·3	448·3
Percentage with graded result in:							
English	76·8	78·0	78·1	78·3	78·2	78·6	79·9
Maths	64·9	65·7	66·2	66·8	66·5	67·8	69·9
Physics	23·9	25·1	23·8	24·2	23·9	24·1	24·1
Chemistry	14·6	15·8	16·2	16·8	16·7	17·3	17·7
Biology	30·1	31·1	31·9	31·9	30·7	31·0	29·0
Craft, design, technology	31·6	32·0	30·6	30·4	30·5	29·6	29·9
Other science	11·8	12·6	13·1	13·3	13·5	14·7	17·8
French	19·3	20·4	20·6	21·5	21·8	22·3	24·7
History	28·2	27·9	27·8	27·0	26·6	26·4	26·2
Geography	32·9	34·0	33·3	33·3	32·8	32·6	32·7
Creative arts	29·8	30·2	30·5	30·6	30·8	31·9	31·5
Commercial and domestic subjects	31·7	32·4	33·4	33·5	33·9	35·5	35·8

[1]A graded result is defined as GCSE grades A-G, or O level grades A-E and CSE grades 1-5.
[2]Provisional figures.

HEALTH

Organ Transplants

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each of the last 10 years such information as he has of the total number of organ transplants in the United Kingdom and the number of overseas recipients.

Mr. Mellor: According to provisional information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of cadaveric transplants carried out within the NHS in the United Kingdom in 1988 was:

	Number
Kidney	1,544
Heart and heart/lung	332
Liver	212
Pancreas	9
Lung	3

These figures will be subject to revision once final returns are received. Comparable figures for the years 1978-87 were given in my reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 22 December 1988 at columns *397-98*.

The United Kingdom transplant service is currently unable to identify the number of overseas patients treated under reciprocal health agreements with other countries, but revised arrangements for collecting data to be introduced shortly should enable this information to be obtained in the future.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will specify for each of the last 10 years how many instances there were of cadaveric kidneys being transplanted into non-entitled patients.

Mr. Freeman: Comprehensive information is not available. In 1988, 35 transplant operations were performed in the private sector using cadaveric kidneys surplus to requirements in the United States and imported by arrangement with the United Network for organ sharing.

Weil's Disease

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many case of Weil's disease have been treated over the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: Data on the number of cases treated are not available, but the number of cases in the last 10 years confirmed by the leptospira reference unit of the public health laboratory service is 444.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any advice has been given to district health authorities and general practitioners alerting them to be vigilant about Weil's disease.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has not issued any advice to district health authorities or general practitioners about Weil's disease. However, as the organism can enter the human body when cuts and abrasions or the membrane of nose, mouth or eye come into contact with contaminated water, members of inland sailing and canoeing clubs are issued with warning leaflets.

Waiting Lists

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of out-patient waiting lists in Mersey regional health authority area.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect information about out-patient waiting times centrally.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the in-patient waiting list figures for Mersey regional health authority in March 1988, 1987, and 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

In-patient waiting list, Mersey regional health authority

Date	*Waiting list*
31 March 1979	41,103
31 March 1987	29,147
31 March 1988	[1]31,031

[1]On a comparable basis with previous statistics.

Broadmoor Special Hospital

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each of the last five years the number of deaths that have occurred at Broadmoor special hospital; what was the cause in each case; how many of these deaths were investigated by a public inquiry; what was the result in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 1 February at columns *275-76*. The report of the public inquiry relating to the death of a patient on 6 July 1984 was published on 30 August 1985 and a copy is in the Library.

Abortions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many abortions at 18 weeks or more gestation were performed during 1988 in cases of rape.

Mr. Freeman: As rape is not in itself a statutory ground for performing an abortion under the Abortion Act 1967, and is not required to be specified on the notification form by the certifying doctor, the exact number of notifications of abortions associated with rape is not available. However, in some cases the information is volunteered, and arrangements have been made to code separately and analyse all notification forms which mention rape from January 1987. Of the notification forms received by the end of August 1988 in respect of terminations performed in the first two quarters of 1988 at 18 completed weeks gestation or over, none mentioned rape.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure for discharges from out-patient and day-patient attendances of persons with diagnoses of schizophrenic psychosis.

Mr. Freeman: I am sorry that I cannot give the hon. Member the information that he seeks. The information available centrally on out-patient and day care does not include diagnosis.

Guardians Ad Litem

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he proposes to enable guardians ad litem to have the power to see all records relating to the child they represent.

Mr. Mellor: Provisions on procedure to be added to the Children Bill by Government amendment will provide for access to records by guardians ad litem in accordance with paragraph 57(b) of the White Paper on "The Law on Child Care and Family Services" (Cm. 62).

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he proposes under the terms of the Children Bill *[Lords]*, that guardians ad litem for children who are not represented by solicitors would have to seek funding for expert opinions from the local authority.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that the independence of guardians ad litem is maintained under the Children Bill *[Lords]*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the passages dealing with guardians ad litem in the Lord Chancellor's concluding speech on Second Reading of the Bill in another place on 6 December 1988 at columns 534-36, and his remarks in Committee on 19 January at columns 418-20.

Children Bill

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is being made to prevent a child who is being provided with accommodation by a local authority under clause 17 of the Children Bill *[Lords]* from being removed without their consent and without warning by a person with parental responsibility for the child.

Mr. Mellor: In accordance with paragraphs 22 and 23 of the White Paper "The Law on Child Care and Family Services" (Cm. 62), the Bill does not require notice of intended removal to be given where children are being provided with accommodation under voluntary arrangements. The power of any person who has parental responsibility for a child to remove him from accommodation provided by or on behalf of the local authority under clause 17 does not apply where the child is aged 16 or over, by virtue of clause 17(10). The Lord Chancellor gave an outline of provisions enabling a person caring for the child to prevent removal in extreme situations in another place on 6 February at column 1412.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial provision is being made to local authorities to carry out their duties under part III of the Children Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Mellor: The financial consequences for local authorities will be discussed with the local authorities associations and taken into account in setting the level of aggregate Exchequer revenue finance in 1990-91.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to ensure that children continue to be represented in care and related proceedings by a solicitor; and if he will make a statement about the proposed regulations referred to in clause 36 of the Children Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the Lord Chancellor's statement on legal representation of the child in such proceedings on Second Reading of the Bill in another place on 6 December 1988 at column 533-34. I shall make a statement on the regulations provided for in this clause during consideration of the Bill in this House.

Smoking

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the figures for people smoking cigarettes in the United Kingdom during the first three quarters of 1988; and whether this represents an increase or decrease over the previous period.

Mr. Freeman: Information is not available in the form requested. However, consumers' expenditure on cigarettes in the first three quarters of 1988 is estimated to have been £4,440 million at constant 1985 prices. These statistics are not adjusted for seasonal variation and so cannot be compared with the immediately preceding period. They show little change from expenditure on cigarettes at 1985 prices in the first three quarters of 1987 (£4,416 million).

Over 60s

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost of National Health Service treatment for someone *(a)* between 60 and 65 years, *(b)* between 65 years and 75 years and *(c)* over 75 years.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* The information is not available in the form requested. The average gross expenditure per head (at 1986-87 prices) in the NHS is *(a)* £178 for those aged 16-64 *(b)* £521 for those aged 65-74 and *(c)* £1,186 for those aged 75 and over.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the cost to public funds of the medical attention and treatment given by the National Health Service to victims of food poisoning attributable to chicken and eggs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 30 January 1989]:* The costs to public funds in 1988 of medical attention and treatment given by the NHS to victims of food poisoning attributable to chicken and eggs—predominantly from salmonella enteritidis, phage type 4—are estimated at about £2 million. This figure is based on estimates of costs of medical attention and treatment for salmonellosis in hospitals or the community calculated in 1985 as part of a special PHLS study, but adjusted for inflation, and applied to reported cases of infection of salmonella enteritidis phage types 4, 8 and 33 in 1988.

Baby Food (Aluminium)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on the levels of aluminium in baby foods and milks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's policy on aluminium occurring in baby foods and milks is to ensure that the levels do not exceed those which our medical advice has reported to be safe. The results of research into aluminium intakes will be kept under regular review.

SOCIAL SECURITY

National Insurance

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in *(a)* 1989-90 and *(b)* a full year of (i) raising the national insurance threshold from £43 a week to £75 a week and (ii) charging national insurance at 7 per cent. on incomes between £100 and £125 a week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Cost in terms of changed yields of National Insurance contributions

£ million

	1989-90 (receipts) £	*1989-90 (full year)* £
(i) Raising the National Insurance threshold to £75 a week[1]	+190	+220
(ii) Charging national insurance at 7 per cent. on earnings between £100 and £125 a week[2]	−350	−400

[1] The higher lower earnings limit increases the band of earnings in respect of which people in contracted-out employments pay contributions at the higher not-contracted out rate. Raising that limit to £75 a week increases the overall yield of class 1 contributions.

[2] The estimate assumes that earnings between £75 a week and £100 a week attract class 1 contributions at 5 per cent. and earnings between £100 and £125 attract class 1 contributions at 7 per cent.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will collect evidence and make a statement on the effect which the requirement that housing benefit be withdrawn after 52 weeks in hospital is having on the efforts of local authority social service departments to rehabilitate long-term hospital patients.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Ninety per cent. of all hospital admissions last four weeks or less. In the small proportion of admissions lasting more than 52 weeks, there is no evidence that the withdrawal of housing benefit is by itself a major factor preventing the return of long-term hospital patients to the community. I would, however, be happy to consider any examples of such cases that the hon. Member or others may have in mind.

It is the duty of local authorities to find accommodation for people in vulnerable groups who are homeless through no fault of their own, including those who are unable to return to their former home following a stay in hospital. In addition, community care grants may be available to people leaving hospital to help them with the costs of re-establishing themselves in the Community.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider giving some discretion to local authorities to extend the period of housing benefit in cases where single patients would otherwise be unable to retain their homes when they go into hospital for a long stay.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Housing benefit is intended to help people with their immediate costs by way of rent and rates and to alleviate current hardship. The main criterion for entitlement is therefore that the claimant must be paying rent or rates for a dwelling which he or she occupies as home. Fifty-two weeks is a reasonable limit to the period during which a claimant can be considered to be occupying a dwelling despite his or her physical absence. The application of this limit to the housing benefit entitlement of hospital in-patients does not appear to lead to undue hardship, but the situation is being kept under review.

Age-related Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the size of age-related personal allowances within *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* income support and *(c)* housing benefit for each age-group for each year since 1980, both in current and standard prices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Values under the old and new benefit systems are not comparable because the system of personal allowances and premiums intruduced in 1988 radically altered the structure of the income-related benefits. The information requested is:

a. Supplementary Benefit

			16-17		18 and over		80 and over			
	Up to age 10	*11-15*	*Ordinary*	*Long term*	*Ordinary*	*Long term*	*Single house-holders*	*Single non-house-holders*	*Couples both over 80*	*Couples one of whom is over 80*
November 1980										
Rate	7·30	10·90	13·10	16·65	17·05	21·70	27·40	21·95	43·95	43·70
At April 1988 Value	11·12	16·60	19·95	25·35	25·96	33·04	41·72	33·42	66·92	66·54
November 1981										
Rate	7·90	11·90	14·30	18·15	18·60	23·65	29·85	23·90	47·85	47·60
At April 1988 Value	10·74	16·18	19·45	24·68	25·30	32·16	40·60	32·50	65·08	64·74
November 1982										
Rate	8·75	13·15	15·80	20·05	20·55	26·15	32·95	26·40	52·80	52·55
At April 1988 Value	11·20	16·83	20·22	25·66	26·30	33·47	42·17	32·68	67·58	67·26
November 1983										
Rate	9·15	13·70	16·50	20·90	21·45	27·25	34·35	27·50	55·05	54·80
At April 1988 Value	11·17	16·72	20·14	25·51	26·19	33·27	41·93	33·57	67·20	66·90
November 1984										
Rate	9·60	14·35	17·30	21·90	22·45	28·55	35·95	28·80	57·60	57·35
At April 1988 Value	11·17	16·69	20·12	25·48	26·12	33·21	41·82	33·50	67·00	66·71
November 1985										
Rate	10·10	15·10	18·20	23·00	23·60	30·00	37·75	30·25	60·50	60·25
At April 1988 Value	11·14	16·66	20·07	25·37	26·03	33·09	41·64	33·37	66·73	66·46
July 1986										
Rate	10·20	15·30	18·40	23·25	23·85	30·35	38·15	30·60	61·15	60·90
At April 1988 Value	11·07	16·60	19·96	25·23	25·88	32·93	41·39	33·20	66·35	66·07
April 1987										
Rate	10·40	15·60	18·75	23·70	24·35	30·95	38·90	31·20	62·35	62·10
At April 1988 Value	10·81	16·21	19·49	24·63	25·31	32·17	40·43	32·43	64·80	64·54

b. Income Support and Housing Benefit

April 1988	*Up to age 11*	*11-15*	*16-17*	*18-24*	*Over 25*	*Couple Both under 18*	*Couple at least one over 18*
Personal allowance	10·75	16·10	19·40	26·05	33·40	38·80	51·45

c. Housing Benefit

	Dependent child addition (under 16 or in full time education)	*Pensioner (payable at age 65 for men, 60 for women)*	
		Single £	*Couple £*
April 1983			
Rate	11·40	42·15	61·75
1988 value	14·31	52·91	77·51
November 1983			
Rate	11·90	43·80	64·25
1988 value	14·53	53·47	78·44
November 1984			

	Dependent child addition (under 16 or in full time education)	Pensioner (payable at age 65 for men, 60 for women)	
		Single £	Couple £
Rate	12·85	45·90	67·30
1988 value	14·95	53·39	78·29
November 1985			
Rate	14·50	48·55	71·05
April 1988 value	15·99	53·55	78·37
July 1986			
Rate	14·60	48·95	71·70
April 1988 value	15·84	53·11	77·79
April 1987			
Rate	14·75	49·75	73·00
April 1988 value	15·33	51·70	75·86

Notes:
1. April 1988 value based on the movement in the general index of retail prices (all items) between the dates shown and April 1988.
2. Income support and housing benefit—rates as at April 1988 only shown.
3. Housing benefit—housing benefit scheme started in 1983.

Mrs. Elizabeth Lawrence

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received relating to the case of Mrs. Elizabeth Lawrence daughter of Mrs. Kathleen Beardmore, 6 Carlisle avenue, Cantrell road, Bulwell, Nottingham NG6 9AJ.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None.

Benefit Payments (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are receiving income support from each office in South Yorkshire; and what were the comparable figures at the same date in 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table shows the number of people receiving income support and its predecessor, supplementary benefit.

	27 November 1979 (supplementary benefit)	30 November 1988 (income support)
Barnsley East	5,361	9,620
Barnsley West	4,314	7,252
Doncaster East	5,818	10,164
Doncaster West	7,082	12,951
Rotherham North	3,017	4,858
Rotherham South	9,709	16,218
Sheffield North East	9,718	18,655
Sheffield North West	12,433	16,069
Sheffield South East	7,906	11,679
Sheffield South West	9,157	14,516
Wath-on-Dearne	4,170	7,118

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action. The figures given include a small number of cases not actually in receipt of benefit. The data for 1988 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Social Security Fraud

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money he estimates has been lost in each year since 1979 as a result of fraudulent social security claims and how many persons have been successfully proceeded against in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Strathclyde and *(d)* Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No reliable estimate is available as to how much money is lost as a result of fraudulent social security claims. The information available on successful prosecutions brought by the Department in respect of fraudulent social security benefit claims is shown in the table:

	Great Britain	Scotland[1]	Strathclyde[1]	Greenock and Port Glasgow[1]
1979-80	16,236	—	—	—
1980-81	18,369	—	—	—
1981-82	13,856	—	—	—
1982-83	11,312	—	—	—
1983-84	5,989	—	—	—
1984-85	6,595	463	—	—
1985-86	6,586	541	176	3
1986-87	6,258	796	147	9
1987-88	6,997	769	181	3

[1]Information covering earlier periods is not held.

Family Credit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families receive family credit in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole and what is his estimated number of families in each of *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* who are entitled to family credit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) on 6 February at column *483*.

Water Charges

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what help he intends to introduce for those in

receipt of retirement pensions to assist them in paying increased water charges and increased standing charges for water.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Retirement pension is uprated in line with the percentage movement in the retail prices index which reflects increases in water charges and standing charges for water.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any proposals to assist those in receipt of income support to pay increased water charges and increased standing charges for water.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Unlike supplementary benefit, water charges are not a separately identifiable element in the income support rates. Compensation for water charges was included as a once and for all adjustment from April 1988. The income support personal allowance will be uprated from April 1990 but decisions on the amount of the increase will not be taken until the autumn.

School Meals and Milk

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what cash compensation is in the family credit child rates for the loss of *(a)* free school meals and *(b)* free welfare milk.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The amount is £2·55.

Child Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his total provision for child benefit for 1988-89 and each of the next three years at constant 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 24 January 1989]:* The amounts are shown in the following table and are derived from the cash figures shown in table 15.1 of the 1989 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 615).

Financial year	*£ million*
1988-89	4,256
1989-90	4,065
1990-91	[1]4,200
1991-92	[1]4,200

[1] These figures are rounded to the nearest 100 million, in line with the convention in successive public expenditure White Papers.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Missiles

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what steps are being taken to improve communications between the United Kingdom mainland and Royal Navy submarine-launched ballistic missile carrying submarines whilst those submarines are on patrol;

(2) what steps are being taken to improve the floating buoy communications system for use between the United Kingdom mainland and Royal Navy submarine-launched ballistic missile carrying submarines on patrol;

(3) what steps are being taken to improve the trailing wire communications system for use between the United Kingdom mainland and Royal Navy submarine-launched ballistic missile carrying submarines on patrol;

(4) if any improvements have been made to the trailing wire very low frequency communications reception systems fitted to Royal Navy submarine-launched ballistic missile carrying submarines, which enable reception at the depth of more than 10 m;

(5) if any improvements have been made to the trailing wire very low frequency communications reception systems fitted to Royal Navy submarine-launched ballistic missile carrying submarines, which enable reception when the submarine is travelling at other than specific tangents to the shore-based transmitting station;

(6) whether the Anthorn very low frequency transmitter has been, or will be, hardened to resist the *(a)* blast and *(b)* electromagnetic pulse effects of a nuclear explosion;

(7) whether the Inskip low frequency transmitter has been, or will be, hardened to resist the *(a)* blast and *(b)* electromagnetic pulse effects of a nuclear explosion;

(8) whether the Rugby very low frequency transmitter has been, or will be, hardened to resist the *(a)* blast and *(b)* electromagnetic pulse effects of a nuclear explosion;

(9) whether the Criggon very low frequency transmitter has been, or will be, hardened to resist the *(a)* blast and *(b)* electromagnetic pulse effects of a nuclear explosion;

(10) whether the Glen Garry trial extremely low frequency transmitter will be, hardened to resist the *(a)* blast and *(b)* electromagnetic pulse effects of a nuclear explosion;

(11) whether the Crimond low frequency transmitter has been, or will be, hardened to resist the *(a)* blast and *(b)* electromagnetic pulse effects of a nuclear explosion.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not prepared to comment for security reasons.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions are given to the commanders of submarine-launched ballistic missile carrying submarines regarding launch autonomy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the policy of successive Governments not to discuss operational matters of this kind.

Overseas Visits

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which hon. Members attended the defence visit to Norway on 31 January; and on what basis they were selected.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence has an agreement with the Government and Opposition defence Whips whereby they nominate hon. Members to go on official defence visits, following advertisement in the All-Party Whip. Those who went to Norway were nominated in accordance with this practice.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many overseas visits his Department has arranged in the last two years for hon. Members; and at what cost.

Mr. Neubert: Ten official visits overseas have been arranged for hon. Members over the last two years. In the same time, the Defence Select Committee has undertaken five trips overseas in connection with its official business.

The second part of the question could only be answered at disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all hon. Members who have participated in defence visits overseas in the past two years, stating which visits they have attended and to which political party they belong.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is below. In addition to these visits a number of visits abroad were undertaken by the Defence Select Committee.

Date and Location	*Visitors*	*Party*
February 1987		
Royal Marines	Tim Wood	Conservative
Winter Deployment	Dame Janet Fookes	Conservative
to Norway	Frank Cook	Labour
	Roger Gale	Conservative
	Mark Wolfson	Conservative
March 1987		
British Forces	Tim Wood	Conservative
Cyprus	Tony Marlow	Conservative
	John Corrie	Conservative
	Derek Conway	Conservative
	Mike Woodcock	Conservative
	Kevin McNamara	Labour
	John McWilliam	Labour
	Frank Haynes	Labour
April 1987		
SHAPE	Robert Atkins	Conservative
	Frank Cook	Labour
	Tom Cox	Labour
	Hugh Dykes	Conservative
	Sir Peter Emery	Conservative
	Harry Greenway	Conservative
	Ian Gow	Conservative
	Sir Eldon Griffiths	Conservative
	Jeremy Hanley	Conservative
	Paul Marland	Conservative
	Cyril Townsend	Conservative
	Neville Trotter	Conservative
April 1987		
British Forces	Ivor Stanbrook	Conservative
Gibraltar	Reg Prentice	Conservative
	Sir Reginald Eyre	Conservative
	Albert McQuarrie	Conservative
	Dame Janet Fookes	Conservative
	Bill Walker	Conservative
	Robert Wareing	Labour
	James Kilfedder	UPUP
November 1987		
British Forces	Bill Walker	Conservative
Falkland Islands	Jack Aspinwall	Conservative
	Tony Speller	Conservative
	David Tredinnick	Conservative
	Dale Campbell-Savours	Labour
	Dr. John Marek	Labour
	Gerry Steinberg	Labour
December 1987		
BAOR and	Martyn Jones	Labour
RAF Germany	John McFall	Labour
	Frank Cook	Labour
	Marjorie Mowlam	Labour
	John Cummings	Labour
	Mark Wolfson	Conservative
	Keith Mans	Conservative
	Norman Miscampbell	Conservative
July 1988		
BAOR and 2nd	Sir Ian Lloyd	Conservative
Tactical Air Force	Tim Devlin	Conservative
July 1988		
SHAPE	John Ward	Conservative
Headquarters	Roger Moate	Conservative
	Dame Janet Fookes	Conservative
	Neville Trotter	Conservative
	Alan Amos	Conservative
	Sir Peter Emery	Conservative
	Jacques Arnold	Conservative
	Kenneth Hind	Conservative
	Tony Marlow	Conservative
	Sir Eldon Griffiths	Conservative
	Dr. Goodson-Wickes	Conservative
	Nicholas Bennett	Conservative
January 1989		
NATO and SHAPE	Norman Miscampbell	Conservative
Headquarters	Sir John Stokes	Conservative
	Tim Rathbone	Conservative
	Martin Brandon-Bravo	Conservative
	Bernie Grant	Labour
	Dawn Primarolo	Labour
	John McFall	Labour
February 1989		
Royal Marines	Robert Jones	Conservative
Winter Deployment	Andrew Mackay	Conservative
to Norway	Roger Moate	Conservative
	Norman Miscampbell	Conservative
	John Battle	Labour
	Harold McCusker	UUP

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what future use is proposed for RAF Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) on 3 February at column *444*.

Reserve Forces (Advertising)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the recent advertising campaign for recruitment on behalf of the reserve forces.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 11 November 1988 at column *321*.

Admiralty Nuclear Reactor (Greenwich)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what specific safety assessment has been made of the accident consequences of the Admiralty nuclear research and demonstration reactor at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Reassessments of the consequences of an accident involving the nuclear reactor at the Royal Naval college, Greenwich, are conducted regularly. The most recent assessment, which was carried out in January 1989, concluded that it was difficult to conceive of any accident involving this extremely small reactor which would necessitate countermeasures outside a range of 50 metres. Nevertheless it is our policy to practice contingency arrangements for more severe accidents, however remote the chances of them occurring may be.

Nuclear Submarines

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how often during each year from 1980 to 1988 Royal

Navy submarines have docked at the port of Liverpool; and what emergency procedures exist to protect the metropolitan population of Liverpool against radioactive contamination from an accident involving the radioactive core of the submarine;

(2) how often during each year from 1980 to 1988 a nuclear-powered Royal Navy submarine docked in Cardiff; and what emergency provisions are in force there to cope with an accident involving the nuclear reactor core in a submarine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The annual number of visits by Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarines to Liverpool and Cardiff since 1980 are as follows:

	Liverpool	*Cardiff*
1980	2	1
1981	3	1
1982	1	0
1983	2	2
1984	3	0
1985	3	1
1986	4	2
1987	2	0
1988	4	3

Local authorities are informed three weeks in advance of all such visits, and for the duration of each visit a naval emergency monitoring team, a MOD health physicist and a naval incident commander are located at the port concerned as a precautionary measure.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on Tuesday 7 February at column *667*, and to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) to the hon. Member for Mossley Hill on Tuesday 7 February at column *793*.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any incidence of serious breakdown resulting in radioactive release and exposure to the operating work force in the operation of United Kingdom nuclear-powered submarines since the first such craft was launched.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been no such incidents.

Soviet Forces

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why Her Majesty's Government reject certain aspects of the Soviet compilation of its force deployment in Europe, released on 29 January; and what data base it used.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government have welcomed the Warsaw Pact's publication of its view of the balance of forces in Europe as a sign that the Warsaw Pact is prepared to be more open about such matters than in the past and to acknowledge its superiority in key combat equipments based in Europe. There are, however, differences between the recent Warsaw Pact assessment of the balance and the one published by NATO in November 1988; in particular, NATO does not accept the Warsaw Pact's conclusion that there is a rough parity in forces. Work will be needed by the two Alliances to resolve these differences and to agree common definitions and counting rules.

Procurement Policy

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on procurement from (i) the United Kingdom, (ii) European and (iii) United States-owned defence industries.

Mr. Sainsbury: Whilst we have regard for other factors including the location of the manufacturer and the ownership of suppliers, our prime consideration is to obtain the best value for money.

EMPLOYMENT

VAT Registrations

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new registrations there were for value-added tax in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: In 1987, the latest year for which figures have been published, the estimated number of new registrations for value added tax was 205,000. The net increase in the number of VAT registered businesses in 1987 was 45,000 or nearly 900 a week on average. The indications are that the rate of increase during 1988 has been faster.

Employment Training

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees who have started on employment training have subsequently dropped out.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated that by the end of November 1988 about 12,000 trainees who were not transferees from previous programmes had left employment training earlier than planned.

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will visit Nottingham, North and address a meeting of former miners on the redundant mineworkers pension scheme who have received letters to undertake restart; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have no plans to visit the Nottingham, North constituency. As I told the hon. Member in my reply to his question of 2 January 1989, the redundant mineworkers payment scheme is the responsibility of the Department of Energy. Officials from my Department and the Department of Energy are examining the redundant mineworkers payment scheme regulations and benefit procedures which bring those in the redundant mineworkers payment scheme within the coverage of the restart programme.

Race Relations and Equal Opportunity

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will describe his Department's principal achievements in respect of race relations and equal opportunity since May 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The principal achievements in my Department in respect of race relations and equal opportunities since May 1979 are as follows:

(i) In the race relations field

The extension of race discrimination legislation (the Race Relations Act 1976) to offshore employment.

The significant role played by my Department's race relations employment advisory service in promoting the recommendations of the CRE 1984 code of practice's recommendations to employers on the implementation of equal opportunities policies. The service is now giving greater publicity to the use of the positive action provisions of the Race Relations Act.

The commissioning of a number of research projects by my Department which have informed the Government and others on the position of ethnic minorities in the labour market.

The regular meetings of my Department's race relations employment advisory group, whose members include the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality and distinguished representatives of ethnic minorities, have provided successive Ministers with valuable advice on the employment of people from ethnic minorities.

(ii) *In the sex discrimination field*

The extension of the Equal Pay Act to provide equal pay for work of equal value.

The removal of restrictions on adult women's hours of work thus freeing women to compete on equal terms with men for higher paid shift and night work.

The extension of sex discrimination legislation (the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts) to offshore employment —an employer can no longer refuse a women a job on an oil rig simply because she is a woman.

Equalising retirement ages—the woman, who wants to, can now work to the same age as her male counterpart.

Freeing single sex training from unnecessary legislation. A training provider no longer has to obtain Ministerial designation before running a women only course.

The regular meetings of the Department's advisory committee on women's employment. This committee, which includes the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission and members of women's organisations, has provided successive Governments with valuable advice on the employment of women.

(iii) *In Training Agency programmes*

All Training Agency programmes are available equally to all eligible people, regardless of their race, religion, sex, marital status or disability.

Both YTS and employment training have equal opportunities codes of practice. A commitment to equal opportunities is one of the criteria for achievement of approved training organisation status; this is under-pinned by a contractual requirement. Publicity material for both schemes promotes equal opportunities and avoids stereotypes. Single sex and race training is provided where appropriate.

The skill training agency has an equal opportunities statement and has issued guidance forbidding pin-up material in skill centre premises.

Education authorities and schools participating in technical and vocational education initiative have equal opportunity statements.

(iv) In the Department's employment service

The employment service is an equal opportunities organisation and as such has a responsibility to ensure its services are available to all regardless of race, sex or disability.

The ethnic origin traffic surveys of 1986 and 1987 provided information on the needs of people from ethnic minorities. As a result 48 inner city officers have been appointed to help make services more accessible and relevant to inner city job seekers, many of whom are from ethnic minorities. A number of leaflets have also been translated into minority languages.

People can attend job clubs at times convenient for childcare and domestic arrangements. A leaflet aimed at women who are thinking of returning to work has been produced. Eligibility for the job start and enterprise allowance schemes is based on receipt of benefit; people whose partner is in receipt of benefit are also eligible.

(v) In the Department's contribution to action for cities

Many people from ethnic minorities live in inner cities and have benefited from these initiatives. For example the small firms service have recently opened six inner city sub-offices; their services will be available to all small businesses but their expertise in ethnic minority business matters will be particularly helpful to ethnic minority entrepreneurs.

(vi) as an employer

In 1986 the race relations employment advisory service audited the equal opportunities policy within my Department with regard to race. Most of their recommendations, which relate to training, instructions etc., were accepted and are being implemented. In addition we are, or are about to begin, monitoring recruitment, staff in post, access to training and promotion. Whilst representation of ethnic minority groups remains concentrated in lower grades there have been gradual improvements.

My Department has also introduced a number of initiatives to ensure both men and women have the same opportunities. These include increased opportunities to work flexible working hours and/or part time, the provision of a preferential reinstatement (career break) scheme and advice on the granting of special leave for domestic purposes. Representation of women is gradually increasing at most levels within my Department.

(vii) The introduction of equal opportunities proofing

All the Department's policies are now examined to ensure that they do not unlawfully discriminate against women and ethnic minorities.

Early Retirement

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he collects statistics on the levels of early retirement and those due to ill health *(a)* generally, *(b)* in local authorities and *(c)* in Gedling borough council.

Mr. Lee: I regret that the statistics as requested are not collected centrally.

Watercooling Plants

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislative controls to make all water cooling plants subject to regular inspection and control.

Mr. Nicholls: Water cooling plants in workplaces are already subject to the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, which places a responsibility on those in control of buildings and their engineering services to implement and monitor appropriate controls. Additionally, the Health and Safety Executive has issued guidance on these controls and inspectors monitor the performance of employers during routine inspections.

New Jobs

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full-time and part-time jobs were created in the 12 months to September 1988 in Great Britain.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses. In the year to September 1988 the work force in employment in Great Britain increased by 399,000 of which 220,000 were in full-time employment and 179,000 were in part-time employment. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes. In classifiying the work force in employment between full and part-time, all programme participants are counted as in part-time employment.

Employment Training

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees on employment training are *(a)* getting meals paid, *(b)* getting the maximum of £5 of travel paid, *(c)* experiencing a £5 deduction because their spouse works and *(d)* confined to a £10 premium because their partner works 24 hours plus a week; and if he will express each figure as a percentage of the total numbers of employment trainees.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested at *(a)*, *(b)*, and *(d)* is not available. It is not clear what the hon. Member is referring to at *(c)*. There is no £5 deduction on employment training. All trainees get a training allowance of at least £10 a week more than their benefit entitlement.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees undergoing employment training are receiving enhancements over benefit paid for training managers; and if he will express this figure as a percentage of the total on employment training.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of dismissals from the employment training programme so far, distinguishing between reasons for dismissal.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Tourism

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total of Government support for the tourist industry in 1988 prices for each year from 1960 to 1988 for the south west region and separately for Devon and Cornwall; and what is the projected amount for the next five years.

Mr. Lee: Total funds made available by the English tourist board to support tourism in the south west region, through subventions to the west country tourist board, payments under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 and, in 1971-72 and 1972-73, under the hotel development incentives scheme, at constant 1987-88 prices, were as follows:

	£
1971-72	129,472
1972-73	830,381
1973-74	801,818
1974-75	866,538
1975-76	1,241,240
1976-77	991,504
1977-78	951,349
1978-79	904,050
1979-80	1,781,136
1980-81	1,633,740
1981-82	2,171,574
1982-83	1,331,250
1983-84	3,443,496
1984-85	2,351,520
1985-86	2,796,238
1986-87	3,954,080
1987-88	3,431,000
1988-89	[1]

[1] estimated to end of January 1989, at actual prices—£2,538,500

Separate figures for Devon and Cornwall, and for Government assistance prior to the formation of the west country tourist board in June 1971, could only be provided at disproportionate cost. No projections have been made as to the amount of support for the next five years.

In addition, the tourist industry receives substantial support through a number of other Government Departments.

Community Insulation Projects

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on Government support for community insulation projects under employment training.

Mr. Fowler: Employment training is helping a large and increasing number of unemployed people to develop the skills they need to get back to work. The valuable work done by community insulation projects in draught proofing the homes of low-income households offers one means of providing suitable training and experience.

I have agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy to reinforce the contribution employment training can make to community insulation projects this year by taking the following action:

(a) training managers will be offered an increase to £40 per week in the level of supplementary training grant under existing contracts in respect of additional filled places;

(b) more advice will be provided to training agents and potential trainees on the range of skills offered by such project based training; and

(c) support will be given to enhance the opportunities for trainees on insulation projects to obtain recognised qualifications.

To give these measures time to take effect and to maintain the present community insulation project network through the remaining winter months a three-month extension will be offered to participants presently on community programme terms.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

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Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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